

Are your glazes safe?

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Safe for what? I assure you that if someone hits you over the head with one of my pots that it will hurt.

Seriously, all of the glazes that I use on ware that is intended for everyday tableware are microwaveable, dish-washable, and formulated with durability being foremost and to be esthetically pleasing.

Glaze durability is a very popular topic in the pottery community, and it has come to mean several things. Some potters will advertise that their pottery is "Lead Free", leading the customer to believe that their glazes are "Food Safe". Unfortunately there is no set definition of what is "Food Safe", and the term is often misleading. For this reason more potters are starting to use the term "durable". For example, have you ever seen glazes that have a beautiful "crackle" pattern in them? Those "crackles" are excellent places for bacteria to hide in and grow, and ultimately make it in to your meal, Yuck! Also, it indicates a poor fitting glaze to the ceramic body, which will ultimately weaken the whole piece, making it easier to break.

Another example would be some of the pottery that has an almost metallic look to it. This is often created by "overloading" the glaze recipe with metallic colorants, some of which are classified as "heavy metals", which can quite often leach out of the glaze. This frequently occurs when you have food that contains high acidity, such as orange juice, salsa, etc. and can over time leave a tell-tale sign of the glaze discoloring. Where do you think that the color is going?

Recently my wife purchased a very nice looking coffee mug from a very popular bookseller that was made from a low-fire clay body. Frequently the glazes that are use on low-fire pottery don't fuse to the clay body itself, and consequently the glaze is randomly chipping away from the mug itself. Can you imagine drinking a glaze shard?

These are just a couple examples of just how complicated the issue of glaze durability is. If you are interested in learning more about this I have provided a link to the website for Frog Pond Pottery. John Hesselberth of Frog Pond Pottery has written an excellent book titled "Mastering Cone 6 Glazes" which specifically deals with the issue of glaze durability. He is widely regarded as an authority on this issue and has written numerous articles in trade magazines dealing with this very complex issue.

<http://www.frogpondpottery.com/glazestability/undglazestab.html>