



Useful Information

Images and information about the products described below can be found on our websites at:

www.countrylovecrafts.com (online shop)

www.countryloveceramics.com (information website)

For health and safety guidelines regarding ceramic/pottery glazing and firing, please read the appropriate recommendations provided by the Health & Safety Executive at the HSE website – www.hse.gov.uk.

Amazing Glazing Training Course:

This course is held monthly (usually on a Friday) at Country Love Crafts. We consider this course essential for all **NEW BUSINESS OWNERS** or as a refresher course for **EXISTING BUSINESS OWNERS**. Learn different methods of glazing and how to load and fire a kiln.

Cost: The course is £40 + VAT or free when a kiln is purchased through Country Love Crafts.

Time: 10am until 2pm

Pre-Decoration: Remember to examine bisque pieces prior to decoration. Hairline cracks on damaged pieces can be seen (or heard by lightly tapping a piece). Keep working areas clean and tidy and remember to tell artists to wash hands as dirt and grease will prevent colour and glaze from adhering.

Decorating: Ensure that bisque, glazes and underglazes are all compatible by either checking the manufacturer's label for recommended uses or ask your supplier. Typically, over application of glaze or underglaze can result in future problems so advise decorators to be careful when decorating pieces. It is standard practice to apply no more than three coats of coloured glaze or underglaze. Glazes and underglazes should be stored carefully – extreme conditions (cold or warm) can affect the finished outcome. For best results decorate using products that are room temperature.

Post-Decoration: Before glazing, we recommend that glazers thoroughly examine each piece to make sure that coloured glaze/underglaze is not too thick. It is possible to "finger sand!" areas where application looks thick. Examining work will help glazers learn more about finished firing results.

Identification Process: Before glazing, it is also a good idea to devise a process for identifying fired pieces. Perhaps add a code or form of ID on the item (prior to glazing). Remember to consider all parts of a customer's piece i.e. on trinket boxes, remember to ID both the lid and base or keep them together during the firing process.

Use an underglaze pencil for handwriting IDs. Underglaze pencils are a special writing appliance that is permanent during the firing process - normal pens and pencils (including permanent varieties) will burn off during the firing process.

Dry Footing or Stilting: Check that glaze or colour has been removed from the dry foot area (usually found at the base) or any area that will touch the kiln shelf. If the choice is made not to dry-foot, remember to use a stilt when loading the item in the kiln. If this process is not followed, the item will stick to the kiln shelf during the firing process. Glaze melts during high temperatures and hardens when the kiln cools.

Equipment List: In your glazing area, we recommend:

- A clean and spacious working area
- A large dipping container for the glaze liquid
- A mixing appliance (like a toilet brush)
- Glaze Tongs (optional)
- Drying Mats
- Viscosity Cup (with cocktail stick to keep hole clean)
- Stop Watch
- Soft brush
- Jug with water supply

Other Methods of Glazing: There are other methods of glazing that will need to be mastered over time. They are:

- Brushing
- Sponging
- Rolling/Spilling

Glaze Dipping Quick Guide

Clear glaze will add a sparkling protective finish to wares. When using a clear glaze, dipping can save time (especially when faced with a high volume of pieces to glaze). It makes glazing large pieces fast and easy. Glazes come in various colours and quantities. The glaze contains a dye that will burn out during the firing process. The dye is added to the mixture for two reasons (a) to help identify a glaze and (b) to allow the glazer to see that all areas of the decorated bisque have been covered in the clear glaze.

Check decorated item:

- Is colour application appropriate?
- Is there an ID no on the piece (optional)?
- Is there more than one part to the piece?
- Does the item include speciality products?
- Does the decoration include lots of pink, purple or red designs?
- Is everything dry e.g. dimensional products may run or bleed if still wet?

Glaze container check:

- Is there enough glaze in your dipping container?
- Is the glaze deep enough to cover the largest item you want to dip?
- Is the container big enough to dip your largest item?

Glaze viscosity check:

Check the viscosity each time as your glaze will be prone to evaporation and also, as water is the thinnest ingredient in the glaze mixture, the more dipping you do, the more water will be removed from the mixture.

- Have you mixed the glaze well to ensure particles are in suspension and there is no sediment at the bottom of the dipping container?
- Is the glaze the right consistency – remember to check the viscosity a few times and make sure the hole in the viscosity cup is completely clear of debris?

Dipping with hands:

1. Hold the decorated bisque firmly and submerge the bisque item to cover as much of the piece as possible (90%+). If you are glazing a vessel shape, ensure you move the bisque gently (while submerged). This is to ensure all areas absorb glaze i.e. there are no vacuums.
2. Place the partially glazed item on the drying mats to dry.
3. Once dry, finger sand the end of the dry glaze on all sides and follow the same process in step 1 and 2 above but this time only submerge the unglazed area (the remaining 20%) and make sure there is a small overlap to ensure full coverage of glaze.

Dipping with tongs:

1. Ensure the tongs are clean. Pay particular attention to the area that touches the bisque.

2. Gently grasp the bisque by squeezing the tongs together. If possible, place the tongs on an unpainted area of each bisque item (or perhaps the least decorated area). This is to ensure you won't scratch or mark a design if you should either lose your grip during dipping or not widen the tongs enough as you release the piece from your grip. The tong mark areas usually fill with glaze and do not tend to show after firing.

Touch Up:

- Is everything dry and have you examined each piece thoroughly?
- Have you "finger sanded" any lumpy or bumpy patches, drips or runs and any areas that have "fizzed" or bubbled?
- Have you touched up any raw areas of bisque using small drops of glaze on the end of your finger or by using a small, soft brush? A palette knife can be used to shave off any large problematic areas.

Firing Preparation:

- Is each item fully dry and has it been dry-footed where appropriate.
- Do you have enough stilts, cranks, setters or bead trees for your kiln load?
- Are some items required more urgently than others?

Proof or Safe:

- If you are firing tableware items, please follow the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure the item is glazed and fired appropriately to make it food-safe?
- It is industry standard that unless an item is stamped or marked dishwasher, oven or microwave "safe" then it isn't. However, we do know customers that frequently place their hand-painted items in ovens, dishwashers and microwaves. To avoid unnecessary law suits, be very careful about the advice you offer and DO NOT claim that the item is dishwasher, oven or microwave "safe". Our bisque is ceramic earthenware. Earthenware is porous and it will trap moisture. Therefore, extreme care should be taken as the pottery can get VERY HOT.