

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF YOUR NATURAL STONE

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INTRODUCTION

We are so pleased to present the following care and maintenance guide, the substance of which has been provided directly by Maurizio Bertoli, the man that is regarded as the most renowned stone restoration professional in the world, and our own extraordinary stone restoration professional, Tom McNall.

Which all means to say that none of the guidelines in this document is second hand.

Maurizio Bertoli has spent a lifetime of study and practice on the single focus of stone and stone restoration. He is the expert that many of the world's most prestigious clients rely on when it comes to restoring or maintaining their marble, granite or other natural stone installations, from the Architect of the Capitol in Washington, DC to the Bank of China in Beijing to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. (You can read his bio at the end of this document.)

And though many of the products he recommends in these pages are his own product line, you will never have to concern yourself that he is merely trying to sell you something.

Maurizio himself would be the first to tell you when not to use a product—even if it does bear his name. Consider, for example, the issue of sealers. Although the MB Stone Care line includes an excellent sealer, Maurizio will be the first to tell you that not every stone needs to be sealed and if it doesn't—*don't*. Or consider the enlightening bit of information about disinfectants included in the following pages.

The truth is, Maurizio Bertoli never set out to be a chemist or manufacturer of products. Back in the '80s, he wanted to find a quality product line that he could recommend and make available to his customers, but his extensive research left him terribly dismayed. There simply was nothing intended for the consumer except a handful of products that were not appropriate.

His frustration led him to finding a top-notch chemist that helped him develop the MB Stone Care products. Even then, he had no intention of becoming a significant manufacturer of products—he simply wanted to leave his stone restoration customers with a product that was appropriate for their needs. However, word got out and customer demand grew and the next thing he knew, the MB Stone Care line of products became a business in and of itself.

Presently, Maurizio Bertoli is a man compelled by a powerful desire to reach consumers with quality and accurate information and to effect change—namely to establish standards that are severely lacking—in the stone industry. You can truly believe that you can believe he means it when he says, “**Education before any sale.**”

Our own Tom McNall affectionately refers to Maurizio as ‘the Godfather’ of stone and it is from him that Tom received much of his initial education and training in the field. Tom has since flourished in the industry and has earned his own right to be regarded as one of the stone industry’s most prominent and informed professionals. Tom has not only earned his well-deserved reputation among his clients and customers, he is arguably one of the most respected voices impacting the industry through his involvement as a member on the Marble Institute of America’s (MIA) Board of Directors, teaching classes through the MIA and the International Training Centers for the Stone Trades (ITCStone), doing live radio call-in shows, writing for industry publications and volunteering his wealth of expertise in such forums as “Ask the Stone Experts”™ at marblecleaning.org.

Our own commitment to our customers is to be THE trusted resource for quality stone care and maintenance products, information and services. This guide is just one way of doing that.

---StoneCareCentral.com

*Your One-stop-shop for Granite, Marble and Other Natural Stone
Care & Maintenance Products, Information and Services*

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CARING FOR YOUR NATURAL STONE

Natural stones—especially calcite-based stones such as marble, travertine, limestone, and many slates—have a delicate chemical composition that may interact in “strange” (damaging) ways with the cleaning solutions that were not specifically formulated for the task. Once you know WHAT to use, all you have to do is follow some basic guidelines and your natural stone installation will give you years and years of beautiful service.

ROUTINE PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Use coasters under drinking glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juices to avoid etching.
- Do not place hot items directly on the stone surface. Use trivets or mats under hot dishes.
- Use place mats under china, silver or other objects that can scratch the surface.

TREATING SPILLS

Some spills will turn out to be detrimental to stone if unattended. Orange juice, lemonade, wine, vinegar, liquors, tomato sauce, yogurt, salad dressing, perfume, after shave, the wrong cleaning products and so on, through a long list, most likely won't damage “granite” and “green marble” surfaces (at least in the short run), but will ETCH polished marble, travertine, limestone, onyx, alabaster and many a slate. Therefore,

DO pick up any spills as quickly as possible.

DON'T rub the spill, only blot it.

DON'T use cleaning products on or near your natural stone unless the label specifies that it is safe on natural marble (cultured marble is man-made, and it's basically a plastic material). This includes glass cleaner to clean the mirror over a marble vanity top, or a liquid toilet bowl cleaner when the toilet is set on a marble floor.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

FLOORS

Invest in quality cleaning tools

A cleaning chore—any cleaning chore—is never a matter of a cleaning product only. The implements—cleaning rag, paper towel, scrubbing pad, squeegee, etc.—are important considerations as well. A good quality mop and the proper mopping bucket are critical to obtaining the best results when mopping your highly polished stone or porcelain floor.

We found that sponge mops are not the best choice for highly polished stone floors. A better choice is a good sized, closed-loop cotton string mop. However, the very best are micro-fiber mops.

While the micro-fiber technology is rather recent in the U.S., it has been popular for many years in Europe, where it was first developed. Their technology is still superior; therefore we selected an Italian-made product that passed with flying colors every possible demanding test we submitted it to. MB MicroMop™ is an excellent product and will last much longer than any other type of mop on the market.

It is a good idea to have at least a couple of mop-heads, so that when one is dirty, all you have to do is throw it into the washing machine and use another one in the meantime.

The mop bucket is very important too. The amazing MB MopWringer™ bucket is a masterpiece of ingenuity in its own, and will allow you to clean large floors with little water, while constantly using a clean solution.

Newly Installed Floors

The best thing to have done to a brand-new polished stone floor is a detailing job by a properly trained janitor, or a professional stone refinisher. Detailing means deep-cleaning the floor virtually square inch by square inch, removing all possible grout residue or film and adhesive, taking care of possible small damages left behind by installers, or a possible few factory flaws, and open the pores of the stone by using some special cleaning agents, such as **MB-2 Heavy-Duty Stone, Tile and Grout Cleaner** or, in extreme instances)if a grout film is still present over the surface of the tiles, **MB-3 Soap Film Remover**. Such particular product is excellent at removing mineral deposit due to the presence of chelates in its formula. (Grout film could be equated to mineral deposit.) In that way the stone can “breathe” and dry properly.

For porous stones like hone-finished limestone or certain mercantile granites, the application of a good-quality stone impregnating sealer, such as **MB-4 Stone & More Impregnator/Sealer** is recommended if the floor is installed in a room where accidental spills of staining agents (i.e.: cooking oil, coffee, Ocean Spray®, etc.) are likely to occur.

The application of an impregnating sealer to highly polished marble and travertine, or polished high-density mercantile granites is not recommended.

Should you decide not to have your floor detailed,

DON'T damp-mop your floor immediately after installation and grouting. While you would not cause any real damage, the fine powder most likely left on the floor will be trapped in the water and may leave ugly and hard-to-remove streaks all over its surface. For the first week or so, just vacuum (being careful not to use vacuum cleaners that are worn.

