



It's a glass act



glassfacts

There are certain questions that Glen Lock from Glassact, a bespoke glass manufacturer, is regularly asked by customers about glass worktops. Here, he answers these common queries:

How big can the glass be?

We have two maximum sizes: 3,200mm x 1,600mm and 2,950mm x 2,200mm. This allows for long worktops of up to 3,200mm, or curved worktops that can go around a corner without the need for a join, this size can also be used for wider island units.

How long after ordering can delivery be expected?

Our normal lead time for complete installations is three to four weeks. This includes templating and site survey, which is normally done one week from order. Supply-only lead time is 10 to 15 working days.

How do you clean colour-coated glass?

You can clean the glass surface with any good glass cleaner.

Are glass worktops strong?

Glass itself is a structurally very strong product, combined with installation it would take some considerable force or impact to break it in conventional use.

Can I drill holes in the glass?

No, all holes or cut-outs must be made prior to installation and cannot be altered after manufacture.

Will the colours fade?

No, the special paint we use will not fade and will stay bright and vibrant for life. The paint is also unaffected by steam and heat.

Colour-coated glass has added a new dimension to contemporary kitchen surfaces, exciting both the domestic and commercial marketplaces. We asked **GLEN LOCK**, from Glassact, what's so special about this alternative option.

Hotel owners and restaurateurs can see the hygiene and durability qualities of a glass-topped work surface – as well as its aesthetic value – and so too have homeowners looking for something a bit different for their own kitchens.

Norwich-based Glassact, a subsidiary of Contract Glass, has recognised this demand and can produce made-to-measure worktops and splashbacks to suit any kitchen.

"We've been producing glass worktops for the last four years, but it's only in the last couple of years that it's started to become more popular," explained Glen Lock, a sales advisor at Glassact. "We're one of only two companies in the country who manufacture this type of glass product, so we go all over to fit them in people's houses."

Recognition of this modern kitchen feature was recently achieved for the company when it was approached by ITV programme "60 Minute Makeover" to produce some contemporary, black glass splashbacks for one of its episodes.

The makeover took place in Greenhithe, where the team helped a husband and his two daughters surprise their mum with a home makeover. "A team of our guys went down to Kent for the day and the crew filmed them fitting the splash backs," explained Glen. "The show went out on September 24 and we've had lots of calls from other media and customers to find out more about the product."

Glen said the main reason people go for the glass option is because of the way it looks, but there are many other benefits. "It's a very hygienic surface," he said. "Glass is a

non-porous material, so it doesn't harbour germs, and it's easy to clean because it's so smooth. The edges are watertight, too, so it doesn't need any sealant, which is a problem area for bacteria."

Another practical benefit is that it can be cut to any shape, making it suitable for kitchens of all shapes and sizes.

"We've invested a lot of money into keeping up with the latest technology in glass cutting. We use state-of-the-art, water-jet cutting machinery, which is completely computer controlled, with the designs programmable from CAD drawings."

Water at a pressure of 60,000psi is

pumped continuously into a supersonic water jet stream, making it possible to cut through composites such as stone and glass. It basically erodes through the material.

Working at maximum capacity, the machine can turn around more than 100 intricate pieces a day, and is capable of moving extremely quickly from job to job, which means Glassact can produce the bespoke pieces that individual customers want, as well as multiple orders.

These impressive bits of equipment cost about £1million each, and Glassact has two of them, doubling its productivity and enabling them to be very competitive when it comes to pricing.

The glass itself is actually clear, with the desired colouring painted underneath to give the impression of coloured glass. "We can create any colour you want," explained Glen. "Customers can bring in a sample and we'll send it away and get the paint matched exactly. We've also introduced glitter recently, which really sparkles if you have down lighting under wall units."

Another recent development is the option of having images put under the glass – including your own photographs – adding a real personal touch to a kitchen.

One of the main questions Glen is asked by customers when considering a glass worktop is whether it scratches. "I always tell them that it's glass, so yes it will scratch," he said. "But as long as you're careful, it shouldn't be a problem, plus there are polishing kits available that can get out any small scratches."



CUTTING EDGE: The latest technology in water-jet cutting machinery allows Glassact to produce bespoke products.

■ For more information about Glassact worktops visit www.contractglass.co.uk, or call 01603 763076.