



TIMBER IN YOUR KITCHEN

Timber is a much loved material for the kitchen but at the Kitchen Specialists Association we find that lack of information on the part of the consumer and lack of communication from the kitchen company leads to a large portion of the complaints we receive. Timber is a living material. There is a lack of knowledge about how this will affect the manufacturing, design and maintenance of a kitchen.

Whether you opt for solid timber or veneer the product originates from a tree. When harvested and milled each piece of timber will be unique. As such getting uniformity of colour and grain is very difficult. Planks generated from one tree can vary in patterning and colour depending on what that tree has been through in its life. It is vital for consumers to realize that should they need that uniformity of colour and grain it will take the timber company time, effort and expense to match various boards to ensure continuity of the grain. It is very important that should a client want this uniformity they inform the kitchen company from the get-go as the matching process will drastically affect the cost of the kitchen as well as the time it takes to manufacture the kitchen.

Matching colour is also a difficult process because as timber ages or is treated its colour changes. In many cases the KSA is called to site on a dispute where a cupboard door has been remade and

the colour is not identical to those doors that have already been installed. With time the new cupboard door will be exposed to light and other elements and will change colour to become more like the other doors but it is next to impossible to get the same colouration immediately. When the timber needs to be treated it can also be difficult to get an exact match as each board of timber may differ slightly in its porosity and will absorb the treatment differently. Getting an exact match takes time and often several attempts.

A timber kitchen door is no different to any other timber furniture in the home. It needs care and maintenance to survive and look its best. Consumers tend to forget that what they have in their kitchen needs the same treatment as their mahogany dining room table or their teak TV unit particularly if they have a veneer kitchen. It is easy to forget that a veneer is a natural product and not man-made. Although the timber undergoes a lot of production to become a veneer (a thin piece of wood bonded to a substrate) it is still a natural product and requires care and maintenance. Access to good timber is becoming increasingly difficult and more costly; and as such it is vital that if you are going to outlay the extra funds to have a timber kitchen you follow the manufacturer's care and maintenance instructions to the letter. Wax based products or oils should be



used to care for the timber and water should be avoided. The timber should be polished or oiled at least once a month. Exposure to excessive sun and moisture should be minimal to avoid warping and cracking. It is possible to have your timber treated and sealed. If this is done by a professional with the correct products the amount of maintenance will be drastically reduced and the longevity drastically increased.

When it comes to installing timber tops into your kitchen the same rules apply as with a door. As it is impossible to make tops out of one piece of timber strips of timber are bonded together to create the solid top. Once again we find the problem of matching grain and colour and customers must be prepared to wait longer and pay more if the manufacturer is going to match the grain and keep colour variegation to a minimum. Your request for this special timber selection must be done in writing and be made clear to the manufacturer when the tops are ordered.

Timber tops can be sealed or left 'raw'. If opting to seal them it is important to note that fine scratches will appear in the sealant with daily use. This is unavoidable but scratches can be made less visible by cleaning your tops with a waxed based product like Mr. Min. If opting to leave your tops 'raw' they basically become a large butcher's block surface.

They will scratch and absorb stains but this should become part of the rustic beauty of the tops and should be viewed in this way. Installing timber tops is a very specialized procedure and should only be undertaken by trained professionals. If not installed correctly the tops can quickly bow, warp and split.

The variegation that comes to timber from nature is something that should be celebrated rather than hidden, the changes in patternation, the knots; all these have a beauty of their own which celebrates nature and should be the reason we choose to work with a natural product rather than a man-made option. Timber brings a warmth to a kitchen that no other product can but should be used with knowledge as to its unique qualities and maintenance requirements. The current trend of combining timber with a neutral high gloss or matt finish has become particularly popular and gives a modern, yet classic clean line feel. The most important thing is to ensure that a professional company with experience in timber and the sealing and maintenance thereof is selected to make the product for you.

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