The metal or plastic attachments or the wheels may scratch the surface. Upright vacuum cleaners are a not recommended. Canister vacuum cleaners and central vacuum systems

are the best) and dust mop (with a NON-treated dust mop or a clean, dry micro-fiber mop like MB MicroMop®) your floor as often as you can. You will know it is ready to be washed when your hand remains clean (no whitish powder) after rubbing it on the floor.

Newly Restored (Refinished) Floor

DON'T damp-mop your floor using a solution of water and stone soap. Like any other soap, stone soap will leave a hard-to-remove deposit on the surface of the stone. Stone soaps have very limited applications and, most importantly, they are not for cleaning a highly polished stone floor. Even so-called "rinse-free" stone soaps are discouraged.

In fact, by reading the label on soap stone bottles, you will see that every so often (when you can't stand to look at your streaky and smeary floor any longer, that is!) you should be using a heavy duty stripper/degreaser to remove all the soap scum that has been accumulating on your otherwise beautiful floor by not rinsing it after damp-mopping it.

Always use a pH neutral floor detergent, opposed to soap. (Even dish soap would create the same problem.)

DON'T damp-mop your floor using a solution of water with a commercially available cleaner, unless its label specifically indicates that it is safe to use on natural stone. Worse yet,

DON'T damp-mop your floor using a solution of water and vinegar. Vinegar is highly acidic and will damage the stone.

DO a deep-cleaning of your stone floor and grout lines when needed using a solution of water and ***MB Stone Care MB-2, Heavy-Duty Stone, Tile and Grout Cleaner***.

If your floor is in a foyer or any other room with direct access to the outside,

DO use proper floor mats. The leather or rubber of your shoes won't damage your floor, but dirt will. It is important to have good rather than merely 'pretty' mats. "ASTROTURF" mats by the Monsanto Company (heavy-duty outside the door and finer inside) are among the best, in our professional opinion. A good Janitorial Supply Company should carry them and may even custom cut them for you.

DO clean your floor mats often. When they get saturated with dirt and sand they defeat their purpose.

Preserving the Finish

Many homeowners ask what they should do to preserve the factory finish (or the finish of a newly restored floor). If one is willing to work in order to protect the 'showroom finish' of his or her car by regularly waxing it, the same principle should apply to a polished stone floor (actually, even more so. After all, you don't walk on your car!).

MB Stone Care MB-7 Marble, Granite & More Polish Preserver is an excellent performer. For starters, the product should be applied as soon after installation, or restoration as possible. It is meant to preserve the polish of the stone surface, not to make it. If you don't think to apply it until after the floor is beginning to show damages (dull wear and tear patterns), ***MB Stone Care MB-7 Marble, Granite & More Polish Preserver*** will do a terrific job at preserving ... the damages!

However, if used regularly as directed, ***MB Stone Care MB-7 Marble, Granite & More Polish Preserver*** will make your floor age gracefully. ***MB Stone Care MB-7 Marble, Granite & More Polish Preserver*** must be

applied with either a professional, or a small residential floor buffer (available at Sears and other fine appliance stores).

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KITCHEN COUNTER TOPS

Assuming that your kitchen counter-top is made either out of true or mercantile granite, green marble or soapstone or a hone-finished stone (if you have polished marble or polished travertine, then there's not much that can be done to maintain their highly glossy finish, other than ... well, never using your countertop!) there is one thing you must remember:

This firm rule applies to all stone surfaces: countertops, floors, walls, etc.

Using a "glass cleaner" or "water with a little dish soap" are common but erroneous recommendations

If a cleaning product was not specifically formulated to clean while NOT interacting with the chemical makeup of the stone, it is not safe to be used, period.

that you may hear. Glass cleaners may turn out to be too harsh to both the stone and the sealer (if one has been applied), while water and dish soap will leave an unsanitary and unsightly film that will build up and become problematic to remove. (Wash your hands with dish soap and then rinse them under running water; observe how long and how much water it will take to rinse properly. To get the same rinsing result – which is the only one acceptable – for your countertops, you would have to rinse them with a garden hose!)

Generic household cleaners off the shelves of the supermarket are out, and specialty cleaners specifically formulated to deal with the delicate chemistry of stone are, very definitely, in order.

DO clean your kitchen countertop regularly with **MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner**, full strength in areas near cooking and eating areas, and diluted in a proportion of 1:1 with water for less demanding situations such as vanity tops, areas of the countertop far from the cooking and eating areas or another product that specifically states it is safe on natural stone on the label.

As an alternative to a spray stone cleaner, you could use stone wipes, such as **MB Stone Care MB-17, Stone Wipes** or similarly stone-safe rated products.

DO clean your kitchen countertop regularly with a stone-safe soap-free cleaner such as **MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner**. Use product full strength in areas near cooking and eating areas, and diluted in a proportion of 1:1 with water for less demanding situations such as vanity tops, areas of the countertop far from the cooking

and eating areas or another product that specifically states it is safe on natural stone on the label.

- DON'T** let any spills sit too long on the surface of your counter top. Clean spills up (by blotting only) as soon as you can.

However, if a spill has been left and results in dried-on food or other matter, your countertop needs some scrubbing.

Treating Dried on Spills

- DON'T** use any green or brown scouring pad. The presence of silicon carbide grits in them will scratch even the toughest "granite." You can safely use the sponges lined with a silvery net, or other plastic scouring pads. REMEMBER, it's very important to spray the cleaner and let it sit for a while to moisten and soften the soil, before scrubbing. LET THE CLEANING AGENT DO THE WORK! It will make your job much easier and will be more effective.

For Extra Shine

MB Stone Care MB-13 Stone Polish does a terrific job at brightening up your polished stone surface. All of its ingredients are classified as "food-grade," and are therefore 100% sanitary. As with all the products, be sure to follow the label instructions.

BATH AND VANITY

Vanity Tops

- DO** clean your vanity tops regularly with a stone-safe, soap free product such as **MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner**. Considering the light-duty cleaning that is typically necessary on a vanity top, you can dilute the product in a proportion of 1:1 with tap water and it will still perform flawlessly.
- DON'T** take chances with cleaning your mirrors over your marble vanity tops with a regular glass cleaner. The over-spray could spill onto the marble surface and may damage it. Therefore,
- DO** clean your mirror with the same solution of water and **MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner**. Even if you over-spray it, nothing bad is going to happen to your marble.
- DON'T** use any powder cleanser, or—worse yet—any cream cleanser, such as Soft Scrub®.
- DON'T** do your nails on your marble vanity top, or color or perm your hair nearby it.
- DON'T** put any wet bottle onto it (perfume, after-shave, etc.). Keep your cosmetics and fragrances in one of those pretty mirror trays (be sure that the legs of the tray have felts tips) or other appropriate container.

