

Soup's On! or, How To Have a Mold and Eat It Too!

She's gone mad, you're thinking ... first it was the pantyhose thing, and now she's babbling about eating soup, but bear with me a moment more, and all will be revealed!

Most fusing artists we know love to experiment with molds and in the interest of "full disclosure" we felt you should know that ANY steel or stainless steel item (bowl, cup, plate, cylinder, etc.) is a mold in disguise looking for a fusing artist! This is where the soup comes in, because I believe in having my mold and eating it too! Next time you venture forth to do the weekly shopping, keep an eye out for your favorite soup, because the can will do nicely as a mold long after you have enjoyed the soup! Now there are a few simple "rules" which you will need to know in order to make the right choices, so take note!

First, you'll need to take along a magnet when you go shopping because you'll have to make sure you have an honest to goodness steel can and the best way to do that, is to test it with a magnet. So grab a magnet off the fridge and take it with you to the grocery store. If the magnet sticks to the can and you like the contents, then you're ready for meal and a homemade mold! The best part about this exercise is, that you'll have to eat the contents of your steel can first, so please, be my guest! And, if you haven't already read the article entitled "How to Apply Kiln Wash to Metal Molds" now would be the ideal time ... there's nothing like feeding the body AND the mind!

Next, let's clean that can thoroughly and peel off that paper label too! It's time to get to work! The first thing to do is to drill two or three small holes (about 1/8 inch or smaller) in the bottom of your can, evenly spaced around the edge. This will allow air to circulate throughout the mold. Now it's time to heat your can to about 450F and follow the instructions on how to apply kiln wash to a metal mold. As an alternative to heating your can in a conventional oven or kiln, you can heat it with a blow dryer, but this process is generally a great deal slower, as you will only be able to heat portions of the can at one time. Once your can is nice and hot, you will remove it from the oven or kiln (with gloved hands) and set it on a heat proof surface while you apply at least four coats of kiln wash/primer. You can apply it with a brush, or a spray bottle. If the primer isn't sticking to the can, it may need more heating. Just return the can to the oven or kiln and repeat the process until the can is well coated with kiln wash/primer. Let the primer dry thoroughly! This may take some time and you can set the can back in the oven, or kiln, (which you have since turned "OFF") and allow it to slowly cool down and dry out. ** Lass Tip – if you want a quick and easy way out, wrap the can with Bullseye ThinFire Paper and secure the paper at the open end of the can with some high temperature wire (which you can find on our Materials and Supplies Page) **

Now here comes the easy part ... find a piece of glass and decide if you want to cut it into a particular shape (square, oval, circle, triangle, etc.). Once the kiln has

returned to room temperature (if you used it to heat your can) and your can is dry and cool, you want to turn the can upside down on the kiln shelf (which I trust, has also been adequately coated with primer) and lay the piece of glass you have chosen on top. If you want a balanced-looking piece, you will want to center the glass on the base of the can (using a ruler, if you feel so inclined). Otherwise, if you want a more random, abstract look, you will set the glass on the can in any way that pleases you, and resolve to be pleasantly surprised by the results!

You are then going to close the kiln and begin firing, as you would any other fusing project (at a rate of roughly 500-600 degrees per hour) until you reach slumping temperatures in the range of about 1250-1325F. You will need to keep an eye on your project at this stage as timing is critical. You are watching to see the side of the glass begin to droop down the side of the can. Don't rush this, it WILL happen and it's best to "hold" or "soak" your glass at the temperature at which you begin to notice the glass droop, than to increase the temperature. The temperature at which the glass begins to move will depend on the glass you are using and the number of layers in your piece (you CAN use more than one; just make sure you are using COMPATIBLE fusing glass). Once you are pleased with the droop and the way the glass has moved around your can (uh, I mean mold), you will turn off the kiln and flash vent back to 1000F. ** Lass Tip – you DON'T want to let the glass droop to the point where it is hugging the can too closely on the sides, as this will make it very difficult to remove the glass from the can! You are looking for a gentle droop, much like that of a well starched handkerchief! **

Once the temperature has reached 1000, close the lid and walk away. The annealing process has begun and it is important NOT to peek! Peeking, even through your peep hole, can create enough of a temperature change inside the kiln to cause stress fractures in your work!

Once the kiln has returned to room temperature, you may open the lid and marvel at your creation! There may still be some residual heat in the glass and the can, so before you pick it up, check it first! Gently twist the can while carefully pulling it away from the glass. Your piece will need to be washed thoroughly to remove any kiln primer/wash residue. ** Lass Tip – our Wash Away solution makes it fast and easy to remove stubborn primer residue and can be found on our Materials and Supplies page **

You should now have a lovely and/or uniquely shaped vase or bowl, perfect for a candle, or potpourri or flowers or anything else you can come up with! The can is recyclable, and can be used again, or sent to the curb with the trash! Happy fusing!