

# Making A Solid Choice: OUR GUIDE TO COUNTERTOPS

*With what seems like a million choices in countertop materials, it's not only confusing to know what the best option is for your kitchen and bath, but also overwhelming to stay on top of what's new. We'd like to help you navigate the countertop wars and choose the best fit for your family.*



**Materials:** Wood or butcher-block countertops are made from straight cuts of wood that are glued together.

**Benefits:** Warm, hardworking and budget-friendly. Though they do require sealant, unlike other cost effective options like laminate, wood is highly heat resistant. When sealed properly, the wood is completely sanitary, even for cutting meat. Customizable with stains and finishes.

**Varieties:** Wood countertops can be cut from many types of wood, including Ash, Beech, Birch, Cherry, Hickory or Pine, among others.

**Good For:** Traditional, modern or retro kitchens and eco-friendly homes. Easy maintenance kitchens that want a warmer feel.



**Material:** Concrete countertops are made from a general-purpose mortar mix: one part cement to three parts sand.

**Benefits:** Heat-resistant; very durable if sealed; shapes, edge details and texture can be fully customized (i.e. you can add recycled glass or stone pieces into the mixture); can be made to look seamless with a filler and can be stained any variety of colors.

**Varieties:** Leaving it natural looks like smooth grey concrete, but it can be custom stained or colored, or even mixed with other materials to add texture.

**Good For:** Modern, industrial or rustic style kitchens with moderate use.



**Material:** Stainless steel is made of a metal alloy with chromium content of around 10 percent.

**Benefits:** Industrial strength; durable; easy to clean and antibacterial. It can be cut to any size and installed without seams. It's impervious to heat, rust, corrosion and stains. Coordinates with any finishes.

**Varieties:** Available in satin, antique matte or specialty finishes.

**Good For:** Modern or industrial style kitchens; families concerned with hygienic cooking; high-traffic kitchens and eco-friendly kitchens (it's 100 percent recyclable).



**Material:** Non-porous, quarried natural stone. Composed mostly of mineral talc with higher amounts of quartz for countertop use.

**Benefits:** Beautiful color; smooth matte feel; resistant to bacteria and can be sanded or oiled to restore. Doesn't require yearly sealing.

**Varieties:** Available in a range of greys from light to dark, all with subtle veining.

**Good For:** Any kitchen.



**Material:** Most popular material, until recently, Granite is a natural stone that is cut and polished for surface use.

**Benefits:** Durable; heat and scratch resistant and available in a wide array of patterns, colorways and styles. Timeless and easy to clean, though yearly after maintenance is advised.

**Varieties:** Available in nearly endless colorways and patterns.

**Good For:** Any kitchen, especially high-traffic kitchens.



**Material:** Having come a long way in look and functionality, Laminate is made of particleboard with sheets of laminate or melamine resin glued together for a sturdy, solid surface.

**Benefits:** Budget-friendly; mimics granite, marble or even steel at a fraction of the cost and it's moisture-proof. Designers like Jonathan Adler are designing patterned countertops for a one-of-a-kind look.

**Varieties:** Patterns mimicking stone, marble, wood, fabric, leather and even rusted metal, in addition to richly hued solid colors and textured patterns.

**Good For:** Mid-Century Modern or Retro kitchens. Kitchen islands and easy maintenance kitchens.



**Material:** A natural stone that's cut and honed or polished for surface use.

**Benefits:** Lends a natural, organic feel to the kitchen, and also a hint of luxury. Can be as affordable as granite and even less expensive than quartz. A naturally cool surface, great for baking.

**Varieties:** Most commonly shades of white, often with grey veins, though other varieties can be found. Choose honed for a softer, more comfortable matte look or polished for a high-shine, luxurious look.

**Good For:** Lightly used kitchens and Type A personalities who love a truly clean, bright kitchen; or messy cooks who are chill about the occasional etch or stain to which a naturally porous material is prone.



**Material:** Quartz is an engineered material made from bits of stone, resins and pigments that can be dyed a variety of hues.

**Benefits:** Practically maintenance free; resistant to stains, scratches, heat, acid and nearly unbreakable. And thanks to the non-porous surface, Quartz surfaces don't need to be sealed like natural stone surfaces.

**Varieties:** Available in a wide range of colors and patterns.

**Good For:** Larger families and busy cooks.



**Material:** A new countertop material, Volcanic Lava Stone is extracted by hand from open-air quarries (usually in Auvergne, France), then cut into slabs, glazed with enamel and fired in a kiln at 1,300 degrees. During cooling, a smooth crackled finish develops.

**Benefits:** Non-porous; highly resistant to stains, scratches, shock and temperature changes; low maintenance; durable; each slab is completely unique and available in a wide variety of colors; can be installed without seams.

**Varieties:** Available in just about any color imaginable, including neutrals. Can be shiny or matte with an ultra smooth, crackled finish.

**Good For:** Large budget kitchens; statement kitchens and busy cooks; eco-friendly kitchens (nearly indestructible, so waste is minimal).



**Material:** Quartzite is a natural stone that is cut and polished for surface use.

**Benefits:** Since it's harder than Granite, Quartzite does not scratch or etch but as a natural stone, it still needs sealing to help resist staining. It's also heat-resistant and an easy-care stone, needing just a wipe from a damp cloth and mild soap to clean. Veining varies from slab to slab, so no two are exactly alike.

**Varieties:** Most often white or grey with brown and black veins, but you can occasionally find colored Quartzite if the original rock had impurities that impacted color - for example, iron oxide can create pink or red hues, where other minerals can add yellow, green or even blue.

**Good For:** A long-term, high-quality kitchen that gets high use but needs easy maintenance. Though natural stone can be quite costly, the quality is unmatched.