What's behind a disinfectant?

Maurizio Bertoli has written a very informative white paper on the topic that will give you more insight than you'll find anywhere else. It's at the end of this care document.

- DO use ***MB Stone Care MB-13 Polished Stone Dressing*** if you want to add some extra shine to your polished stone countertop surface and help prevent soiling. Follow the directions on the bottle, and get ready to be amazed by the results!

Shower Stalls

- DO monitor your grout and caulk lines periodically and address any problem immediately.
- DON'T use any cleanser, either in a powdery or creamy form.
- DON'T use any generic soap film remover, such as TILEX SOAP SCUM® or X-14 SOAP SCUM® on your polished stone shower stall.
- DON'T use any generic mildew stain remover, such as TILEX MILDEW STAIN REMOVER® or X-14 MILDEW STAIN REMOVER® on your polished stone shower stall.
- DON'T use any magic self-cleaner, such as SCRUB-FREE® and the likes, or any harsh disinfectant, such as LYSOL®
- DO clean your shower stall daily. The easiest and most effective way is, after everybody has taken a shower, spray the walls and floor of the stall with a diluted solution of water and ***MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner***, then squeegee.

Removing Soap Scum

If you notice an accumulation of soap film (especially on the lower part of the walls and on the floor pan)

- DO use ***MB Stone Care MB-3 Soap Film Remover*** to clean it off. ***MB Stone Care MB-3 Soap Film Remover*** was specifically formulated to be effective at doing the job of cleaning soap scum and hard mineral deposits, while not negatively interacting with the chemistry of natural stone.

Treating Mildew

If mildew appears on the grout lines of your shower enclosure

- DO clean the mildew stain with ***MB Stone Care MB-9 Mildew Stain Remover***. It has been formulated to be safe on natural stone, while being very effective at removing mildew and other biological stains.

Commodes

If your toilet bowl sits on a marble or other natural stone floor,

- DON'T use any generic toilet bowl cleaners. Possible spills will dig holes in your marble. Clean your bowl with a powdery cleanser and, if extra disinfection is desired, you can spray your toilet liberally with ***MB Surface Care MB-15 Cleaner/Disinfectant***.

SEALING YOUR STONE

Let's start this important issue by explaining what a sealer for stone will do for you. Contrary to what your perception may be when you hear the word sealer, sealers for stone are all below-surface products and will not alter in any way, shape or form the original finish produced by the factory. They will not offer one iota of protection to the surface of the stone, either. They will only go inside the stone by being absorbed by it (assuming that the stone is porous enough to allow this to happen) and will clog its pores, thus reducing its natural absorbency rate. This will help prevent possible accidental spills of staining agents from being absorbed by the stone. End of the list of performances of a sealer for stone.

Also, contrary to what you may have heard, there is no blanket rule when it comes to sealing natural stone. Marble (especially all those mercantile marbles that are actually compact limestone) and travertine are NOT very porous. If you don't believe this, spill a few drops of water, say, on a polished travertine tile, and observe how long it will take to be absorbed (the area under the water would become darker). A very long time, if ever!

On the other hand, all granites must be sealed. Granite is indeed more porous than marble and will stain if not protected with a good-quality impregnator-type stone sealer such as **MB Stone Care MB 4 Impregnator for Stone & More**. With that said, however, keep in mind that a vast majority of stones marketed as granite are not true granite. Consequently, while it is true that real granites need to be sealed, there are many other stones being sold as granite that are in fact much denser than granite that do not need to be sealed. Some may even develop problems related to the sealer, if sealed nonetheless.

THE LEMON JUICE (AND OIL) TEST

The famous test to determine suitability of granite selection for your kitchen countertops

It is time now to select the stone. What do you look for?

Two things: Absorbency and acid sensitivity. You do NOT want a "granite" too darn absorbent, and you do NOT want a "granite" that is mixed with calcite (the main component of marble and limestone.) And here comes my little "lemon juice (and oil) test" to the rescue! Since you can't get the true geological name of the stones you brought home with you (nor probably you care to!), what you want to know is which one is going to make you happy. Line your samples on a table or countertop, dust them thoroughly then spill a few drops of lemon juice and cooking oil on each one of them. If you notice that where the juice and the oil hit the stone its surface turns dark just about immediately, you take those scraps and dump them in the garbage can (where they belong) without a second thought! If you notice that the juice and the oil take a little time to get absorbed (a half a minute or better), then you have a stone whose absorbency can be effectively controlled with a good-quality impregnator like MB-4 Stone and More Impregnator. If you finally notice that some samples will not absorb anything within, say, half an hour or so, then you may have a winner. That stone will not even need to be sealed!

Now, how to eliminate the word 'may' from the equation? The answer resides in another question: Why using lemon juice instead of, say plain water? Because, as I mentioned above, you're not just looking to determine the absorbency of the stones you're considering, but you also want to determine that your samples are 100% silicate rocks (whether true granite or not), opposed to some stones—still traded as granite—that are mixed with various percentages of calcite. If there's even a little calcite in the stone, it will react to the high acidity of the lemon juice (citric acid) and, when you wipe your spills dry, you will notice a dull spot of the same shape of the lemon drops. In such case, once again, off into the trash they go! If instead it's still nice and shiny under where the drops were, then you eliminated the may factor!

At the other end of the spectrum, some other “granites” are so porous, that no sealer will do a satisfactory job at sealing them 100% or for a long time.

Sealers for stones, which are below surface, penetrating-type sealers (better referred to as impregnators), are designed to do one thing and one thing only: clog the pores of the stone so that alien liquids will not be absorbed by it. But this is only one factor of the “sealing equation.”

The other factor to consider is the environment where the stone is installed. Ask yourself: “What are the chances that some coffee or cooking oil will be spilled on my stone without realizing it (so that it’s going to sit on it a long time) which would call for a sealing job?”

The answer to that question will help you determine the necessity of having your stone sealed. Consider first if yours is a stone that will take in a sealer to begin with. If you conclude that the it probably won’t, then for the sake of your stone, leave it alone! It makes no sense to seal, say, a Botticino Classsico, or a Travertine foyer or shower-stall. Those two stone are not very absorbent to begin with, and the chances of staining (in a foyer, or inside a shower enclosure) are remote to say the least. Likewise, it makes no sense to seal, say a Larvikite, or Anorthosite kitchen countertop (both stones are traded as granite), as the sealer itself has no chance to be absorbed due to the density of the stone. Nor would it make sense to seal walls clad with White Sardinia. The stone—a true granite—does need sealing if you use it as a kitchen countertop, because of the likelihood of staining agents being spilled onto it, but what kind of chances are there to spill some staining agent on a wall?

