

# squak mountain stone

NATURAL BEAUTY, REDEFINED

## MAINTAINING SQUAK MOUNTAIN STONE



### DISCLAIMER

Squak Mountain Stone™ composites, like other stone and cement-based materials, have inherent characteristics that may make it more susceptible to staining, scratching or etching than plastic-resin products; but with proper sealing, care and maintenance by the owner, these can be mitigated. Squak Mountain Stone™ also has a porous nature to it, which may increase the chances for bacterial growth on the surface, if not regularly cleaned and maintained.

This maintenance guide is to provide homeowners and users with tips on how to get the most out of their ever-changing Squak Mountain Stone products, and is not intended to provide a strategy for how to keep Squak Mountain Stone looking “as good as new forever.” All in all, frequency of maintenance is subjective and voluntary: you do as much or as little as you like and gratefully live with the consequences.

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## CLEANING

Although the factory-applied sealing system can withstand deterioration from ultraviolet rays and household acids, it is still a good idea to not use harsh cleaners on Squak Mountain Stone. Many typical household cleaners contain ammonia, acid or bleach. These products can dull and actually etch Squak Mountain Stone if they were able to get through the factory sealer.

To ensure that the sealer will last as long as possible, always be sure to use pH-neutral products to clean. Many stains or blemishes can be wiped up with a simple damp sponge and liquid dish soap.



*Its time to re-seal when the counter darkens in areas after being wiped down with a wet sponge.*

## STAIN RESISTANCE

The factory sealer is stain resistant for up to 24 hours. However, Squak Mountain Stone is not "stain-proof". If liquids, such as coffee, wine, or oils are left on Squak Mountain Stone for a long period of time, a stain can develop. This is due to the sealer's ability to let the stone "breathe". Therefore, as good maintenance would dictate, all spills and dirt should be wiped up promptly. See the last page of this bulletin for a quick step by step process to remove or reduce the appearance of stains.

All oils and acids should be wiped up immediately and not allowed to sit for too long on the surface as they may eventually degrade the sealer and leave a stain or etch. Oils can penetrate through pin holes in the surface leaving a difficult to remove dark spot.



*Even with a sealer, a puddle of olive oil was left on the sample counter for several hours and migrated through the pin-holes on the surface. Using a poultice to wick the oil out may remove the stain altogether or at least lessen it.*

## ETCHING

Etching occurs when an acidic liquid comes into contact with an alkaline solid. The chemical reaction that occurs leaves a bleached, rough patch where the two materials made contact. Common acids found in today's homes are citrus juices, vinegars and beauty products that contain salicylic acids or alpha-hydroxy acids.

The factory applied sealer provides limited protection against etching from common household acids. However, even if an acid hasn't etched the stone, it may have degraded the sealer a bit. You will know the sealer is thinned out if the etch darkens immediately when wiped with a wet sponge. See the top picture on this page. When the stone has been etched, the color can't be restored but the etching can be reduced by lightly sanding the area with a fine grit sandpaper and recoating the area with Top Coat. The etched area can also be darkened in by rubbing in olive oil into the area and "staining" it.

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## CHIPS

Edges can chip. So be careful with pots and pans. Consider “easing” any edges in high traffic areas by rounding them over with sandpaper. This will help deflect any direct shots. If you do chip an edge you can do one of two things:

If you have the chipped piece, it can be glued back to the surface with any multipurpose glue. Or you can remove the chip and sand it with a 100 grit sand paper, to smooth it out and blend it in as much as you desire with the rest of the surface. Then re-seal the exposed area with Top Coat.

Resist, if you can, the temptation to try to “rebuild” the chipped out area with grout or epoxy. 10 times out of 10 it ends up looking like you tried to repair it, which makes it more noticeable than it might have been if it was simply sanded to blend in and re-sealed.



This “chip” was caused by repeatedly smacking the edge of the counter with a hammer. This is a good example for why we don't recommend you hammer on your countertop.



This same area is softened up by hand sanding it with 100 grit sandpaper. It should be re-sealed (not shown), to protect it and help it match the rest of the countertop.

## FINAL THOUGHTS: WHAT “NOT” TO DO

**Never pull off something that is stuck to the surface.** Always try to soften it with warm, soapy water. Once softened, use a soft sponge to wipe clean. If it does not soften or clean up with warm, soapy water, then use a razor blade/handy blade to gently scrape the glue from the surface. This will remove some of the sealer but will reduce damaging the surface. Refer to the last page for how to repair the sealer if this happens.

**Avoid putting hot things directly onto the countertops.** Why? First, it could heat up the acrylic sealer and make it smelly. Second, if hot enough, it can melt the acrylic sealer completely, forcing you to sand & reseal that area. And third, if done often and in the same area, the heat from a pan can start to dry out that area of the slab, leaving a shadow or “crazing” - tiny little cracks. None of these are the end of the world, but if you don't want to deal with them, don't put your hot pan on the countertop. In a pinch, if you have to, a hot pan isn't going to do anything detrimental to your slab.

**Don't cut directly on the countertop.** It scratches the sealer. It can dull your knives. A scratch in the sealer is not the end of the world and can be easily fixed. Re-sharpening your knives, however, can be harder. Use a cutting board.

**Don't stress out.** This product is so easy to live with it. The things that happen naturally to all countertops (chips, stains, dings, dents and cuts) blend in so well with Squak Mountain Stone that its not really worth worrying about if they will happen. Keep the sealer in tact as much as you can, use a wax if you want more protection and just enjoy. There are more important things to worry about than fussing over your countertops.



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## REAL EXAMPLE: REMOVING AND REDUCING THE APPEARANCE OF STAINS

This slab was used in a store as a demonstration piece. It was neglected and subject to abuse from the sales staff so that the "aging" process could be accelerated. The slab was then returned to us to be studied and restored. The following is a quick and easy process used to reduce the appearance of the stains (and scratches) on the counter. Oil stains may not be completely or even partially removed doing this, because they are usually much deeper.

Before the stain removal process, the entire slab was scrubbed down with a steel wool pots & pans cleaning pad (impregnated with a baking soda based cleaner). This was done in order to make sure the rings were *really* stains. The photo on the right shows the rings that were still left on the counter after this thorough scrubbing.



**Step 1**—Using light to normal hand pressure, sand the stain and a bit of the surrounding area, in a gentle circular motion. Keep sanding the area until you just start to see a bit of the color of the slab in the dust. This means you've removed the old sealer and a small layer of the countertop, where the stain is. If you still see some of the stain, repeat. Resist sanding the stone its self too much or you will get a lighter patch where the old stain was.



**Step 2**—Wipe up the dust with a tack cloth or a damp paper towel. If you've used a damp paper towel, let the slab dry out for an hour. Once its clean and dry, wipe on a light coat of Top Coat with a cellulose sponge.

**The Final Product**—After the sealer cured, most of the stains are completely gone and the ones that remained have been reduced. You can leave it as is or apply your favorite countertop wax finish.

As compared to using a poultice (which can take up to 48 hours of wicking and another day or two of drying out the moisture in the slab) this method is easier, faster and just as effective.

Use this process for also removing scratches or fixing the sealer when its been damaged by acidic materials or other things.

