

SHINY AND NEW



Decorative pattern-polished walls inside a restaurant kitchen.

Service center aims to make over stainless steel's look

BY CAITLIN TUCKER

Many home improvement or real estate television shows feature a homeowner requesting a high-end kitchen with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. The metal's shiny, polished finish adds modern flair and luxury to any design, but one service center says it's got a lot more to give.

Metals & Services Co., Addison, Ill., plans to refashion stainless steel with its pattern polisher. The company's commitment to innovation derives from founder Harvey Baessler. When his previous employer Jessop Steel went out of business in

1977, Baessler began his own company from his home in Lombard, Ill.

"He was always looking at new machines that would be different in the marketplace," says John Baessler, part owner and CEO of Metals & Services. In the mid-1990s, Harvey Baessler attended Fabtech and was struck by the pattern polish machine. "He bought the floor model because it was the only one in the U.S. at the time," says John Baessler. "He was always the kind of guy that wanted to have something somebody else didn't have."

Attracting customers

Today, Metals & Services is one of a few

companies in the United States that provide pattern-polished steel. However, since purchasing the machine, the company's polished stainless products have yet to break into the American market. "It's very popular in Europe. I've seen it in casinos, cruise ships, restaurants, elevators, tables, airports—even in that movie "The Bourne Identity"; they had it in the morgue," says Baessler. "In the United States, I don't understand, it just hasn't caught on that well."

Nevertheless, he is hopeful the polish will become a popular choice. Metals & Services has had some success selling the product as flooring, for kitchen cabinets and to hospitals. "I have a customer that makes professional race car trailers, and he's considering putting it on the inside of the trailer," says Jayne Baessler, inside sales and marketing manager.

12 Gauge Construction LLC, Waukesha, Wis., recently used the wave pattern in a Libertyville, Ill., restaurant, Chili-U. The general contractor specializes in commercial remodeling and new construction, especially for restaurants. Jayne Baessler says an interior design studio employee was first interested in the pattern polish and informed some architects of its aesthetics. "They passed our name to 12 Gauge Construction, who really liked [the polish]," she says. "And they passed it along to the restaurant owner, who loved it."

Jim Worthington, vice president of construction for 12 Gauge Construction says, "The designer of the restaurant wanted a pattern to the stainless, so I got a hold of Jayne, and she got me their literature and

A 72-inch-wide stainless 304 sheet is being staged to start the polishing process.



provided some big samples of what they can do. Then I presented it to the designer and owner and they selected it.”

Metals & Services’ engineering department helped the designers and contractors through the process. “They were wonderful people to work with,” says Jayne Baessler. “We gave them our best opinion on where to put things because it was new.” Suggestions on which way the pattern should go and where it should be placed were helpful.

Worthington says the pattern was applied in the kitchen, which is visible to guests in the dining area. “So it was used for two purposes,” he says. “One, so it could be clean and meet the health department requirements, and two, so when customers look in the kitchen, they don’t see just a boring, plain wall.” Worthington says the pattern polish is pretty rare, but he has installed it in another restaurant in Milwaukee and would most likely use it again. “It all depends on the owners and designers,” he says, noting its high cost makes them hesitant to buy it.

Adjusted cost

“Customers think it’s expensive,” says John Baessler. Purchasing sheets in smaller quantities for use in homes and smaller design projects is more expensive than larger purchases. “If you’re going to buy mass quantities it can be affordable, like for an appliance maker or larger architecture like stadiums, airports or hospitals,” he continues. “The sheets are always readily available in the 2B finish [at the Metals & Services facility]. We can just take one off and run it through the machine. The time element makes it more economical.”

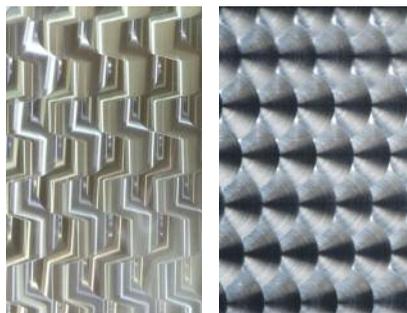
Jayne Baessler agrees, “The main purpose is to mass produce this product for architectural purposes. [Chili-U] is just one small project we did, but it’s made to do so much more,” she says. “They were a starting point for us.”

Metals & Services is not looking for the average homeowner. “We would get those all the time in here,” says John Baessler. “We’re looking for the architects, the appliance makers—people that would want more of this decorative material that is consistent in pattern.”

The pattern polish is available in three styles: circular overlapped round, cross circular wave and longitudinal stripe. “It’s like



Custom fabricated cabinets using stainless 304 stripe pattern.



Left: The stainless 304 wave pattern polish. Right: The stainless 304 circular overlapped round pattern polish. Different lighting can change the appearance of the patterns.

if you go to a suit store and you buy a Sears suit as opposed to a Versace or an Armani,” says John Baessler. “This pattern actually makes people open up their eyes.” Like a man in a good suit, the finish turns heads. “If you’re sitting at a table at an outside restaurant and you see the round pattern, it’s decorative, it’s easy to clean up, it’s not easily scratched,” he says.

“I think with things becoming more modern, this machine will get the United States more up to speed with new architecture that other countries have adapted to,” says Jayne Baessler. “It’s a one-of-a-kind polish. It doesn’t have enough exposure right now for it to really be recognizable.” The finish is durable and more resistant to scratching than a standard stainless finish.

“You can get different gauges,” says John Baessler. “It’s readily available in any sheet made right now in 2B finish. The sheet comes from the mill in 2B or No. 4 finish. Whatever we have on our shelf we can finish.” The pattern polish can be used on all alloys, except hot-roll finish plate, he says. “It has to have a smooth finish to begin with.”



A unique look to an angular dining area using the stainless 304 wave pattern.

Ready for change

The pattern polisher machine is automatic and convenient for workers at Metals & Services because stock is on-hand. “You take a normal stainless steel sheet and put it on the conveyor that goes into the machine,” says John Baessler. “It has multiple lines of round rollers, and they turn and spin while the sheet is fed through.”

An up-and-down movement creates the round pattern, moving side to side makes the wave pattern and feeding sheet straight through produces a stripe. “You can deviate from these patterns by using bigger wheels or slowing the machine down and making your own custom pattern,” he says. The polished sheet is then plastic vinyl coated for protection before installation. “It’s an extremely reliable machine, and the finishes come out very consistently. There are rarely any glitches to the pattern,” says Jayne Baessler.

The Baesslers have high hopes for this machine and will continue to market its unique patterns. Just like John’s father and Jayne’s grandfather, Harvey Baessler, they are not afraid to purchase more machines if demand grows. “We’re in the third generation already, and we’re going strong,” says John Baessler. “We’ve always been profitable, never had any losses. We’re conservative in one retrospect of how we sell our material but we’re aggressive on innovative things like this pattern polish.” ■

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