In fact, in some instances, “weird” problems that may appear to be etching on “granite” countertops turns out to be that the residue of sealer left on the surface of the stone (nothing went inside it) was being etched, certainly not the stone. In these instances, once the sealer is professionally removed, everything is fine.

Note: Sometimes, marks of corrosion (etch marks) that an acidic substance will leave behind when coming in contact with the surface of some stones may look like water stains, or water rings, but they are neither stains, nor were they generated by water. The deriving (surface) damage has no relation whatsoever with the porosity of the stone (which determines its absorbency), but is exclusively related to its chemical makeup. No sealer in the entire world will do anything to prevent this. See the section on Stain Management for more information.

If, because of the type of stone and where it was installed, you conclude you’re your stone does need to be sealed, **MB Stone Care MB-4 Impregnator for Stone & More** is very effective and comes with a 10-year warranty, which means that it will not require once-a-year applications.

HOW MANY APPLICATIONS ARE NEEDED?

For some stones that are more porous than others, one application of sealer/impregnator may not be enough. But how will you know? Or when will you know if it is time to re-seal?

On mercantile granites that need sealing, at least two applications are recommended, with at least two hours in between applications. Very porous mercantile granites, sandstone, quartzite, etc. may require three or more applications. To find out if your stone is perfectly sealed, spill some water on it and wait for approximately half an hour, then wipe it dry. If the surface of the stone did not darken it means that the stone is perfectly sealed. Use this same test to determine when it is time to reseal.

RESINING

Let's now talk about the "resining" process. What is it exactly? It is a procedure that was introduced to the stone world by the Italians not too long ago to improve on the natural characteristics of certain stones, namely certain "granites" that are either too porous, or inherently prone to having a high percentage of natural flaws, such as fissures, pitting, etc. Now, what's this mysterious process all about, and where and when is it done?

The "resining" of a slab is not done by the factories that process blocks into slabs. It is rather done by separate high-tech facilities where the slabs are delivered as they come out from the gang-saw, and before one of their two sides is further processed by grinding, honing and polishing. The slabs are enclosed in a vacuum-filled chamber, and a flowing resin (mostly ester-epoxy) is applied onto it. The vacuum environment helps the resin being deeply absorbed into the stone. After proper curing time, the slabs are sent back to the original processing plants, where they will be calibrated, ground, honed and polished. The resin will be totally eliminated from the polished surface of the slab and it will be exposed only as a filler of the possible natural fissure and pits of the stone and that would be otherwise unfilled and more or less obvious.

Is there anything wrong about such a procedure? Not really. There is indeed a lack of data about the long-term effect (if any) of the resin inside the stone, but there are solid reasons to believe that nothing bad will come from it. The type of resin, ester-epoxy has been used in the stone industry for a few generations already and it's the base of a few impregnator/sealers, as well. Once cured, such resin is chemically inert (thus totally safe) and doesn't react with any chemical, except Methylene Chloride.

There are, however, a couple of things to be taken into consideration:

- 1) Sometimes the "resining" process is used to "upgrade" slabs. Translation: by resining the low-grade slabs they will become "good." If the resining is done to eliminate the absorbency of the stone or to fill the natural pits, that is okay, but if it is done to mask some bad slab ... well, you fill in the blanks.
This is just another reason why the reputation of your fabricator is paramount. A good fabricator will never buy "doctored" slabs!
- 2) While you could put a hot pot or pan right out of the stone onto "granite" that was not resined, you could NOT do that if the slab had been resined. Irreparable damages to the resin will occur.
- 3) Certain resins may turn out to be photosensitive and alter its color over time if exposed to UV rays.

All in all, however, it is the educated opinion of this writer that "resining" is good (with the limitations listed above). Even "granites" that wouldn't normally make my list of preferences would become more than acceptable if "resined".

How to find that out? Very simple, ask your fabricator.

STAIN MANAGEMENT

We all know what a stain is, right? ... Or do we ...

Let's start by saying that a stain is a discoloration. So far, so good.

The fact is, however, that not all discolorations are stains. To illustrate the point, let's take, for example, a piece of common fabric. Fabric is typically absorbent. Therefore, if we spill some liquid onto it, the material will absorb it. If it is only water, it will leave a temporary stain. In fact, once it dries, the fabric will go back to its original color (plus, maybe, some mineral deposit can we can just brush away), but if coffee, or cooking oil is spilled on it a stain will occur because the fabric will absorb the staining agent and change its color in a permanent way, unless we do something to remove the agent from the fabric.

On the other hand, if bleach is spilled on that same fabric, a discoloration will occur, but it can hardly be defined as a stain because it is actually a permanent damage to the dye that originally made the color of the fabric.

As with the fabric example, when it comes to natural stone there are stains that are in fact stains, and there are "stains" that are actually discolorations that are due to something else.

All stones are, more or less, absorbent. One may say that diamonds or gemstones are not absorbent. That's

right, but a gemstone is not actually a stone. It is in fact made of one crystal of one single mineral. All other (less noble) stones are the composition of many crystals, either of the same mineral, or of different minerals bonded together. The "space" in between these molecules of minerals is mostly what determines the porosity of a stone. That said, what is next is the fact that the porosity of stones varies greatly, and so does, of course, their absorbency. Some of them are extremely dense, therefore their porosity is minimal. What this translates into is the fact that the absorbency of such types of stone is so marginal that—by all practical intents and purposes—can be considered irrelevant. Some other stones present a medium porosity, and others at the very end of the spectrum are extremely porous. Because of their inherent porosity, many stones will absorb liquids, and if such liquids are staining agents, a true stain will occur.

A true stain is a discoloration of the stone produced by a staining agent that was actually absorbed by the stone.

Other 'discolorations' have nothing to do with the porosity (absorbency) of the stone, but rather are a result of damage to the stone surface. All those 'stains' that look like 'water spots' or 'water rings' are actually marks of corrosion (etches) created by some chemically active liquid (mostly—but not necessarily limited to—acids) which had a chance to come in contact with the stone. All calcite-based stones such as marble, limestone, onyx, travertine, etc. are sensitive to acids. Therefore, they will etch readily (within a

A true stain is always darker than the stained material.

If it appears as being of a lighter color it is not a stain but either a mark of corrosion (etching) made by an acid, or a caustic mark (bleaching) made by a strong base (a.k.a., alkali). In other words, a lighter color "stain" is in fact always a surface damage and has no relation whatsoever with the absorbency rate of the damaged material – stone or whatever.

There is not a single exception to this rule.

few seconds). Many a slate, too, will etch, and so will a few “granites” (those that instead of being a 100% silicate rock are mixed with a certain percentage of calcite.)

