

# Stone Options for Your Kitchen Counter

## Granite, Quartz, Marble?

By Bob Blanchard  
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Our kitchens are the heart of our homes. It's the room to which family and friends are naturally drawn. Kitchen countertops function in a variety of ways: as food assembly station, landing spot, office and schoolwork desks and gathering table. Options in stone for countertops are plenty. All function well and provide a strong personal statement within our homes. There is a material for everyone, so which is right for your kitchen? The following is a breakdown of the advantages and considerations of the most popular options.



### Granite

Granite is nowadays almost the norm in most kitchens. As more and more dramatic stones come to market-place and consumers are exposed to new colors and varieties of stone, the color palettes continue to change. There are no inherent problems with granite and maintenance requires simple washing with soap and water. Any minor chips can be easily repaired. Most oil stains evaporate in a couple of days. Almost everyone will be happy with this choice.

### Man-made Quartz

Manmade quartz products such as Caesarstone, Cambria and Silestone are nearly unsusceptible to problems. They require the same cleaning with soap and water and do not stain. However, very hot objects must have a towel or trivet down to protect the counter from discoloration. These products are the easiest to maintain. The manufacturers introduce new colors each year. The only downside is that up close, they lack the same appearance as natural stone. They are very well suited in modern kitchens with clean, simple styles with European cabinets such as Poliform, Siematic or Poggin Pohl. You will experience no worries with manmade quartz.

### Marble (and other traditional options)

The old world stones that have been around for centuries; limestone from Jerusalem, marbles such as white marble from Italy (the historically original stone countertop) and soapstone from the United States, Brazil and India. These stones create the most inviting, calming and understated looks of all options available. Many people have avoided these beautiful stones out of fear of maintenance issues. If you want your kitchen to remain almost perfect, they are not for you. If you live in an older home or do not worry about small imperfections, marble and limestone can be the best stone for you.

Limestone and marble can stain, but most stains evaporate or just become part of the stone's pattern or patina. The fossils in limestone hide this particularly well. All of these stones should come to your house with a honed or satin finish. The acids in food can scratch a polished marble. Installing the tops with a honed finish will eliminate the worry of maintaining a polish altogether. Soapstone is a different type and look from all the others and is maintained with mineral oil, creating a rich dark color in shades of blue, green or dark charcoal.

### Finish Options

Next are some new finishes for stones other than the usual polished finish. Honing for marble, limestone or soapstone is the most common. Granites tend to have a softer look after honing (a sort of matte finish) or the popular antique old world finish that creates a textured surface in the stone. Your hands can feel the texture as light creates shadows and highlights, and it is very forgiving to potential damage as a result. All of these types of stones and finishes need to be sampled and re-

viewed within a kitchen or bathroom to make a final selection. A small sample will not show the variation and nuances in finish or color. A large sample, such as a full slab of the finished stone, is most effective when making a selection.

### How Do You Choose?

You can view new colors and fin-



ishes at R. Bratti Associates, Inc. We welcome you to visit our location in Alexandria just north of Old Town. We stock an extensive inventory of full slabs to select from. We are happy to sort through the materials so you can choose what you like best. After measurement we encourage clients to layout the countertop templates on the slabs to ensure all aspects of the selected slabs are incorporated into the countertops. We can be reached at 703-549-1135. Ask for Bob or Tara. Walk-ins are welcome, and Saturdays are by appointment.

### About Bob Blanchard

Bob Blanchard has been in the tile and stone industry for the last 35 years. He is an active member and serves on the board for the National Kitchen and Bath Association for the Washington, D.C. chapter. Bob also serves on the National Board of the Fabricators Council.

## R. Bratti Associates, Inc. Granite & Marble Specialists

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Marble Institute of America  
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