Firing Glass in a Ceramic Kiln
How to use an L&L Ceramic Kiln with a DynaTrol to Fire Glass

BASIC IDEAS

Glass is not as forgiving as clay when fired in a kiln. Temperatures and firing times must be more precise; as such firing glass requires special considerations when fusing and slumping in a pottery kiln.

Using a kiln sitter with cones is a difficult process when fusing and slumping glass and will not be discussed here. The following instructions address how to use a DynaTrol digital controlled pottery kiln when fusing and slumping glass. Glass casting is a special process and is not covered by the following information.

Pottery kilns heat from the side elements where as glass kilns heat from the lid element and side element. In most glass kilns the lid element provides 70% of the heat and the side elements provide 30% of the heat. The lid element throws heat down in a uniform manner across the kiln shelf. The side element is only there to adjust for the height of the kiln.

A pottery kiln heats from the sides toward the center. Using a standard glass firing sequence in a pottery kiln will cause the glass pieces on the outer edges of the kiln shelf to fuse long before the glass pieces in the center of the kiln shelf. If firing a large piece of glass the outer edges will fuse quickly and trap air bubbles in the glass and by the time the center of the piece reaches fusing temperature the outer edges will be over fired and may become distorted and thin.

The number of stacked shelves (amount of furniture) will impact the firing of the kiln. Kiln furniture absorbs heat before the glass absorbs heat causing what is referred to a heat steal. Also impacting glass firing in a pottery kiln is the size of the kiln plus if the kiln is made of 3 inch brick will also affect the firing. Glass kilns tend to be shorter in height than potter kilns and are usually made of 2 ½ inch brick or refractory fiber board or blanket.

With side elements, kiln furniture, size of the kiln and brick thickness you must fire slow in a pottery kiln when firing glass. If you fire too fast you will have an over fire plus you may also thermoshock the glass causing it to break. If you cool too fast you will thermoshock the glass causing it to break.

The following fusing sequences are to be used as a starting point from which you will develop your own firing sequence for successful firing of your projects. The sized of your kiln and how you load the furniture may require refining the sequence below.

You would use the same firing sequence for small jewelry pieces as well as large platters and bowls.

On the left of the DynaTrol digital controller is a yellow section labeled "VARY-FIRE". This feature has 6 user programs each user program has 8 segments. A segment permits the artist to input firing sequences with a specified ramp rate in degrees per hour, a soak temperature, and a soak time. These three items comprise a segment. You select the number of segments needed for your firing sequence.

Simple firings like jewelry and small plates and bowls you should be able to obtain good results with the use of 2 segments.

If you are loading the kiln with multiple shelf levels or a single shelf you would use the 3 zone feature of your kiln to obtain uniform heating.

The assumption is made that you already know how to safely and correctly operate your DynaTrol digital controlled kiln. The following information is provides a guide line for adjusting your firing from pottery to glass.

The following information is not to replace the instructions provided in your kiln owner's manual. Refer to the owner's

manual for complete information on the operation and features of the DynaTrol digital controller.

After loading your kiln you would set the DynaTrol digital controller in the following manner.

NOTE: All degrees listed below are degrees F. If you want to use degrees C you will need to set the controller for degrees C and convert the degrees F below to degrees C for you firing.

The firing schedule below is for use with Bullseye, Uroboros, or Spectrum Glass. It is not for use with float or borosilicate glass.

FUSING GLASS

1. If the kiln has an off/on switch, turn the kiln on.

2. The kiln should indicate it is in the idle mode by flashing "IdLE", the number of zones and the temperature inside the kiln.

3. Press the "Enter Prog" key in the VARY-FIRE section. You will see the display flashing between "USER" and a number between 1 and 6. At this point you want to choose which USER program you want to use. You can set USER 1 for a fusing project and you can set USER 2 for a slumping project, as an example.

4. Press the number 1 on the key pad, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have chosen to use "USER 1"

5. The display will now flash SEGS and a number. It is asking how many segments you want to use for your firing.

6. Press the number 2 on the key pad, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have chosen to use 2 segments for your firing.

