

This information is intended to help you and your customers better set the right expectations, sell & understand the handmade Ceramic Furniture & Accessory / Ornamental Vase Collection. Our 100% **handmade** Ceramic collection is made from multiple production phases. No two pieces will ever be exactly alike, this is why many of our customers seek out handmade merchandise.

Each accessory, accent or furniture item in this Collection has its own set of characteristics and markings that helps to make each piece unique. These individual characteristics are in part due to a combination of factors: raw natural materials combined with the manufacturing process and human effort (handmade).

THE RAW MATERIALS & HOW THESE MATERIALS INFLUENCE THE END PRODUCT

Clay – Clay is a type of earth, which is made from the decomposition of rocks and sand through time and weathering. Over time, small pieces of earth are transported from one location to another and deposited in locations where water flows slowly almost to a trickle. As the earth is transported with water, it accumulates other organic materials to form a dense organic material that we call clay. Different mineral compositions in clay can mean different results when we “Fire” or bake in professional ceramic “Kilns” or ceramic ovens.

Glaze – Our glazes are made from glass (silicon dioxide) that have been specially formulated to cause them to melt under extreme high temperatures and adhere to the clay.

Glaze includes many different ingredients to achieve a specific look (e.g. glossy vs. matt) or effect.

THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Our ceramic products are handmade and include many processes to deliver a fine ceramic product. Each stage of this manufacturing process can result in a certain percentage of a group of products being discarded due to multiple reasons. Often size can be a significant factor, the larger the ceramic item, the higher the chance of the product failing. This is why many kiln ovens in the world only produce small ceramic items.

FORMING / MOLDING – Stage 1

We source clay from wholesalers who specialize in clay excavation or mining. The clay is delivered to our factory in large quantities and may come from several different clay fields. It is important to understand this because the mineralization of clay will vary from depending on where it is sourced and often even within the same clay pit. Think about your own garden, the soil you dig in one part of the garden may be different to soil from another part of the garden – the same is true with clay.

When we receive the clay, our skilled workers measure out the amount of clay they require and then work the clay to remove air bubbles and the visible foreign substances before pressing the clay into plaster molds. When we first make a new style of product, this is done by one of our leading craftsmen with years of experience and knowledge to create a new product from which we then make plaster molds.

NATURAL DRYING - Stage 2

Once the clay has been pressed and formed into the plaster molds, each mold is tightly bound and left for 1-2 days to bond and form into the shape of the product we want. After this, we remove the molds and let the formed clay product dry naturally in a naturally ventilated space away from rain – this can take anywhere from 7-10 days. At times, humidity can delay or slow down this natural curing and drying period particularly during the monsoon period.

BISQUE FIRING – Stage 3

Once the clay has reached a certain degree of firmness, the newly formed clay items undergo a first firing stage at a temperature of 800 degrees Celsius / 1,472 degrees Fahrenheit. This usually turns the original clay form into a hard and strong beige or orange color. This product is now known as “Bisque” or “Biscuit”. Once the product has cooled, it is inspected for flaws, chips or cracks. If the product passes this stage, it is now ready for glazing.

GLAZING – Stage 4

We source our glazes from Europe, these great glazes are safe and non-toxic....no nasty chemicals such as Cadmium or lead. Our glazes are not food safe. Our glazes are specially formulated to create glazes that are bright, jewel-like tones. The “Bisque” product is either spray-painted or the glaze is applied by hand by dipping the Bisque item. The glaze then needs time to dry before it undergoes its most important and final firing stage.

FINAL FIRING – Stage 5

The glazed ceramic product is loaded into a very large gas operated kiln ovens. These gas fired kiln ovens reach

temperatures in excess of 1,200 degrees Celsius / 2,192 degrees Fahrenheit. Many handmade ceramics from other parts of the world use wood burning kilns, which limit the glaze colors. Gas-fired kilns are the ultimate in unique, high-quality, unique ceramic glaze production. Depending on where a specific item is placed in the kiln, the glaze can react to the firing differently. For example, one square ceramic stool may be placed at a higher level (there are multiple levels in our kilns) than another ceramic stool in the same color. While heat is fairly evenly distributed, we know that hot air rises....as such the end result may mean that some items while of the same glaze may result in a slightly different appearance.

OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE FINAL OUTCOME OF GLAZED CERAMIC PRODUCTS

Question: Why are some of the same ceramic products slightly different in size from one another?

Answer: Shrinkage and Expansion - In both firing stages, clay / ceramic will shrink or expand sometimes as much as 8-10%

Answer: Larger items *may* need to be fired in portions – so the product is cut down in size and rejoined before the final firing. Expansion or contraction may alter the shapes of the product slightly.

Answer: The nature of Hand Made vs. Machine Made – As with any handmade process, different workers will apply

different ways to their work. Sometimes, workers may apply more glaze than another colleague, this can result in the glaze appearing stronger or richer than the standard. Other times, molds will be re-created, as such over time, mold sizes will change minimally but this can impact the size of the product.

Question: My glaze has the appearance of cracked glass....is this a problem with the glaze and will it peel off?

Answer: Some glazes may have an appearance of cracked glass, this is more evident in lighter glazes especially the turquoise blue colors. There is nothing wrong with this, it is just how this specific glaze responds to its firing. Once glaze is firmly burned on to the "Bisque" product it is permanently attached. It takes a very hard knock to "peel off" glaze. Very few products peel glaze. If this happens, it is typically noticed very early on. Glazes do not typically "Peel off"

Question: I notice black or other color spots on my handmade ceramic product. Is this normal?

Answer: Yes, it is perfectly normal. Spotting, unevenness of color, changes in glaze coloration all can occur due to a variety of factors including but not limited to: minerals in the raw clay reacting to the glaze, it may be the result of dust and or dirt that accumulates during the manufacturing process or it could be due to undetectable foreign bodies that were included in the raw clay. This won't impact or weaken the product, but you should understand that this is normal and acceptable in handmade ceramic products.

Question: Why Do I sometimes see tiny holes in the glaze or areas of the product where the glaze does not entirely cover the ceramic product?

Answer: This can come about due to minor air bubbles being trapped in the clay and as a result the glaze does not completely cover the product because the air pocket or bubble causes the glaze to burst off in firing. There is nothing wrong with your glaze or the ceramic item, this is the nature of handmade ceramic vs. machine made – call it character marks or minor flaws.

Question: What is the best way to care for ceramics?

Answer: Use a soft cloth and a garden hose with fresh, clean water to regularly rinse and remove dust and dirt from your ceramics. Wiping over your vases regularly, will not only help them shine and make their jewel glazes stand out, it will also make your product look brand new. Never use bleaches or other abrasive products. Read your product care instructions for more information.