



MATT FINISHES IN THE KITCHEN

Over the past few years, we have seen a drastic move away from gloss finishes to matt and then ultra-matt finishes in the kitchen space. Matt offers a highly sophisticated finish with low reflectivity. The colours are intense yet allow the space to embrace darker shades without the space feeling dark and dingy. There are various ways to achieve this look but predominantly it is via melamine or high-pressure laminate. It is important to know that these products are available in a range of qualities each offering different pro's and con's.

One of the big draws to matt finishes is the idea that you can't see fingerprints on the material. This is not true. Dark colours traditionally show more finger marking than light and matt materials are known for picking up fingermarks especially if they have been conducted by anything greasy. Most matt materials for kitchen use do claim a reduction in finger marking. It is vital that you understand that this resistance to marking varies and is dependent on the make and quality of the material, the colour of the material and the technology behind it. Most materials on the market offer a reduction or resilience to finger marking rather than being fingerprint proof.

From a wear and tear perspective products vary according to the technology behind them. Most are supplied with a protective film to protect the matt finish in transport and installation. The matt finish



itself comes in a laminate format which is then adhered to a substrate like MDF. Some products like those supplied by PG Bison, Niemann SA and Seno are already fabricated onto board by the supplier but others like those supplied by companies like Max on Top and Novodecor are supplied in laminate format allowing the kitchen company or board merchant to upgrade the laminate to its board-based substrate. The final finishing of the board is vital. Matt finishes can be unforgiving to manufacturing errors, particularly to edging errors. It is vital that the company doing the upgrading is well versed at working with the laminate in question and is skilled at the edging process to ensure that the finished matt product is not spoiled by an overly visible glue line where it has been edged. The use of quality edging that matches or compliments the materials, applied by a skilled edge band operator is important. While most matt finishes claim to be scratch resistant few really are. Some of the more expensive matt laminates are scratch resistant though, and if the material has nanotechnology then minor scratches and abrasions can actually be removed through the application of heat.





Each matt product will have its own recommended care and maintenance guidelines and it is vital that you follow those issued by the material supplier. However, as a guideline the following applies:

- Any chemical spills or spills of abrasive product should be removed immediately and then the surface washed with warm soapy water and a soft cloth
- Only use a soft, lint-free cloth to clean
- Clean in an up and down motion and not side to side or circular as you disrupt the grain of the material.
- A mild soapy solution and a well wrung cloth is the best option – excessive water should never be applied to the material or be allowed to sit on the material.
- Never use scrubbing brushes, scourers, or scrapers
- Name brand window cleaners or cleaning agents supplied by the material supplier with a soft cloth are good for removing drying marks or smears.
- Some materials can accommodate a harsher clean and in fact recommend a deep clean every now and again to maintain the colour and texture of the material. This type of cleaning should only be undertaken if the material supplier's cleaning guidelines recommend it, and these instructions should be followed to the letter.

From a design perspective matt colours work well when combined with woodgrains or when offset by another colour creating a two or three tone kitchen. For darker colours it does help to have a larger space but given good natural lighting or well-planned kitchen lighting the darker colours can grace any space. The aesthetic lends itself to a handleless design which echoes the sleek look of the matt finish. This can be achieved through a gola rail, push to open mechanisms or by lengthening your door and drawer facias to create a natural overlap grip. As the matt look that is presently popular is achieved through laminates and melamines the product is not suited to paneled doors or doors with a decorative detail. For this aesthetic a satin finished duco paint would be used.

The matt trend is going to be with us for a while and if done correctly will create a timeless look and feel for your kitchen. However, it is vital that you do your homework and know where the laminate being used is coming from and its quality so that you are not disappointed when you get the finished product and find it marks and scratches.

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