7. The display will now flash RA 1 and a number. It is asking for the ramp rate in degrees per hour for the first segment.

8. Pressing the number keys enter 150, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to heat at 150 degrees per hour. This means that after 1 hour the kiln will be at room temperature plus 150

KILNS BUILT TO LAST

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degrees, after 2 hours it will be at room temperature plus 300 degrees, and so forth.

9. The display will now flash °F 1 and a number. It is asking for the soak temperature for the first segment.

10. Pressing the number keys enter 1450, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to heat to 1450 °F. This means that the kiln will heat at a rate of 150 degrees per hour and go to 1450 degrees, taking roughly 9.66 hours to do so.

11. The display will now flash HLd 1 and a number with a decimal point 2 digits to the left, You may have a number which looks like 12.30 or 1.20 or 0.20. The decimal point separates minutes from hours. Hours to the left of the decimal point and minutes to the right of the decimal point. It is asking for the soak time   period for the first segment.

12 - Pressing the number keys enter 15, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to soak for 15 minutes. On review of the program you would see: 0.15. You have entered the first segment.

13. The display will now flash RA 2 and a number. It is asking for the ramp rate in degrees per hour for the second segment.

14. Pressing the number keys enter 150, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to cool at 150 degrees per hour.

15. The display will now flash °F 2 and a number. It is asking for the soak temperature for the second segment.

16. Pressing the number keys enter 100, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to cool to 100 °F. This means that the kiln will cool at a rate no faster than 150 degrees per hour and go to 100 degrees, taking roughly 14.5 hours to do so.

17. The display will now flash HLd 2 and a number with a decimal point 2 digits to the left, You may have a number which looks like 12.30 or 1.20 or 0.20. The decimal point separates minutes from hours. Hours to the left of the decimal point and minutes to the right of the decimal point. It is asking for the soak time period for the second segment.

18. Pressing the number keys enter 30, then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area. You have instructed the controller to soak for 30 minutes. On review of the program you would see: 0.30

19. The display will now flash ALRM and 9999. It is asking if you want to have an alarm sound when the kiln reaches a particular temperature. The number 9999 instructs the controller NOT to sound any alarm.

20. Press the ENTER button in the number key pad area, with the 9999 number in the display, if you do NOT want an alarm. If you want the controller to sound an alarm notifying you that it has reached a particular temperature enter that temperature number on the key pad and then press the ENTER button in the number key pad area.

21. The display will now display CPL for a few seconds then switch to the IdLE mode. You have entered the second and final segment. The digital controller has the above firing sequence in its memory as USER 1. It will remember this firing sequence even after the kiln is turned off. You can edit and change the firing sequence any time.

22. When the display is in the IdLE mode press the "Recall Prog" button in the VARY FIRE section of the key pad. The display will flash USER and a number. Press the number 1 and then press the "START /STOP" button. The display will briefly show STOP then switch to the IdLE mode. Press the START/STOP button again. The display will show -- ON -- and the controller will start the firing the USER 1 program.

Note: The digital controller does not understand heating or cooling. It only understands what temperature it is at and what temperature it is to go to. Thus it will adjust the firing to go to the destination temperature.

The above glass firing sequence has instructed the kiln to do the following.

Heat at 150 degrees per hour, go to 1450 degrees, stay at that temperature for 15 minutes then cool at 150 degrees per hour, go to 100 degrees and stay at that temperature for 30 minutes then stop firing.

SLUMPING GLASS

To slump glass you will use the same sequence however you must change the soak temperature from 1450 degrees to 1250 degrees, all other values remain the same.

HOW TO CORRECT FOR OVER OR UNDER FIRING WITH THE ABOVE FIRING SEQUENCE

Only change one variable at a time.

1. I suggest that you adjust the soak time not the temperature.

2. If the glass is over fired reduce the soak time by 5 minutes.

3. If the glass is under fired add 5 minutes to the soak time

ANNEALING GLASS

The above firing sequence passes through the annealing temperature so slowly that the glass is annealed. If you want to use a formal annealing cycle you would use 3 segments with the second segment having the annealing soak temperature and soak time in it. The heating and cooling rate would remain the same.

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