Now let's see what to do to remove stains.

HOW TO REMOVE A STAIN – POULTICING METHOD

Definition of a Poultice

What's a poultice? It is the combination of a very absorbent medium (it must be more absorbent than the stone) mixed with a chemical, which is to be selected in accordance with the type of stain to be removed. The concept is to re-absorb the stain out of the stone. The chemical will attack the stain inside the stone, and the absorbent agent will pull them both out together.

It is intuitive that while the absorbent agent can be the same all the time, regardless of the nature of the stain to be removed, the chemical will be different, in accordance with the nature of the staining agent, since it will have to interact with it.

The absorbent part of a poultice could be (in order of preference), talcum powder (baby powder), paper-towel (Bounty® or Viva® are the best), and diatomaceous earth (the white stuff inside your swimming pool filter) for larger projects.

'Professional poulticing kits' are really unnecessary. Anybody with no experience whatsoever can make their own homemade poultice, which will be just as good as the 'professional kits' (if not better!)

As we said before, the chemical must be selected in accordance with the nature of the staining agent. There are five major classifications of stains:

1. **Organic stains** (i.e. coffee, tea, coloring agents of dark sodas and other drinks, gravy, mustard, etc.)
2. **Inorganic stains** (i.e. ink, color dyes, dirt – water spilling over from flower and plant pot, etc.)
3. **Oily stains** (i.e. any type of vegetable oil, certain mineral oils – motor oil, butter, margarine, melted animal fat, etc.)
4. **Biological stains** (i.e. mildew, mold, etc.)
5. **Metal stains** (i.e. rust, copper, etc.)

The chemical of choice for both organic and inorganic stains is hydrogen peroxide (30/40 volumes, the clear type—available at your local beauty salon. The one from the drugstore is too weak, at 3.5 volume). Sometime, in the case of ink stains, denatured alcohol (or rubbing alcohol) may turn out to be more effective.

For oily stains our favorite is acetone, which is available at any hardware or paint store. (Forget your nail polish remover. Some of them contain other chemicals, others contain no acetone whatever.)

For biological stains, one can try using regular household bleach, but we recommend **MB Stone Care MB-9 Mildew Stain Remover**. It represents a much more complete and effective formulation for these kinds of stains, not to mention the very important fact that's formulated in a way not to interact with the chemistry of natural stone.

For metal stains, our favorite is a white powder (to be melted in water) called Iron-out™.

How to Prepare a Poultice and Use It to Remove Stains

WEAR RUBBER GLOVES ALL THE TIME, WHILE HANDLING CHEMICALS!

If you've chosen talc powder (baby powder) as your absorbent medium,

1. *Mix it—using a metal spatula or spoon—in a glass or stainless steel bowl, together with the chemical, to form a paste just a tad thinner than peanut butter (thin enough, but not runny.)*

If you are attempting to remove a metal (rust) stain, first melt the Iron-out™ with water—according with the directions on the container—then mix it with an equal amount of talcum powder, adding water if it turns out to be too thick, or talcum if it is too runny.

2. *Apply the poultice onto the stain, going approximately ½" over it all around, keeping it as thick as possible (at least ¼").*
3. *Cover the poultice with plastic wrap, and tape it down using masking tape.*
4. *Leave the whole thing alone for at least 24 hours, then remove the plastic wrap.*
5. *Allow the poultice to **dry thoroughly!** It may take from a couple of hours to a couple of days or better, depending on the chemical. **Do NOT peek!** This is the phase during which the absorbing agent is re-absorbing the chemical that was forced into the stone, together (hopefully!) with the staining agent, and you do **NOT** want to interrupt that process.*
6. *Once the poultice is completely dry, scrape it off the surface of the stone with a plastic spatula, clean the area with a little squirt of MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner, then wipe it dry with a clean rag or a sheet of paper-towel.*

If the stain is gone, your mission is over! If some of it is still there, repeat the whole procedure (especially in the case of oily stains, it may take up to 4 or 5 attempts). If it didn't move at all, either you made a mistake while evaluating the nature of the stain (and consequently used the wrong chemical), or the stain is too old and will not come out, or it was not a stain, but another type of discoloration.

If you decide to use a paper-towel instead of talc powder, make a "pillow" with it (8 or 10 fold thick) a little wider than the stain, soak it with the chemical to a point that's wet through but not dripping, apply it on the stain and tap it with your gloved fingertips to insure full contact with the surface of the stone. Then take it from step 3 above.

Etching, a.k.a. "Water Stains" Or "Rings"

Polished marble, travertine, onyx, limestone, etc. are all calcite-based stones, and as such are affected by pH active liquids, mostly acidic in nature. In layman's language, when an acidic liquid gets on a polished marble, travertine, many a slate, etc. surface, it etches it on contact. That is, it leaves a mark of corrosion that looks like a water-stain or ring. Such surface damage has nothing to do with the absorbency rate of the stone (typically quite low, anyway), but exclusively with its chemical makeup, which, as mentioned before, is mostly calcite (Calcium Carbonate, CaCO₃). Trying to remove the "stain" by poulticing it would be useless exercise, since it is not a stain, no matter what it looks like.

So, how do you remove a chemical etch-mark, which, as seen, is not a stain but a surface damage?

You don't! In fact an etch mark can be effectively compared to, and defined as, a shallow chemical scratch. A scratch is something missing (a groove), and nobody can remove something missing. It would be like trying to remove a hole from a doughnut! The only thing one can do is to eat the doughnut, and ... the hole is gone! Same thing with a scratch: you must actually remove whatever is around the groove, down to the depth of the deepest point of the scratch.

You are actually facing a full-fledged—though small in size—stone restoration project! Is this a task for the average homeowner?

The answer is: Maybe.

If it is polished marble or travertine or onyx, then there's hope. If it is hone-finished marble or travertine, or hone-finished slate (like a chalk-board), or mixed "granite", then you probably should hire a professional stone refinisher. If it's a cleft-finished slate (rippled on its surface), then nobody can actually do anything about it, other than attempt to mask it by applying a good quality stone color enhancer, such as ***MB Stone Care MB-6 Stone Color Enhancer***.

If the etch is light (the depth is undetectable by the naked eye, and it looks and feels smooth, then ***MB Stone Care MB-11 Polishing Compound for Marble*** will work quite well without requiring the experience of a professional and no specific tools are needed, other than a piece of terry cloth.

Combination "Stains"

Finally, we may have a combination of a stain with etching. For example, if some red wine is spilled on an absorbent polished limestone, then the acidity of the wine (acetic acid) will etch (corrode) the surface on contact, while the dark color of the wine will stain the stone by being absorbed by it. In such a case, first you remove the stain by poulticing (hydrogen peroxide), and then repair the etching by refinishing the surface.

