

Granite, Granite Countertops, Tombstone, Special Stone

Counter-question ? what's the best counter top for your kitchen? The choices can be confusing ?there's so much available in kitchen counters. From natural stone like granite and marble to synthetics such as Formica, Ceramic tiles, Corian - even environmentally damaging products like wood. So what should you choose, and why?

Ideally, most people (naturally) want to coordinate their kitchen counter top to the decor and color theme in their kitchen. In addition to that, they're probably looking at aesthetic appeal and cost. And would normally like to get a durable surface with suitable edges, that is easy to use and clean, has a smooth surface, is heat resistant, water resistant, chemical resistant, won't scratch, stain, chip or crack, and last, but not least, is easily repaired. Taking each option available on the market today, we can take a look to see if it meets the criteria vital to the ideal counter top for your kitchen. Formica A thin layer of plastic joined to a particleboard or wood ? that's what forms a laminate like Formica. It comes in attractive colors and designs, simulating materials like granite, is relatively inexpensive and fairly durable with edging options. Easy to clean, and smooth in surface it is also stain resistant.

It meets seven of the fifteen criteria identified, but is that good enough? Few people find Formica aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, hot objects placed on it melt the surface, and wetting and flooding damage its surface beyond repair. Cleaning materials you use in the kitchen damage Formica, making it dull and scratched. Knives scratch the surface. Remember, you cannot repair it. Additionally, Formica warps and fades with prolonged use. Ceramic Tiles Ceramic tiles, joined by grouting tiles together come in an array of designs and colors. Some homeowners find them attractive, and they are durable, stain, water and heat resistant and practically scratch proof. Repairable, with a little difficulty, they're attractively priced, though more expensive than laminates,

They need frequent cleaning, though, because grouting easily gathers dirt, a situation not desirable in a kitchen. Cleaning grouting frequently is not only time-consuming, but can be very tiresome. Additionally, ceramic tiles are prone to chipping and cracking.

Ceramic tile counters fare well on most counts, but its major drawback ?that of maintenance ?makes it an impractical solution for kitchen use. Corian Corian is made using acrylic and or polyester plastic. It comes in many colors and designs, including granite look-alikes, and is available in a matte or glossy finish. It is water resistant, does not usually stain and is easy to clean. Unaffected by chemical use in cleaning agents, it is repairable.

However, Corian is not heat resistant. Placing hot pans on it damages the surface beyond repair. It is expensive, and scratches easily, though the scratches can be removed through repair. Additionally, being manmade, Corian is not eco-friendly. But most of all, Corian is not aesthetically appealing to the discerning consumer. Corian is essentially synthetic, and its finish cannot match the timbre and antiquity of natural stone. Its not that its cost effective, either.

Corian meets some of the criteria of a good counter top, but its lack of resistance to heat and scratching, and its synthetic finish do not offer value for money to a cost conscious consumer. Wood Wood counter tops, made using strips of thick wood joined together, are durable with care, attractive and functional, especially if you chop a lot. They are easy to clean as well and you can remove scratches by sandpapering.

However, wood counters do not offer much scope in color or design and need a lot of care. Compared to other counters, they do not last as long. They are neither heat nor water resistant and scratch easily. Additionally, their edges warp over time and need treatment. Wood is not environmentally friendly either.

It is expensive, too. The question facing consumers is, is it worth the extra care with all its drawbacks at this cost? Granite A natural stone of immense beauty, granite is available in many colors and finishing styles, from polished to matte and textured. It is strong, very durable, easy to use and clean and does not attract dirt. Heat, water and chemical resistant, granite does not stain or scratch. One of the hardest materials in existence, it does not usually chip or crack, but is replaceable in the event of a mishap.

Granite is expensive, but offers many benefits in a high usage area like a kitchen. Additionally, its aesthetic appeal is unmatched by any other alternative. Marble Marble is also aesthetically appealing and hygienic, but can stain and scratch more easily. It is not as hard as granite and therefore not as durable and does not react well with chemical cleaning agents.

Considering the facts at hand, granite provides the best option for a kitchen counter top. The cost of granite is an investment, which more than pays off over the decades, in terms of ease, convenience, cleanliness, low maintenance cost, durability and aesthetics.

Other civilizations soon followed The Greeks are famous for their magnificent Temple of Artemis, the giant marbled pillars of the Parthenon and their pools and baths, lined with marble; the Romans for colossal structures like the elliptical Coliseum with its arches, and tiered seating for 50000 people, and the Pantheon pillared with Egyptian granite. And despite the dark ages, the use of natural stone continued through the medieval period to the Renaissance in buildings like the Notre Dame in France and official residences through most of Europe.

Ancient greek temple of Hephaistos, in Ancient Agora, beneath Acropolis in Athens - Greece.

Meanwhile, in India Meanwhile, in India, artisans sculpted rock caves and temples into intricate stone carvings and fine sculptures that are remarkably intact until today. Soon enough, most kings and noblemen built palaces and opulent residences adorned with gossamer marble floors, pillars, ceilings, and decorated with artifacts and marble inlays on furniture. The jewel in India's crown, the Taj Mahal, constructed entirely from marble and encrusted with jewels and gems was the crowning glory of this period.

A framed carved marble panel in the world-famous monument tribute to love, Taj Mahal

Back in the West The Renaissance and its discovery of improved methods of quarrying and technical use brought innovation and novelty to the use of natural stone. Michelangelo fashioned sculptures from marble; ornate decoration of facades gained popularity. Until about a century ago, this style remained in vogue. Then a shift in decoration styles as a result of changing cultural thought and industrial processes brought in a wave of functional design - it was no longer stylish to be decorative.

Michelangelo's statue of David in the Gallery of the Accademia

New ways of thinking But the last decade or so generated new ways of thinking. A new consciousness of the environment- of using eco-friendly materials- brought architects to the drawing board again to find aesthetic yet cost effective, durable and environmentally friendly alternatives to manmade materials. They recognized the popular demand for creating a unique interior, a decorative one yet again, but using materials that could create a homely feel to suit many preferences. One they could use to create the warmth of an old country cottage or a palatial residence. Or anything, from a sleek singles apartment or a stylish family home to a period house or a zany open plan studio. What better place to start than natural stone? This time significant advances in technology aided them.

Additionally, they found natural stone more adaptive. Available in a large variety of colors and patterns, natural stone is practical and adds to the aesthetic value of every part of a home - from the roof, walls, flooring, furniture, even the garden and exterior walls. It transforms a four-walled house or apartment into a comfortable home, into warm colors, or a fusion of vibrant ones, infusing warmth and creating a relaxing atmosphere - creating a haven far from the strains and stresses of the modern day world. For these very reasons, more and more people use natural stone today than ever before. After all, it has withstood the ravages of time over the last 4 billion years. Considering the fact that natural stone is as old as creation, as ancient as time and space as we know it, you cannot but feel a sense of awe at the marvel and beauty of its creation. Since the Egyptians first used granite and limestone, nearly 5000 years ago, the use of natural stone, its quarrying, fabrication and technical testing have only improved and become more sophisticated over the millennia, making it an affordable, attractive and feasible alternative for most people.

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