

Premium Care, Maintenance & Winterizing Guide


Preserving Your Marine-Grade 316 Stainless Steel Investment

1. Understanding Marine-Grade 316 Stainless Steel

Your outdoor shower is meticulously crafted from premium Marine-Grade 316 Stainless Steel, representing the pinnacle of corrosion resistance and structural endurance for high-exposure environments. However, it is vital to remember that "stainless" does not equal "stain-proof." The combined action of wind-borne coastal salts, ambient humidity, and intense Southern Hemisphere UV rays requires simple, routine maintenance to preserve its flawless factory shine.

2. Preventing Tea Staining (The Coastal Rule)

In highly concentrated maritime or coastal areas, airborne sea salt crystals settle directly onto the face of the metal. If left uncleaned, these salt deposits accumulate, concentrate, and result in a light brown, rust-colored surface discoloration known across the industry as **tea staining**. Tea staining is purely superficial, visual oxidation; it is entirely cosmetic and does not compromise or damage the underlying structural integrity of your solid steel shower.

 **The Golden Maintenance Rule: Treat your outdoor shower exactly like a premium vehicle—it requires a quick, periodic fresh water washdown to remain clean, brilliant, and free from corrosive build-up.**

- **Routine Rinsing:** Thoroughly hose down the exterior body of the shower fixture with clean, fresh tap water at least **once per month**. If your property sits directly on an ocean beachfront or high-exposure cliff edge, increase this to a quick **fortnightly** spray to rinse away accumulated salt crusts before they bond to the surface.
- **How to Remove Tea Staining:** If light brown cosmetic spotting begins to appear, **never use steel wool, wire abrasive scrubbers, or harsh chemical bleaching agents**. These aggressive compounds will permanently scratch or score the high-polish finish and physically strip away the steel's native chromium oxide self-healing protective layer.
- **Approved Maintenance Products:** Clean gently using a lint-free microfiber cloth or a non-scratch household nylon cleaning pad paired with a specialized stainless steel surface cleaner or marine-grade metal polish. Trusted products like **3M Stainless Steel Cleaner** or **Innoshine B570** are highly effective and readily available at local Bunnings Warehouses and commercial New Zealand hardware suppliers. Always rinse the unit comprehensively with fresh water after every wipe down.

3. Winterizing Guide (Frost and Freeze Protection)

When environmental water drops below freezing temperatures, its volume expands by roughly 9%. If standing water remains trapped inside your outdoor shower's internal mixing valves, cartridges, or fixed internal pipelines during a severe New Zealand winter frost, this expansion will generate immense pressure and crack, burst, or split the brass and steel mechanisms from the inside out.

To keep your shower fully protected against seasonal ice cracking, follow these mandatory winterizing rules ahead of local cold snaps:

- **Isolate Water Supplies:** Locate and fully close the dedicated water isolation valve or shut-off valve that supplies water exclusively out to your outdoor shower line.
- **Completely Drain the System:** Turn the primary shower mixer or tap valves completely to the **fully open** position. Allow all standing water held within the vertical columns and shower head to exit the unit completely under natural gravity.
- **Leave Valves Open:** Keep the internal mixer or tap handles adjusted to a slightly open position throughout the duration of the winter season. This ensures that any residual micro-moisture can expand harmlessly into open air if sub-zero frost conditions develop.

For additional care queries or maintenance support, please contact us at richard@clawfoot-baths.co.nz.