



THE FACTS - FINGERPRINT RESISTANT FINISHES

With the rise in popularity of matt finishes in the kitchen we have seen advances in technology and the introduction to the market of the 'fingerprint resistant surface'. While the idea of this in a kitchen is very enticing, we need to understand exactly what is meant by 'fingerprint resistant' and how does it work to ensure consumers have realistic expectations of what it can deliver.

Fingerprint-resistant finishes have had advanced surface treatments designed to minimise visible marks from oils and dirt left behind by fingerprints. These finishes create a micro-textured surface, featuring microscopic peaks and valleys. When touched, only the tips of the peaks make contact, causing contaminants to settle in the valleys and remain less visible.

In principle there are definite benefits for using a fingerprint resistant material in high-touch areas, such as kitchen countertops and cabinet doors and drawers. Unlike traditional surfaces, which easily show smudges and fingerprints, fingerprint-resistant materials minimize the need for daily cleaning. This is particularly enticing if your kitchen will be a high traffic area and if you entertain a lot.

It is important to note that not all fingerprint-resistant finishes are equal. As with all things, you get quality differences, and the price is often an indicator of the quality. Here it is vital that you, as a consumer, are realistic. A high price material and a

lower priced version will never perform the same or have the same long-term capabilities.

You can get fingerprint-resistant properties in a variety of materials from melamine to high pressure and compact laminates, and wrap. These are typically treated with advanced acrylic resins and undergo an electron beam curing process. This innovative technology hardens the coating, resulting in a unique micro-structured surface that effectively resists fingerprints. Some are then treated with a specialised coating like low-coefficient friction coatings and antimicrobial finishes that enhance hygiene. The technology behind the coatings and manufacturing process will translate directly to the cost with the materials with the best research and results usually being the highest priced.

Thanks to the electron beam curing process, these finishes exhibit exceptional strength and durability. They are resistant (not impervious to) scratches, abrasions, and weathering, making them ideal for kitchen environments. Additionally, some of the more advanced and expensive finishes can self-heal from superficial micro-scratches, enhancing their longevity.



Maintaining fingerprint-resistant surfaces is straightforward but it is here that we see consumers make the most errors. Incorrect cleaning can damage the surface, removing the protective coating and causing permanent damage to the finish. This ultimately will remove the fingerprint resistant quality. For routine cleaning, warm water and a microfiber cloth are usually sufficient. For tougher stains, non-abrasive household cleaners can be safely used. It's advisable to avoid harsh solvents and abrasive tools to maintain the integrity of the surface. Many manufacturers encourage cleaning with the grain of the material and in one direction – avoiding circular or backwards and forwards cleaning actions. You can also get cleaning kits or products from some suppliers specifically designed for the product's maintenance and longevity.



If you are interested in a fingerprint resistant finish you must consider the following:

- Does it suite your budget – this is one of the higher priced kitchen finishes.
- Who does the cleaning in the home – it is vital that whoever is doing the cleaning clearly understands what they need to do so your expensive finish will not be ruined.
- Does it suit your lifestyle – while this product is hard wearing it is expensive so you don't want a scenario where kids are bumping into it or climbing up onto it or where it might be subject to abuse
- Does it suit the way you cook – fingerprint resistant does not mean that you will not see marks if you have cooking oils and cooking residue on your hands when you open the cupboards or drawers. It means resistance to natural dirt and oils on your hands. If you cook with a lot of fats and



oils, do a lot of frying, baking etc you will still see marks if you do not wash your hands before opening the cupboards.

- Do you want to use a darker colour palette – darker colours are naturally more prone to showing finger-marks no matter what the material.

In short, fingerprint-resistant finishes are gorgeous and promote low maintenance but they are not miracle workers. Have realistic expectations of the product, dependent on the cost you paid. No finish is going to look amazing if you touch it with hands soaked in cooking oil or straight after you have handled the streaky bacon. If you clean it correctly it will give you a long term, low maintenance, elegant finish that will make your kitchen take pride of place in your home.



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