

Which Countertop Is Best For Your Kitchen?

A Countertop Buying Guide



Comparing Different Types of Countertops

We Weigh the Pros & Cons of
the Most Popular Kitchen Countertop Materials
to Help You Find the Apple of Your Eye

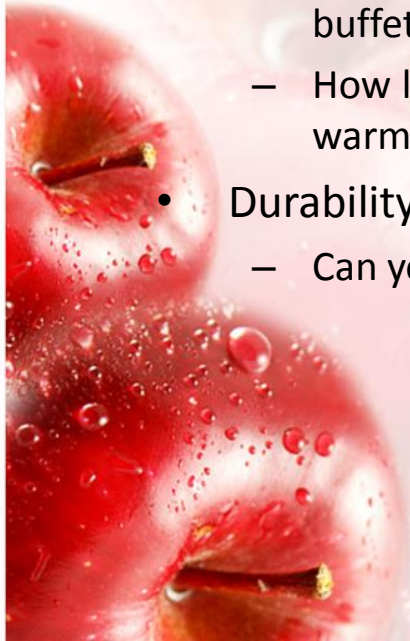
Countertops Can Make or Break a Kitchen

- Your selection of a countertop material can profoundly impact the aesthetics and functionality of your kitchen.
- To help you decide, we review and compare the most popular countertop materials.



Factors To Consider in Weighing Your Kitchen Counter and Island Top Options

- Meal Preparation
 - Do you cut, chop, dice and slice directly on your counters, or do you use a cutting board?
- Baking
 - Do you require a smooth, expansive surface for rolling and kneading dough, for instance?
- Serving Meals
 - Do you use worktops for serving appetizers, meals, desserts and snacks buffet style?
 - How likely are you to place hot casseroles on counters? Or do you use warming trays?
- Durability
 - Can you live with occasional chips or dings in your kitchen counters?



Factors To Consider in Weighing Your Kitchen Counter and Island Top Options

- Maintenance
 - Are you OK with sealing or oiling counters from time to time and to sand out stains if necessary?
- Aesthetics
 - Do you want countertops that make a design statement, or that blend in with your décor?
- Trendiness
 - How often do you remodel to keep up with the latest trends?
- Sustainability
 - Is it important to you to find a natural material that is sustainable and environmentally friendly?
- Cost
 - How important is cost? Is it your most important criterion, of little concern, or none at all?



A Snap Shot Comparison of Popular Countertop Types

MATERIAL	COMPOSITION	Beautiful/ Variegated	Scratch/Chip/ Ding Resistant	Heat Resistant	Stain Resistant	Low Main- tenance	Naturally Occurring	Sustainable/ Enviro-Friendly	Affordable
Butcher Block	Wood	●●●	●●	●	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
Granite	Natural stone	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	○	●
Marble	Natural stone	●●●	●	●●●	●	●●●	●●●	○	●
Limestone	Natural stone	●●●	●●	●●●	●	●●	●●●	○	●●●
Slate	Natural stone	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	○	●●●
Soapstone	Natural stone	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	○	●●●
Quartz	Engineered stone	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	○	●●
Solid Surface	Synthetic resin	●●	●●	●	●●●	●●●	○	●	●●
Tile	Clay & minerals	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●
Concrete	Cement & pigments	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●	●	●
Recycled Glass	Crushed glass & acrylic	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●
Stainless Steel	Iron alloys	●	●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●
Laminate	Particle board & plastic	●●	●	●	●	●●●	●	●	●●●

Butcher Block Countertops

Hardwood rails are bonded together to form butcher block countertops. They're available in various wood species and in different construction/grain styles. They offer diversity in color, look and feel.



Pros

- Natural beauty and warmth
- Smooth for baking prep
- Can be cut upon
- Recyclable, renewable, sustainable
- Very affordable

Cons

- Susceptible to nicks and gouges (which can be repaired)
- Susceptible to stains and scorches (which can be sanded out)
- Needs monthly re-oiling

Shop the most popular [wood types and grain styles](#).



Granite Countertops

Granite is a natural stone appreciated for its visual richness and variability in colors and patterns. Igneous rock, it was originally molten (liquefied by heat) deep in the earth before it cooled and formed stone.



Pros

- Highly heat-resistant
- Quite durable
- Wide variety of looks.

Cons

- If not sealed properly upon installation and annually thereafter, can absorb liquids that stain.
- Cost. Must be bought by the slab and installation can be expensive.
- Environmental impact. Must be quarried and oftentimes transported long distances.



Marble Countertops

Like granite, marble is a beautiful igneous rock that's at the high end of the cost curve. However, in contrast to granite, marble can scratch and stain easily. Consequently, marble is typically recommended for bathrooms over kitchens.



Pros

- Natural beauty
- Durable
- Heat-resistant

Cons

- Scratches and stains easily.
- Environmental impact. Must be quarried and oftentimes transported long distances.



Limestone Countertops

Limestone, another natural stone, is comprised of sea shells and fossils. Typically white or a sandy hue, limestone makes an appealing complement for kitchens that feature a good amount of stainless steel.



Pros

- Natural beauty
- Durable
- Exceptional beauty
- Highly resistant to heat
- Abundant, so affordable

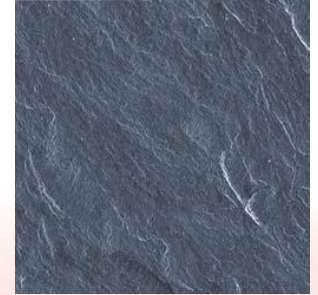
Cons

- Relatively soft. Likely to show scratches, mars and stains.
- Given its porous nature, limestone must be sealed from time to time.



