



SEASONAL LIVING®



SEASONAL LIVING
Ceramic Furniture + Accents

ABOUT OUR HAND CRAFTED CERAMIC FURNITURE / ACCENTS & VASES

UPDATED – JANUARY 2016

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND USE OF HIGH QUALITY FURNITURE COVERS

This information is intended to help you and your customers better set the right expectations, sell and understand the Ceramic Furniture and Vase Collections. Seasonal Living® ceramic products are 100% crafted by hand from multiple production stages. No two pieces will ever be exactly alike, this is why many of our customers seek out hand crafted merchandise.

Each ceramic item has its own set of unique characteristics and marketing that helps to create a “one of a kind” piece. These characteristics are in part due to a combination of factors: raw materials combined with the fabrication process and human effort (hand crafted).

THE RAW MATERIALS & HOW THESE MATERIALS INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE END PRODUCT (Visit our website: SeasonalLiving.com to watch the fabrication of ceramics and understand the production process).

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 by water, it accumulates other minerals and substances which all go to alter the chemical composition of that specific group of earth / clay. These differing compositions in clay can result in different results when we “Fire” or Bake the clay in the Kiln / Ceramic ovens.

Glaze – Our glazes are made from glass / crystalline (silicon dioxide) that are crafted by European know-how and have been specifically formulated to cause the glazes to melt under extreme high temperatures and create a permanent impenetrable seal about the “bisque (Biscuit or oven dried clay). Glazes include many ingredients and natural pigments to achieve a specific look or finish. Our glazes are applied by hand, as such human effort and knowledge goes into producing these pieces. Some glazing masters may apply more glaze than another person, in turn this can impact the final outcome of the glazed product.

The Manufacturing Process – Our ceramic products are hand crafted and include many stages of production. Each stage will result in a high degree of rejections or failures to create the perfect product / outcome.

Forming / Molding the Clay – Stage 1

When the clay is received at the factory, it is measured out and then formed to remove air bubbles and visible foreign substances before being shaped and placed into plaster of paris molds

Drying of the Clay – Stage 2

The clay then has to naturally cure. Depending on the time of the year, Monsoon or heavy rain periods can delay the curing and drying process. This process cannot be hurried along, it is a natural process that requires time for the clay to gradually dry and take shape its mold. Once the clay is dried (anywhere between 7-10 days, longer if heavy rains) , it can then move on to the next stage of production

Bisque Firing – Stage 3

Once the clay has reached a level of dryness and firmness, the newly formed clay item undergoes its first firing in a special clay oven (gas kiln) with a oven temperature set at / around 800 degrees C / 1,472 degrees F. it is at this stage that the clay is turned from a dark brown / grey pigment to an orange / yellow biscuit color. Once the product cools and has been inspected for flaws, chips or cracks it moves on the next stage of production – glazing

Glazing of Bisque – Stage 4

Our European glazes are safe for every day decorative use but are not intended to be used for food or beverage service. None of our glazes contain nasty chemicals such as

Cadmium or lead. The glazes are created to allow for bright jewel-like colors to shine through and avoid most traditional muddy glaze finishes. The glazes are applied by hand. Depending upon the size of the bisque item, it may be immersed into a glaze bath or it may be placed on a wheel operated by hand and spun at the same time using hand held glazing sprayers, the glaze is applied by the glazing specialist. The glaze then needs time to dry and be prepared for the next stage of production – Final Firing.

Final Firing – Stage 5

The glazed bisque products are loaded on to large carts that can withstand the intense heat of a ceramic kiln. To maximize the use of the gas fuelled kilns, the carts will support bisque products at different heights. The goal is to operate the kiln at maximum capacity. The final firing of the bisque product often results in temperatures reaching in excess of 1,200 Celsius / 2,192 degrees Fahrenheit. Many traditional kilns operate using wood which limits the glazes that can be used and does not permit the glaze colors carried by Seasonal Living to be achieved.

FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME / APPEARANCE OF THE GLAZED CERAMIC ITEM

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

ANSWER: A combination of natural shrinkage and expansion during the production stage coupled with hand crafted molds (molds have a limited life and have to be re-created, as such over time, sizes may vary a little). While a certain size is expected, it is the craftsman's eye that shapes the product. In the firing stages, the clay / bisque may expand or contract a few inches.

QUESTION: The glaze has the appearance of 'cracked glass' – Is this a problem with the glaze and will it peel off the ceramic base?

ANSWER: No. There is no problem with this. This is just the effect of the crystalline settling at high temperatures and creating the appearance of shattered or cracked glass. If there is a manufacturing flaw, the glaze will flake off and be evident when you receive the glazed product. Sometimes, lighter glazes (creamy white, turquoise, green and some other paler colors) will show this cracked glass effect, but this is just part of the production process.

QUESTION: I notice that my ceramic item has some black, blue or greenish spots or flecks in it. I also notice some pits where the glaze has not filled in. Why is this and can it be avoided?

ANSWER: This is perfectly normal. Spotting and minor discoloration are the result of a

combination of factors ranging from mineralization content of the original clay, clay reaction to the glaze. Remember, what is excavated from one part of a clay pit will be different from another part of the same clay pit and this can have an effect on these random spots / flecks of color. As for pitting, while our products are checked, sometimes during the production process little pits may appear, this does not effect the product integrity at all, it could just be a little area of the molded clay item that did not hold its glaze. Sometimes this can be due to tiny pockets of air trapped in the clay – it is just a characteristic of hand made glazed ceramic

QUESTION: Why do I see color variation in the glazes?

ANSWER: There are many reasons for this, some of which have been identified in the manufacturing process:

1. Different mineralization content of the clay
2. How heavily (or lightly) the glaze was applied by different craftsman. No two people work exactly alike, every person has their own interpretation of perfection
3. Environmental factors – High periods of seasonal humidity impacts how hot the kilns become and this can have an impact on glaze color
4. Placement in the kiln – As indicated above, kilns are packed for maximum efficiency, as such, some products will receive more heat than others as we are unable to insure equal heating and cooling of glazes at differing levels and heights

QUESTION: Can I expect the glaze tile sample colors to be exact to what I receive?

ANSWER: No. read previous point. While we have a specific recipe of glaze mix, you will always have the potential for some glaze variation.

When considering purchasing a Seasonal Living ceramic item, remember, you are not purchasing a mass produced piece of furniture or decorative accent. Every piece is unique and we hope that you will appreciate that multiple people have been involved in hand crafting your merchandise. We hope that you will enjoy the fact that this is not a machine that produced your merchandise, instead a craftsman who has trained for many years, works every day to create new and unique ceramic products that are intended to be different to mass produced furniture and decorative accessories.

SEASONAL LIVING – ‘ABOUT OUR CERAMICS’ – JANUARY 2016