

General Safety

All vitreous enamel products are glass of one form or another. Care should be taken not to ingest them. Enamels can contain cadmium, selenium, barium, antimony and arsenic and may be lead bearing. These products, however, can be used quite safely if you adhere to the following housekeeping and hygiene rules and treat the materials wisely.

- Keep products out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep your work area neat and clean. Wipe your enameling space with a wet cloth rather than sweeping or vacuuming which will just re-circulate any enamel dust.
- Use your enamels in a well ventilated work area. Wear an appropriate respirator (one made for dangerous particulate matter) and whenever possible use ventilation that pulls the dust away from you.
- Wash your hands prior to eating. Do not eat, drink or smoke when you are working with enamels. You do not want to ingest or inhale enamel dust.
- Keep your clothing clean. Wear clothes made of natural materials around the kiln. Man made fabrics will melt onto you if enough heat reaches them.
- Wear heat resistant gloves when putting a piece in the kiln. Long sleeve tops help as well. You can cut the toe out of a long sock and put it on your arm as an alternative.

Enamels on Food Contact Surfaces

It is not recommended to use enamels for food contact surfaces. Although Thompson lead-free enamels are very acid resistant and do not contain lead, their final food safe properties may depend on enamel application and firing. Therefore, each item should be individually tested to determine whether or not it can pass current F.D.A. regulations. This process, however, would probably be too costly for the average artist.

The vintage Thompson Lead-bearing and Soyer Enamels contain lead and are not suitable for food surfaces.

Wrapped food items may be considered safe.