Slate Countertops

Another metamorphic rock, slate is formed when mudstone (aka shale) or basalt is exposed to moderate pressure and heat over time. Slate can be found in colors ranging from black to gray to brown, but color variation within an individual slab is very modest.



Pros

- Slabs tend to be uniform in appearance.
- Non-porous. Won't absorb liquid spills.
- Doesn't chip or crack easily.
- Heat resistant.
- Affordable.

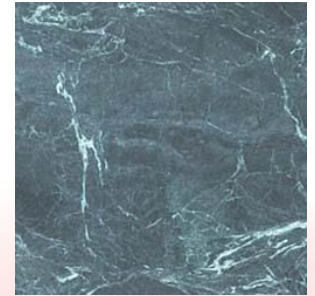
Cons

- Limited and subdued color palette.
- You will need to apply mineral oil to slate to maintain its coloration.



Soapstone Countertops

Soapstone too is a metamorphic rock (i.e., it changes form due to exposure to intense heat and pressure). The word “soap” is appended to its name due to the soapy feel of the stone. Chances are, if you took chemistry in school you’re familiar with soapstone and likely even conducted experiments on it.



Pros

- Visually interesting.
- Makes a rugged work surface - virtually impervious to stains and intense heat.
- Quite affordable.

Cons

- Coloration varies only slightly. Ranges from light to charcoal gray (but with some whitish variegation).
- Can suffer scratches, which can typically be sanded out.
- Mineral oil should be applied to help ensure a uniform appearance.



Quartz Countertops

Quartz is a manufactured product. That's why quartz countertops are also known as engineered stone countertops. They're actually a blend of 93-95% crushed natural quartz plus epoxy resin.



Pros

- Engineered, so available in a wider range of colors than are natural stones.
- Won't chip, crack or stain as easily as stone.
- Priced comparable to or a bit below granite and marble.

Cons

- Some people dislike the non-natural look of quartz.
- Not as resistant to high heat as are certain other countertop materials.



Solid Surface Countertops

Made of the synthetic resins acrylic and polyester. Best known in this class is Dupont's Corian™.



Pros

- Wide color variety
- No seams
- Non-porous
- Low maintenance.

Cons

- Less heat resistant than stone surfaces.
- Susceptible to scratching.
- Price can approach that of natural stone.
- Some people judge them unnatural in appearance.



Tile Countertops

Ceramic and porcelain tiles are basically thin bricks of clay, minerals and water fired at high temperatures; coated with a paint-like substance; then fired again.



Pros

- Can deliver a beautiful look.
- Resist heat, scratches and stains.
- Customizable. Available in different colors, interesting color patterns and decorative tiles.
- Quite affordable.

Cons

- Prone to chip or crack when impacted by heavy objects
- Can be uneven
- Some maintenance is required to keep grout lines clean and sanitary.



Concrete Countertops

Made of a mix of sand and cement in a 3-to-1 ratio.



Pros

- Add color to make it complement any kitchen décor.
- Inlay into concrete other materials, such as tile, recycled glass or stone pieces.
- Seamlessly integrate sinks.
- Once sealed, concrete counters provide a non-porous surface that's resistant to both stains and heat.

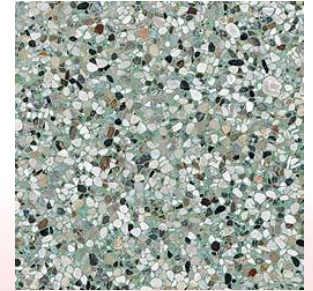
Cons

- Some consider the look to be “industrial”
- Cost can approach that of high-end stone countertops.
- Must be sealed to make them non-porous and heat- and-stain- resistant.



Recycled Glass Countertops

Crushed glass mixed with acrylic. Recycled glass accounts for a large percentage of any glass countertop. That's why they are commonly called recycled glass countertops and earn high ratings from environmentalists.



Pros

- Crushed glass of diverse colors can be mixed together with acrylic to create a striking blend.
- No two are exactly alike.
- Don't readily chip.
- Typically more affordable than high-end stones such as granite.

Cons

- Not the sturdiest. Excessive weight can cause them to crack.
- Acrylic surfaces can mar or stain.



Stainless Steel Countertops

Sleek and modern look makes them a great choice for modern or urban kitchens. There's good reason they're ubiquitous in commercial kitchens. Steel is strong, durable, hygienic, heat resistant, and easy to clean.



Pros

- Stylish, good looks.
- Durable and easy to clean.
- Resist heat, stains, even bacteria.

Cons

- Can be scratched, dented and dinged.
- Can be noisy.
- Tend to show fingerprints and smudges.
- Skew toward the high end of the price scale



Laminate Countertops

The base of a laminate countertop is actually particle board, made of compressed wood chips and resin adhesive. Onto this base are bonded thin sheets of plastic. .



Pros

- Many color options.
- Easy to clean.
- Inexpensive.

Cons

- Not durable.
- Easy to cut, scratch or burn.
- Only available in solid colors.



So Many Great Choices!

We're biased; we love butcher block.

Check out our full line of
[John Boos premium countertops.](#)