MAINTENANCE LOG

Use this log to record significant information regarding your stone installations.

Site	Event	Date	Comments, Stone Name, Product(s) Used

NOTES:

RECOMMENDED CARE PRODUCTS

For Caring and Maintaining Your Precious Stone

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE PRODUCTS

MB STONE CARE MB-1 MARBLE, GRANITE & MORE FLOOR CLEANER

Just add 1 to 2 ounces of MB-1 Marble, Granite and More Floor Cleaner to a gallon of warm or cold water and watch your polished or honed stone floor come alive!

Its pH balanced, NO RINSE formulation effortlessly cleans soil and grime and dries with NO STREAKS. Special inorganic salts in the formula act as moisturizers and optical brighteners, actually enhancing the shine on the floor.

Also excellent for wood floors, ceramic and porcelain tiles and great for the maintenance of large commercial floors with automatic scrubbing machines, too!

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-2 HEAVY DUTY STONE, TILE & GROUT CLEANER

A powerful heavy-duty alkaline cleaner designed to tackle the most demanding cleaning job on tiles, grout and all natural stones!

MB-2 is a highly concentrated product designed to clean the toughest soils from tiles, grout and all natural stones. This biodegradable powerful cleaning agent, formulated with the latest cutting-edge technology, will clean deep into your grout and any other treated surface effectively and easily.

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-3 SOAP FILM REMOVER

MB Stone Care MB-3 Soap Film Remover is the ideal solution to get rid of unsightly and unsanitary soap film and hard water deposits without damaging the polished surface of your stone shower stalls.

It also works great to clean any grout film left on the surface of the stone by the installer.

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) size

MB STONE CARE MB-4 STONE & MORE IMPREGNATOR/SEALER

MB Stone Care MB-4 Stone and More Impregnator/Sealer effectively inhibits liquids from being absorbed by all natural stones including marble, granite, travertine, limestone and serpentine (green marble) greatly reducing the possibility of staining. It is also effective on most terracotta and even on concrete!

And unlike silicone or Siloxane-based impregnators, it doesn't need frequent reapplication. The first application(s) will protect your valuable stone for years to come. Comes with a 10 year warranty!

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-5 MARBLE, GRANITE & MORE SPRAY CLEANER

Effortlessly and effectively clean your granite, marble or other stone kitchen countertops, vanity tops, as well as mirrors, gilded

fixtures, and other delicate surfaces you don't want just any chemical to touch.

MB Stone Care MB-5 is also great for light daily cleaning of your shower walls, too!

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-6 STONE COLOR ENHANCER (WATER REPELLANT SEALER)

MB Stone Care MB-6 Stone Color Enhancer is the ideal product to achieve that 'wet look' on tumbled marble, low-honed finished limestone and travertine, honed (black) granite, etc. It is at the same time a good water-repellent sealer -- two applications will do for most stones!

Available in 20 Fluid Ounce and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-7 STONE POLISH PRESERVER

A unique blend of fine synthetic resins, MB Stone Care MB-7 Stone Polish Preserver effectively protects the finish of your polished stone floor with an invisible, non-slippery 'buffer' which greatly delays the visual effects of wear and tear by foot traffic. Because this product is not a wax, there is no buildup and never needs to be stripped. Works very effectively on high-gloss polyurethane finished wood floors, too!

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) and US Gallon sizes

MB STONE CARE MB-9 MILDEW STAIN REMOVER

Just spray it on and watch the mildew disappear with no scrubbing!

MB Stone Care MB-9 Mildew Stain Remover is safe on most delicate polished stone surfaces.

For Contractors: MB Stone Care MB-9 is also amazing for power-washing outdoor stone cladding and concrete from pollution, mildew and mold soiling!

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) size

MB STONE CARE MB-11 MARBLE POLISHING POWDER

MB Stone Care MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder is a professional-grade product, yet user-friendly that enables you to polish marble like the Pros!

MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder will restore the majority of "Water Stains" and "Acid Rings" (chemical etches, that is) without the expensive services of a stone restoration professional. While not universal, MB-11 polishes most Marbles, Travertine, Alabaster (Marble-Onyx), Onyx and polished Limestone not by coating, but by abrasion and friction (like gemstone) as it was originally done in the factory.

Contains no "crystallization" acids!

Available in 6 Ounce jars

MB STONE CARE MB-13 STONE POLISH

MB-13 Stone Polish is a no-wax stone polish that coats the stone surface with a smooth and shiny shield. All the components in its formula are classified as food-grade. It helps keeping fingerprints and other smudges at bay, and making the routine cleaning of your granite countertop with our MB-5 or our MB-17 a lot easier.

Note: MB-13 is not to be used on floors.

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) size

MB SURFACE CARE MB-15**SPRAY CLEANER/DISINFECTANT FOR COUNTERTOPS & MORE**

When total disinfecting in addition to a thorough cleaning is mandated, MB Surface Care MB-15 Spray Cleaner/Disinfectant kills dangerous bacteria such as athlete's foot fungus, type A influenza, salmonella, e-coli bacteria and much more. *Be sure to follow the directions on the back label carefully.*

Available in US Quart (.964 Liter) size

MB STONE CARE MB-17 STONE WIPES

MB Stone Care MB-17 Stone Wipes are pre-moistened with an adapted formulation of the extremely popular MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner. Nothing beats the practicality and convenience for wiping down your countertops. They are also great for light daily cleaning of your shower stalls. Comes in a convenient 70 Count container

MB STONE CARE COUNTERTOP KIT I

MB Stone Care Countertop Kit One contains everything you need to keep your granite countertops looking their best at all times:

- MB-4 Stone and More Impregnator-Sealer (1 US Quart) for sealing
- MB-5 Marble, Granite and More Spray Cleaner (1 US Quart) for routine cleaning
- MB-13 Stone Polish (1 US Quart) for beautifying*

**Note: MB-13 Stone Polish is not to be used on floors*

MB STONE CARE COUNTERTOP KIT II

MB Stone Care Countertop Kit Two comes with:

- MB Stone Care MB-4 Stone and More Impregnator/Sealer for sealing (1 US Quart)
- MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite and More Spray Cleaner for routine cleaning (1 US Quart)
- MB Surface Care MB-15 Spray Cleaner/Disinfectant for Countertops and More for disinfecting (1 US Quart)
- MB Stone Care MB-13 Stone Polish* for beautifying (1 US Quart)

**Note: MB Stone Care MB-13 Stone Polish is not for floors.*

MB STONE CARE MARBLE REPAIR KIT

MB Stone Care Marble Repair Kit is an essential care product kit that comes in a beautiful presentation box. It contains:

- MB Stone Care MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder (6 Oz) to remove light to medium "water stains"
- MB Stone Care MB-5 Marble, Granite and More Spray Cleaner (1 US Quart.) to clean
- MB Stone Care MB-13 Stone Polish* (1 US Quart.) to beautify.

