

FUMING VELVET RAKU & SLIP RESIST NAKED RAKU



RAKU HISTORY

Raku Pottery was developed in Japan in the early 1500's as the Ceremonial Tea Ware of the Zen Buddhist Masters. The word Raku signifies enjoyment of freedom. It was preferred by the Masters because of its humility, tasteful unpretentiousness, simple naturalness, and its deliberate avoidance of luxury...all very important to the Zen philosophy.

Seldom watertight, Raku is actually a very poor choice for a casserole or a flower vase; it is pottery without utility or function. It is a low-fired ware, often made with lead based glazes (although none of ours are lead based), and will only hold water for a short period of time.

Raku must be approached with a different criterion in mind, like a painting or a symphony. According to the Zen Masters, its elusive, subtle, yet vigorous beauty is Raku's only worth. It is valued because it is believed that the Spirit of the Maker is embodied in the form and revealed at the foot, which is traditionally left naked (unglazed). It is believed that if we are alert to ourselves, in contemplating the Raku form, we will recognize in it our own Spirit and Meaning.

RAKU PROCESS

Raku Pottery is earth derived...the firing process is unique and daring. In traditional Raku, a once-fired (bisque), unglazed pot is first coated with glaze and placed into kiln. The kiln is then heated to about 1,800° F at a fast rate. It is this first tremendous heat shock which often causes a pot to explode or to develop large "body cracks" in the clay walls. If the vessel survives this shock, almost immediate metamorphosis begins. The entire vessel glows like red-hot coal, and the glaze melts into a sheet of liquid glass.

At this point, the pot must endure a second shock as the potter uses tongs to remove the glowing mass from the inferno. As the cool air outside the kiln hits the glowing vessel, the severe temperature change produces the cracks in the glaze. These cracks are highly prized as characteristic of traditional Raku Pottery -- they are the "proof-marks" of the earthenware's having survived this dramatic trial by fire.

Upon leaving the kiln, the glowing pot is placed directly into an airtight container ("reduction chamber") filled with leaves, sawdust, or the like, which turns the naked clay foot black and highlights the valuable cracks in the glaze.

As if all this were not enough, the vessel (often still over 1,000° F) may then be plunged into cold water to halt the process.

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In our process today, we differ from traditional Raku processes in the following ways:

1) Fuming VS Glazing

Glaze material (glass-forming) is not applied to the pot. We are using a fuming mixture which interacts with the clay surface and in a hot reduction atmosphere, produces a myriad of “velvety” colors. Also, the pot, when removed from the fire, is placed on top of the combustible materials, not buried under them.

2) Slip Resist

A thick slip is applied to the surface of the bare (naked) pot. During the firing, the slip develops unique microcracks which allow the fire & smoke to interact with the surface of the pot, leaving behind intriguing dark signature lines on a white (untouched by flame or smoke) surface. The slip itself is easily removed after the firing and reveals these wonderful, unpredictable patterns.

3) And lastly, we fire to a lower temperature than our traditional raku.

Fuming mixture

Copper oxide	90
Alkaline frit (1324)	10
+ bentonite	10
+ wallpaper paste	1

The ware is removed from the kiln at 1688 – 1832 degrees F.