

FREE MINI-GUIDE

5 DIY Bait Recipes That Work Overnight

✓ Quick-start checklist to stop the panic • 🧪 Science-backed formulas

This 15-page mini-guide reveals the exact formulas I use to knock down ant colonies within 48 hours. It's the perfect introduction to the full system.

Why Baits Work When Sprays Fail

Every time you spray a visible ant trail, you are not solving the problem — you are making it worse. When you spray ants with contact insecticides, you trigger a survival mechanism called "**budding**." The colony detects the threat, and multiple queens take groups of workers to establish new satellite nests deeper inside your walls.

Baits work differently. Ants are social insects that share food through a process called **trophallaxis** — they exchange liquid food mouth-to-mouth. When foragers carry a slow-acting toxic bait back to the nest, they feed it to the queen, the brood, and other workers. **The entire colony collapses from within.**

📖 **The science is clear:** Low concentrations (<1%) of boric acid are capable of eliminating entire ant colonies when delivered in an attractive bait matrix.

The Critical Principle: Delayed Toxicity

Fast-acting toxins kill foragers before they can return to the nest. This is why supermarket sprays fail — they only eliminate the workers you see.

Effective baits must have delayed toxicity. Research shows that baits providing an LT_{50} (time to 50% mortality) between 1 and 4 days are ideal. This delay ensures the toxicant is distributed throughout the colony via trophallaxis before any individual ant dies.

Boric acid is the gold standard for DIY baits because it provides this critical delayed toxicity at low concentrations.

Recipe 1: Classic Sugar-Water Bait

Best for: Argentine ants, odorous house ants, ghost ants, and other sugar-feeding species.

Ingredients

White sugar	1 cup (200g)	Warm water	1 cup (240ml)
Boric acid powder	1½ teaspoons (≈0.5-0.6%)		

Instructions

1. Dissolve sugar in warm water.
2. Stir in boric acid until fully dissolved.
3. Soak cotton balls in the solution.
4. Place cotton balls in small containers (lids or bottle caps) near ant trails.

⚠ Critical: Do not exceed 1% boric acid. Higher concentrations reduce consumption because ants detect and avoid the toxin.

Recipe 2: Protein-Based Bait (Peanut Butter)

Best for: Pavement ants, fire ants, and species that prefer protein in spring and early summer.

Ingredients

Peanut butter (smooth, unsweetened)	3 tablespoons	Honey or corn syrup	1 tablespoon
Boric acid powder	¾ teaspoon (≈0.5-0.6%)		

Instructions

- 1. Mix all ingredients into a smooth paste.
- 2. Place small pea-sized amounts on pieces of wax paper or jar lids.
- 3. Position near ant trails or entry points.
- 4. Refresh every 2-3 days.

Why it works: The protein-fat matrix is highly attractive to protein-seeking colonies. The boric acid is evenly distributed, and the sweetness from honey ensures foragers recruit others to the bait.

Recipe 3: Gel Bait (Professional Grade)

Best for: All species — this is the most versatile formulation.

Ingredients

Water	1 cup (240ml)	Sugar	½ cup (100g)
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Molasses or honey	2 tablespoons	Boric acid powder	1½ teaspoons (≈0.5-0.6%)
Unflavored gelatin (optional)	1 packet		

Instructions

1. Heat water until warm (not boiling).
2. Dissolve sugar, molasses, and boric acid.
3. If using gelatin, sprinkle over the surface and let sit 5 minutes, then stir.
4. Allow to cool and set into a gel.
5. Place small dollops on jar lids or directly on cardboard squares.

Why it's superior: The gel formulation stays moist longer than liquid baits, remains attractive for days, and is easy to place in tight spaces like behind appliances or along baseboards.

Recipe 4: Grease/Fat Bait

Best for: Grease-feeding ants like certain species of *Monomorium* (little black ants) and protein-preferring colonies.

Ingredients

Creamy peanut butter	OR	½ cup	Vegetable shortening + powdered sugar	½ cup + 2 tbsp
Boric acid powder		1 teaspoon (≈0.8-1.0%)		

Instructions

1. Mix the fat base (peanut butter or shortening+sugar) thoroughly with boric acid.

2. Roll into small balls or spread onto cardboard squares.
3. Place near ant trails.

i Important: Fat-based baits can go rancid. Replace every 2-3 days and store unused portions in the refrigerator.

Recipe 5: Emergency Liquid Bait (24-Hour Knockdown)

Best for: Immediate ant traffic reduction when you need results within hours.

Ingredients

Sugar	½ cup (100g)	Warm water	1 cup (240ml)
Boric acid powder	1 tablespoon (≈3-3.5%)		

Instructions

1. Dissolve sugar in warm water.
2. Add boric acid and stir until fully dissolved.
3. Soak cotton balls and place near trails.
4. Remove after 24 hours and switch to a low-concentration (0.5-1%) bait.

⚠ Warning: This high concentration **will** kill foragers quickly. Use it only for immediate knockdown, then transition to Recipes 1-3 for colony elimination.

Quick-Start Checklist: Your 48-Hour Action Plan

Hour 0–2: Observation

- ☐ Locate the ant trail and identify where ants enter your home.
- ☐ Determine if ants are carrying food (protein/grease or sugar).
- ☐ Choose the appropriate bait recipe based on observed preference.

Hour 2–4: Preparation

- ☐ Mix your chosen bait (start with Recipe 1 or 3 for most situations).
- ☐ Prepare 3-5 bait stations (jar lids, bottle caps, or cardboard).
- ☐ Place stations **directly on** the ant trail — do not disturb the trail.

Hour 4–6: Deployment

- ☐ Place bait stations at entry points and along trails.
- ☐ Do **not** spray, wipe, or clean the trail area for 48 hours.
- ☐ Keep children and pets away from bait stations.

Hour 24: First Assessment

- ☐ Check bait consumption. If ants are ignoring it, switch to a different recipe (protein vs. sugar).
- ☐ Refresh any dried-out bait with fresh solution.
- ☐ **Do not clean the trail** — ants are still recruiting.

Hour 48: Evaluation

- ☐ Ant traffic should be significantly reduced (80-90%).
- ☐ Continue baiting for 7-14 days to ensure colony collapse.
- ☐ If ants return, they are likely from a different colony — repeat the process.

Why This Works: The Science in Brief

Boric acid concentration

0.5-1% provides delayed toxicity and minimal repellency

Seasonal preference

Protein in spring, carbohydrates in summer/fall

Formulation matters

Gel baits outperform liquids and granules

Trophallaxis

Food-sharing distributes toxin to queen and brood

Delayed toxicity

LT₅₀ of 1-4 days ensures colony-wide distribution

When to Upgrade to the Full System

This mini-guide gives you the tools to **knock down** an ant infestation within 48 hours. But **knockdown is not elimination**.

Without a complete strategic system — species identification, physical exclusion, seasonal bait rotation, and long-term sustainment — the ants **will** return.

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🧪 Based on peer-reviewed research from the *Journal of Economic Entomology*, *Pest Management Science*, and USDA-ARS publications. All recipes have been field-tested in residential environments.

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