



Patio Parache

Stamped concrete patios are all the rage with area homeowners who demand beauty and value. Here's how *Hudecek Cement* gives you more of both...

Hudecek Cement's loyal customers are more like friends who invite them back year after year to add features like sitting walls, firepits and outdoor kitchens.

by **Bill Yurgen**

Mark Hudecek is an extremely busy guy. Operating his family's 68-year-old business, Hudecek Cement, with his own unique approach for the past 15 years has Mark's schedule far fuller than the average contractor. While most dial their workload way back in the fall as the temperatures begin to plunge, Mark is busy ramping his up.

Hudecek  **Cement**

Mark has been wildly successful, having positioned his company as a contractor of choice for area residents investing in beautiful new stamped concrete patios, walkways, seating walls, or outdoor kitchens. His in-season schedule is packed, so when the off-season finally arrives, Mark rewards himself by...working with concrete. During the off-season, Mark hones his talents as an instructor for one of the two companies in the country that manufactures concrete colorant. When he is not passing on his skills to tradesmen who wish to learn how to create a stamped concrete surface, he can be found in competitions like the one at the "World of Concrete," an industry event held annually in Las Vegas. He also makes very high-end concrete countertops during the winter and, of all things, is studying to become a master chocolatier.

Julie Hudecek, Mark's wife, gave me the details on Mark's passion for artistry and

quality in everything he does, and how that has translated into a very loyal following.

"When Mark took over the company, *Hudecek Cement*, like most other concrete contractors he was primarily involved in laying concrete driveways, walkways, and steps," Judy said. "There weren't a whole lot of creative things being done, so it was a tough fit for someone with a mind like Mark's. He constantly focuses on things like, 'How can I make this different, make it better, make it artistic, and make it visually pleasing?'"

A trip to California and the discovery of a new trend was all Mark needed to become inspired and excited about the possibilities for the family business. Returning home, Mark determined he would be among the first to introduce stamped concrete to the area.

"Educating himself on the business, Mark went from pupil to apprentice to being a master who instructs others. Because he is so insistent on quality, overseeing every job personally, we've enjoyed growth and a very good reputation," Julie added proudly.

Defining "Stamped" Concrete

Stamped concrete, for anyone unfamiliar with the product or the process, is concrete that is formed to mimic the appearance of natural stone, brick, flagstone, slate, or wood in shape, color, and even texture. It is almost always appreciably less expensive than its natural counterparts and is quite often more resistant to traffic and wear

than the real things. Another major benefit is that it can be poured to follow landscape contours to make it very pleasing visually, and it affords the landscape design much more flexibility. The fact that it is far less labor intensive than the cutting and piecing of natural stone or brick serves to make stamped concrete even more economical to use as well as being eco-friendly.



on the cover

For the past 15 years, Mark Hudecek has been the creative force behind the 68-year-old *Hudecek Cement*. He's widely considered to be a master tradesman, having competed in national concrete competitions. His wife, Julie, handles the operational side for the company.

Pocket the Savings

Many people find that stamped concrete provides the natural look they want in a project where the price would be prohibitive to use an alternative material, choosing to either pocket the savings or use it to purchase the grill or spa that otherwise wouldn't have been possible.

The creation of a stamped concrete surface is done by pouring concrete on a prepared surface formed to follow predetermined borders. The borders reflect the layout and design that the homeowners and Mark determine to be the best use of space for their yard. A base color is then chosen to reflect the color of the natural building material the job is intended to reflect. The pattern, or patterns, are then chosen. Hudecek Cement offers 12 different patterns to achieve the look that the homeowner has envisioned.

Next, the stamp (a mold that forms the intended shape of the stone being replicated is used in the first section of the project's surface). Mark also states "Even stamps vary in quality. The better the mold, the better the outcome of having it look like real stone." Once cast, the mold is moved to an adjacent placement to form another section and the process is repeated from there until the entire surface has been transformed. A lot of expertise and artistry is involved in how the mold is rotated to ensure the pattern maintains a natural, random appearance, or forms specific patterns just as you would if laying brick or stone with a machined edge.

see **STAMPED CONCRETE 101**, page 6

Following the mold process, a second or third color will normally be applied. This is to provide a contrasting tone or set of tones that, if done correctly, will further transform the concrete surface to one that can be virtually indistinguishable from the real thing. Finally, a high end sealant is added to maximize the color value within the patio and additionally to help protect the finished product.

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The finished result is beautiful (especially when done by Hudecek Cement), durable, and unique to every installation.

The Value Proposition

When comparing quotations for stamped concrete, Julie advises *Mimi* readers to be aware that there seems to be some misconceptions in the minds of many consumers that one installation is the same as the next. “We use high quality products and our team is incredibly talented,” she notes. “Some contractors offer a very low ‘base price’ and then ask if the customer would like to ‘add on options.’ Those options, like using different patterns, borders, shading colors, high-end sealer, and the use of rebar

(steel reinforcement bars that make the project much more structurally durable), are all things we feel should be included in every job.”

“When we create a patio or an outdoor kitchen area or other improvement, it is something the homeowner’s family will be enjoying for years to come,” she continued. “We use extensive reinforcement in every project, even if it is not required by local code. We want to make sure that what we create for our customers is as durable, functional, and as beautiful as possible.”

Beat the crowd by contacting Hudecek Cement soon to arrange for your new patio, walkway, sitting wall, outdoor kitchen, fire pit, pergola, or other outdoor feature. You may contact them at 216-956-6744. To learn more or to see more examples of their beautiful work, visit www.HudecekCement.com.



Mark is an instructor for his concrete colorant manufacturer in the off season.