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Countertop Selection Guide

When selecting your countertop materials, there are several things you should consider: your lifestyle, budget constraints and the overall look and durability of the material. It is important that the material is not only comfortable to work on, but since it is the hardest working surface in a defined space, it also needs to perform at a high level. You will quickly find that the old standby, a Formica type countertop, is still available, but it has been supplemented by many additional choices that have various levels of performance.

Selecting the pattern and color of your countertop:

One challenge in this area is finding countertop material samples large enough to enable you to make a decision. In some cases such as for quartz, you may find cardboard take home samples with the pattern and color printed on one side. To get a bigger sample you can take a handful of these and tape them together to lay on top of your cabinets. It is advised that you look at the samples both in natural daylight as well as nighttime lighting. Do not be afraid to ask for additional samples that might not be sitting out to take with you. Many countertop brands offer samples for free or a small fee, which in the long run is well worth the extra effort to obtain.

Selecting the countertop edge:

Selecting the edge for your countertop involves not only personal taste but also is an area where you can either save or pay a premium depending on what type of edge treatment you select. Multiple curves on edges will cost more than a straight edge with a slightly curved on the top side. Wood edges will cost more than having Formica wrap around the edge. You should also keep in mind the practical aspects of whatever edge treatment you chose. For example is it likely that a member of your household will be the right height so their belt buckle marks the wood edge?

Combining Surfaces:

The ideal kitchen would have a mixture of the countertop surfaces in the chart above. Below are ways to combine different textures and colors in your kitchen. Some form of stone or solid-surface material can be installed near the range area for placement of hot pots and pans. A solid-surface or plastic laminate can be placed around the sink for easy cleaning. Countertop combinations can be expensive but will ensure you get the best of all options.

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Choosing Your Countertop

Read the pros-and-cons chart below to determine which countertop is perfect for your kitchen:

Countertop Material	Advantages	Disadvantages
Laminate: sheeting glued down to plywood or particle board substrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best value • Durable • Resists water • Easy to install • Easiest to clean and maintain • Hundreds of color and style options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate for cutting • Visible edges • Visible seams
Solid Surface: nonporous, acrylic material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resists water, bacteria and stains • Easy to sand • Nonporous • Virtually seamless for easy cleaning • Integral backsplash and sink options • Available in a range of colors and patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susceptible to scratching • Less heat-resistant than quartz or granite
Granite: durable, smooth, natural stone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly heat-resistant • Resists stains and bacteria when treated and properly sealed • Great for baking preparations • Rich visual texture in a range of colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porous; must be sealed once a year to resist stains and bacteria • Can split if vein is stressed • Visible seams
Quartz: nonporous, natural stone surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resists heat, water, bacteria and stains • Most durable option, resists scratches • Nonporous • Easy to clean • Feels like natural stone, requires low maintenance • More consistent colors and patterns than natural stone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard-to-remove scratches • Visible seams • Limited color selection

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