This terrific kit will enable you to take care of your light to medium etching ("water stains" or "rings") and very light scratch patterns.

**MB Stone Care MB-13 Stone Polish is not for floors.*

IMPLEMENTS & TOOLS**THE CLASSIC OR ELITE DOUBLE-BLADE SQUEEGEE, MADE BY CLERÉT**

Squeegees that win fancy awards? That is exactly what our line of squeegees have done. Clerét doesn't make boring, ordinary looking squeegees and other things. They make products that are downright cool looking, fun to use, and work great.

These squeegees have become the most highly acclaimed squeegees on the planet earning high praise from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, and the *Smithsonian Institution*.

MB MICROFIBER MOP

While the micro-fiber technology is rather recent in the U.S., it has been popular for many years in Europe, where it was first developed. The MB MicroFiber Mop® is Italian-made and passed with flying colors every possible demanding test we submitted it to. The MB MicroFiber Mop® is an excellent product and will last much longer than any other type of mop on the market.

It is a good idea to have at least a couple of mop-heads, so that when one is dirty, all you have to do is throw it into the washing machine and use another one in the meantime.

MB MOPWRINGER®

This bucket is a masterpiece of ingenuity. It will allow you to clean large floors with little water, while constantly using a clean solution, both very important considerations for properly maintaining your stone floors.

RECOMMENDED CARE PRODUCTS CHECKLIST - CATEGORIZED

FOR YOUR BATHROOM

- MB-2 Heavy Duty Stone, Tile & Grout Cleaner
- MB-3 Soap Film Remover
- MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner
- MB 9 Mildew Stain Remover
- MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder
- MB-13 Stone Polish
- MB-15 Spray Cleaner/Disinfectant for Countertops & More
- MB-17 Stone Wipes
- Dual-blade Squeegee (Classic or Elite) made by Clerét

FOR YOUR KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS

- MB-2 Heavy Duty Stone, Tile & Grout Cleaner
- MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner
- MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder
- MB-13 Stone Polish
- MB-15 Spray Cleaner/Disinfectant for Countertops
- MB-17 Stone Wipes
- Countertop Kit I
- Countertop Kit II
- Ongoing Care Kit

GENERAL (WALLS, FIREPLACES, ETC.)

- MB-5 Marble, Granite & More Spray Cleaner
- MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder
- MB-13 Stone Polish
- MB-17 Stone Wipes

FLOORS

- MB-1 Marble, Granite & More Floor Cleaner
- MB-7 Stone Polish Preserver
- MB-11 Marble Polishing Powder
- MB MicroFiber Mop™
- MB MopWringer™

SEALING AND COLOR ENHANCING

- MB-4 Stone & More Impregnator/Sealer
- MB-6 Stone Color Enhancer (Water Repellant Sealer)

RESOURCES

www.stonecarecentral.com

StoneCareCentral.com is our on-line store selling quality products for the care and maintenance of natural stone and tile, including the full line of MB Stone Care Products. Its ***Solution Center*** is a tremendous, and ever growing information repository where you can find answers, how-to's and more. And if you can't find your answer, they are happy to connect you with one of their stone restoration professionals to answer your questions. If you need to pick up some product quickly and conveniently, they have a list of ***StoneCareCentral Stations***, internationally located dealers that stock the products.

www.marblecleaning.org

MarbleCleaning.org is rapidly becoming the first source of information for natural stone and tile matters. It serves not only as an information portal, but as a voice, advocating for the consumer, in an effort to effect much needed industry standards. MarbleCleaning.org offers a direct link to industry professionals through its Ask the Stone Experts™ forum.

MAURIZIO BERTOLI—THE MAN BEHIND MB STONE CARE PRODUCTS

Internationally Recognized Stone Expert

When it comes to maintenance, preservation and restoration of natural stone, such as marble, granite, travertine, limestone, onyx, sandstone, etc. nobody beats the vast expertise and in-depth knowledge of Maurizio Bertoli.

He is arguably one of the foremost stone experts and is recognized at both a national and international level. Within the stone industry he is known for his radical, “out-of-the-box” way of thinking and operating. Many of his accomplishments and suggestions have become widely embraced industry benchmarks.

For example, his simple but effective ‘lemon juice test’ has become the standard around the world to help consumers determine on their own the suitability of certain granites and whether or not they would need to have an impregnator/sealer applied.

He exposed the widespread fraud represented by the “convenient” generic classification under the label of “granite” of all sorts of stones that were not even remotely related to true geological granite. His passion, dedication and accumulated wealth of knowledge on the subject of natural stone is the result of a lifelong experience.

Maurizio Bertoli was born in Parma, Italy, where at the age of 16 he embarked on his chosen career path by working in a marble fabrication facility as a summer job. He continued working the trade as a marble floor setter, exclusively with the “grind-in-place” method while completing his university education in Parma.

In 1968 he purchased the marble flooring company he had been working for upon the passing of the former owner. With a clear direction for his future in place, Mr. Bertoli completed his formal education, acquiring a BA equivalent degree in Accounting and Marketing, and to gain further understanding of his trade, he undertook private studies in the area of petrography (a branch of geology focusing on rocks) and chemistry as applied to marble and natural stone while continuing to run his marble flooring company. His education enabled him to broaden his professional horizons beyond Parma, and soon he was installing high-end marble floors all over Italy, Switzerland and southern France.

In 1979 he sold his Italian based flooring company and became involved in new business endeavors which prompted him to move to New Jersey with his wife Laura and two sons, Giorgio and Giulio. He introduced his expertise to America, and in 1984 established a sole proprietorship, specializing in “grind-in-place” installation of marble floors, restoration and polishing of marble and granite installations.

In 1990, his accumulated wealth of understanding of petrography and chemistry as applied to natural stone, led to being featured in a two page editorial in the Asbury Park Press (the second largest newspaper in New Jersey).

Driven by consumer need and armed with his extensive knowledge of stone, Mr. Bertoli developed a complete line of natural stone maintenance and restoration products. His world-renowned ‘MB Stone Care Products,’ are now sold through dealers in many parts of the world. And despite owning and operating a successful company that manufactures a complete line of specialty products for maintenance and preservation of natural stone, he is genuinely committed to “Education before any sale,” and avails himself and his expertise generously. His integrity is evidenced in such statements as, “Not all stones need to be sealed, and when a stone doesn’t need to be sealed, sealing it anyway is not only a total waste of time and money, but plain WRONG.”

