

## Concern about Pyrography through Glad™ Press'n Seal®

I first heard about this new trend in gourd crafting being done last summer and right away I was hearing warning bells. Partially due to the fact that I have birds in my house I am very careful about introducing anything that causes fumes in my home. Being concerned about the potential dangers of heating this product I contacted Glad™ for information. I talked this over with a friend of mine, also a gourd artist. We both decided to contact Glad™ along with tape manufacturers on the safety of burning through these materials. The short answer is "It is not recommended!"

The response from Glad™ was pretty much a canned answer... "The concern over heating plastics and migration stems from the use of chemical additives (known as plasticizers) in plastics made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC). GLAD™ does not use any PVC plastics in its products. GLAD™ wraps are safe to use in the microwave."

If you look at the warning on the package it says "Cautions: ...Not for use in conventional or convection ovens, stovetops, toaster ovens or browning units. To prevent wrap from melting, foods high in fat (like bacon) or sugar (like pastry) should not come in contact with plastic wrap in the microwave." When used in a microwave the product is safe because it is not being heated in the same way it would be in a regular home oven. This is why this product is not intended for use in a regular oven. Your wood burning tool is heating the product at 1000 degrees or more, depending on the unit you are using. Keep in mind the average home oven will not let you set a cooking temperature higher than 500 degrees and heats to an average of 900 degrees only in cleaning mode. In information found on the internet when this product was tested by an independent company it was found it tested positive for low levels of both phthalates and BPA. These chemicals leached into foods that were touching the wrap when it was heated in a microwave. So it could also be possible for these chemicals to enter the body if the hot wrap comes in contact with your skin.

For those of you burning through tapes on gourds this is the information we received from Shurtape Technologies™, one of the largest manufacturer/suppliers of tapes. "We do use SBR (styrene-butadiene rubber) in our paper tapes. These could decompose and release styrene (and possibly other substances) when strongly heated. That is nasty stuff, but it would be in small amounts. I would say do not risk it with any tape from any manufacturer. I would not do this in any building without a fume extraction or other protective means. Our tapes are not intended to be heated until they decompose and in doing so, an individual has to assess the risk for themselves and decide if it is something they should or should not do."

Finally this is what we received from 3M™ "Anytime you burn something (whether it is the gourd or any tape) you potentially can generate undesirable compounds. As the combustion process is somewhat random it is impossible for us to predetermine the exact hazardous organic components that could be formed."

So if, like me, you love working on gourds, then you need to keep in mind what you are doing for your health and your family. I think the comment from Shurtape says it the best... "An individual has to assess the risk for themselves and decide if it is something they should or should not do."

If you are going to work with Glad™ Press'n Seal® it is recommended you use graphite paper under the product instead of burning through it. As with any part of working with gourds, safety should be your first step. If you do plan on continuing to burn your designs through this product then please take the proper precautions. A good respirator, able to filter out chemicals and compounds from the air, protective clothing that covers any exposed skin, eye protection and recommended only do this outside,

or in a very well ventilated area. Also I ask you to keep in mind this is a new product on the market, using it for other than it was intended over many years may cause health problems you don't see at first.

All this information may have you wondering about the Pyrography paper being used. I actually tested this paper over 20 years ago for use in laser printers for screen printing. In my testing, I used over 100 different papers, with this one coming out on top. It is called 100% cotton fiber paper, that can handle the heat in a laser printer's fusing unit without bursting into flames, changing shape or releasing chemicals into the air.

I hope you found this information helpful and I would like to thank the AGS for letting me bring this information to your attention. Also would like to thank Gloria Irla-Marlow for her assistance in researching this information.

*All marks are the property of their respective companies.*

Chris Pawlik

Member of the American Gourd Society, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana Gourd Societies, and of the Michigourders

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