Mr. Bertoli’s outstanding work in the trade has made him legendary and his knowledge of stone care well-known. So much so that he has been invited to speak on the subject of stone specification, installation and maintenance for such organizations as the Monmouth and Ocean County (New Jersey) Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.). He was so well received at their conference that he was subsequently asked to return as a highlighted guest speaker.

From 1992 to 1995, Mr. Bertoli delivered a round of seminars on the subject of stone specification and maintenance both

at local and national levels. Among the most notable: StoneExpo '93, Orlando, Florida, 1993; CHFI-FM Radio interview, Toronto, Ontario, 1994; and a Home Improvement Show, Washington DC, 1995.

Technical articles carrying his signature and published by all major industry magazines have grown too numerous to list.

In addition he has produced a series of educational literature on the subject of stone specification, installation and maintenance.

Since 1995, Maurizio Bertoli has been offering consultation and training services at local, national and international level. He now holds his training classes on stone restoration and refinishing at state-of-the-art facilities located in Folcroft, Pennsylvania and Perth, WA, Australia.

Mr. Bertoli's in-depth knowledge of the subject and his almost uncanny ability to diagnose and solve problems, as well as his unorthodox and creative approach (still within strict parameters of sound and proven techniques) to stone refinishing and preservation, has resulted in his consultative and restoration services being called upon by some of the world's most recognized establishments. He counts, among his numerous customers:

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL, Washington, DC
 MARPOL MARBLE, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 ASTS FLOORING, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 AM-PM BUILDING MAINTENANCE, Seoul, South Korea
 MILVIN INTERNATIONAL, Calcutta, India
 WALT DISNEY WORLD, Lake Buena Vista, Florida
 THE BANK OF CHINA, Beijing, China
 BERMUDATECH, Hamilton, Bermuda

Mr. Bertoli has also volunteered his expertise to web sites such as www.findstone.com, "Expert Advice"; www.natural-stone.com, "Forum"; www.johnbridge.com, JB Forum. He has served as the Editor-in-Chief of a "radical" monthly stone care trade e-newsletter, 'ROCKING THE BOAT.' His outspoken, sparkling writing style makes him a unique character in the stone industry, with numerous followers.

An article in Newsday (the third largest newspaper in NYC) on July 27, 2004 in which he was featured generated such an outpouring of reader response that his priorities veered somewhat to effecting change in the industry and providing quality education.

So as he looks to the future, Mr. Bertoli now focuses much of his attention on the International Training Centers for the Stone Industry (ITCStone)—a consortium of schools providing intensive training to individuals and groups ranging from cleaning and maintenance professionals to stone crafters—and its offshoot, MarbleCleaning.org, a consumer information portal and advocacy group which he and a handful of other industry leaders scattered over several countries co-founded.

Mr. Bertoli is also currently working on completing a book on stone maintenance and restoration for the Marble Institute of America. Once published, his widely-anticipated book is expected to instantly become an industry standard and best-seller among both peers and pupils of the trade.

His agenda for the coming year includes conducting one-day teaching seminars on the cleaning of natural stone with stops in Las Vegas, Phoenix, Orlando and Chicago. The Phoenix location will focus on working with specifiers and distributors. Mr. Bertoli will also present classes in daily cleaning and restoration, emphasizing the importance of the need to first understand the problem before and appropriate solution can be identified.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DISINFECTANT CLEANERS

From MB Stone Restoration and Supply, Inc.
Producers of the MB Stone Care and MB Surface Care Products

We are very cautious at promoting and indiscriminately encouraging the use of disinfectant/cleaning products to consumers. No matter what, if they have to meet their advertised performance, they are indeed products that must be handled with the utmost attention. If misused, in fact, they will do more evil than good.

MB Surface Care MB-15, Spray Cleaner Disinfectant is an excellent performer, but we would like to make you aware of an important piece of information that, most likely, nobody else will ever disclose to you. All formulations of disinfectant cleaners, including the most popular household names, are strictly regulated by the EPA. There is very little that the chemists of the various companies manufacturing such products can do to the formulas, hence, they are all basically the same, though available in a few different versions.

What this means is that when a company decides to carry one such product, it can only choose between the existing formulations allowed by the EPA, and strictly adhere to them. The penalties for changing, even if so slightly, any one of the components, and/or their dosage, are quite severe and could include imprisonment.

The label of the product is also strictly regulated by the EPA (actually written by them), and is mandated by the formula that was chosen among those available. Some of the features of the product can be deleted from the official EPA label, i.e.: most formulations available – ours included – do kill the HIV virus, among many others; but we chose to keep that particular feature off the label of our own bottle since we don't plan to sell to hospitals or other institutions that may have to deal with such a particular virus; just the specific directions on the use of the product for that one particular task would have filled half the space available for the back label! Other than that, not a single word can be changed or added. While we do appreciate and wholeheartedly endorse such strict regulation, sometimes – we have to admit it – things can get a little bit ... on the humorous side! Let's not forget, in fact, that we're dealing with bureaucrats, no matter how well intentioned and (allegedly) well informed. There is only one formulation available that allows in its label the words "Tile and Stone". By further reading that label, one finds also a reference to "sealed marble". If a manufacturer chooses a formulation different from that one, is not allowed to use such wording. Now the funny part: we did extensively test – like we always do – such particular formulation on a vast array of natural stones (somehow, we do not trust much the "stone expertise" of bureaucrats! And that "sealed marble" definition ...) and found out that it was not safe on a few popular marbles, even if sealed with an impregnator sealer for stone! It was etching them! Further investigation, brought into the open that what seems to be the EPA's definition of "sealed marble" makes reference to marble coated with a shellac-type topical "cocoon", which is still quite popular in the furniture industry (many marble table tops and chest-drawer tops are still treated like that). So basically, that particular product can be safely used on shellac, not marble! But what about your marble vanity top, or your foyer floor? They don't have that stuff applied on them, do they?! So, we discarded that particular formula and chose a different one that turned out to be the only one totally safe on all stones we tested it on (a whole lot, believe us!). But guess what: like we mentioned before, we are not allowed to mention anything about stone on our label, because the EPA label of that particular formulation does not include that!! A less scrupulous competitor of ours preferred to choose the unsafe product over the safe one, because it will allow them to use the words tile and stone on their label, thus greatly helping their marketing department. Something bad happens to your marble? They're off the hook: "Hey, take it up with the EPA, we didn't formulate the product and wrote the label, they did!"

We at MB Stone Restoration & Supply don't care much about these marketing trickeries. We care more about your stone than a bunch of words, which could only help us sell more. We hope you will appreciate that.

That said, of course we'd like you to buy our product (that's what we are in business for, after all!), but we want to make as sure as possible that you won't misuse or overuse it. "Education before any sale!" is our corporate motto. It is not just a slogan. We do mean it.