



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PICKING A COUNTERTOP

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Introduction:

"What's the best countertop for my new kitchen?" is a very common question we hear from homeowners. So we decided to make a guide that details the 9 most commonly used materials, and how to know which one is right for you.

This guide is organized into two main sections: Section #1 goes over the 4 **stone material types**, and Section #2 details the 5 that are **not stone-based**.

Now first, it is important to note that there are five critical factors to consider when deciding on the right countertop for you. These are:

- Factor 1 - How durable the material is
- Factor 2 - What it costs
- Factor 3 - How "unique-to-you" it can be made to look
- Factor 4 - How easy it is to maintain
- Factor 5 - Overall aesthetic

Every person has their own individual tastes, so depending on your personality, habits, and goals, which of the above factors matter to you in comparison with the others will be based on you. And while aesthetic taste is entirely dependent on you, we CAN help you determine which of the material types would suit you best based on the above factors.

In order to accomplish this, we developed a rating system, where we rate each countertop material type according to the above 5 Factors. Each material is given a score from 1-10 for each category, and then their ratings across all categories was added up to a "Total Score" out of a possible 50 points. We did not rate aesthetics because that depends on each person's individual taste, and we split the "durability" factor into "**physical durability**" and "**elemental durability**".

Physical durability is defined as how resilient the material is to scratches, cracks, chips, and dents.

Elemental durability covers how well it resists hot temperatures, staining, mold/mildew growth, water damage, and bacteria accumulation.



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Affordability is obviously rated based on how expensive the material is per square ft. in comparison to other options on the market.

Customization is how varied the designs can be, based on your tastes. For example, granite is a great material... but it's not very customizable. You'll pretty much get "that granite look", and big square shapes. Tempered glass countertops on the other hand, can be made in any design and any shape.

Convenience is a descriptor of how little maintenance is required to keep the countertop clean and fresh. The more maintenance required (such as cleaning, resealing, sanding, etc.), the lower the score.

The way that we created the ratings is that we had each of our project managers and owners do independent research and talk to countertop manufacturers. Then each person individually rated every material in these categories. Then all of the scores were added up and divided by the number of people who provided ratings to establish the **mean rating** for each material and category.

Finally - For the charts, a higher number for each factor is generally better, meaning a rating of 8 in durability means it is more durable than a rating of 4. However, the **Total Score** rating at the bottom of each material type is not necessarily the be-all-end-all answer to how good a countertop is. These are the 9 most common countertops for a reason, with each material having it's own strengths and weaknesses. If a certain factor such as customization is important to you, but cost isn't... then a material having a low total score due to lower-than-average affordability should not deter you away from picking this material.

Alright. Now that we've got that out of the way, let's dig in...

Section #1: The Stone Material Types:

	GRANITE	QUARTZ	MARBLE	SOAPSTONE
Physical Durability	9	10	6	5
Elemental Durability	10	8	7	10
Affordability	3	6	5	5
Customization	6	8	7	7
Convenience	9	10	8	7
Total Score:	37	42	33	34

Granite:

Granite is THE gold standard when it comes to durability and aesthetics. This material can withstand hot temperatures, cold temperatures, water leaks, stains, scratching, bacteria, germs, wild children, and bear maulings. It does all of this while also being visually appealing and unique in its character.



Due to their manufacturing nature, no two granite tops will ever be the same. These countertops are made directly from large slabs of granite rock, making each piece unique. They are made from a variety of different minerals and come in a multitude of patterns and colors. So if



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you have a need for a durable and beautiful countertop, there is a granite countertop out there for you! These countertops can come in various finishes as well. Polished, leathered, caressed, honed, brushed, river-washed, and sand-blasted are just a few examples.

Granite is so durable that it will wear down knife blades if used to cut upon. So it is recommended to always use a cutting board when using a knife instead of cutting directly on the surface of the countertop. It's so hard you have to protect the knife!

And unlike some of the options we'll describe later, you **can put hot pans and pots** onto the surface of a granite top without worrying about any damage. Fluctuations in temperature are powerless against the durability of granite... so it is perfect for use near a range or cooktop.

Now though granite is an outstanding option, there are some downsides to it. The most obvious of these is that the many benefits of granite come with a hefty price. Be prepared for much higher prices when compared to other material options for a countertop. Granite is usually over \$100 per square foot, and over \$400 per square foot is not uncommon for more exotic stones.

Second, although granite is incredibly durable, it is also very inflexible. **If something heavy is dropped onto a granite counter, it can cause cracking.** Although uncommon, it is definitely something to be aware of.

When properly sealed, granite will resist stains and won't absorb liquids. However, it can become susceptible to staining if you neglect to seal it due to stone's porous nature. This leaves it vulnerable to bacteria settling in, along with mold and mildew. Yearly sealing will keep a granite countertop in like new condition for a human lifetime (or longer!)... so proper maintenance is a must if you think granite is the right option for you.

Lastly, since granite is very heavy and comes in solid slabs, it is difficult to handle and install properly, so hiring a professional company is a must when getting this countertop into your home.

Quick Recap: Granite is a top quality material for countertops, but is very expensive. It is very scratch-resistant and can even dull knives if the countertop is used to cut upon and comes in all kinds of colors. However it can be damaged if a heavy object is dropped on it. It is also incredibly heat resistant, so hot pans and pots can be set upon it without damaging its surface. It will resist stains, mold, and bacteria if sealed every year.

Quartz:

Quartz is one of the hardest materials on the earth and is the **most durable option** when it comes to kitchen top manufacturing materials. Not only that, but it is also visually appealing and comes in a variety of colors. It is one of the most common naturally-occurring minerals found on earth, but don't let its commonplace nature fool you!



Quartz has a hardness of 7 on the "Mohs Hardness Scale", meaning it can't be scratched by steel nails, glass, or knife blades. So if you have a quartz countertop, you're going to need some specialized tools to even attempt to scratch the surface! However, take note that ceramic is slightly harder than steel. So if you use ceramic knives, take care to prevent the blade from scratching your countertop.

Unlike granite countertops, Quartz countertops are manufactured and are not made from slabs of stone. The countertops are made primarily from ground quartz crystals and polyester resins for binding and color. Sometimes recycled glass or metallic flakes are added to the mix for a more sparkly design. The resin seals off pores and prevents staining. This means that **quartz countertops never need to be resealed**. This is a great advantage over granite, which needs resealing every year to prevent it from staining.

Until recently, quartz' biggest downfall was its lack of color choices. But now in 2019, thanks to recent innovations to its manufacturing process, quartz can mimic the look of any stone found in nature or otherwise. You can also choose different finishes for the countertop surface such as glossy, matte, or slate... making it easy to find the perfect look for your kitchen.

Quartz can also come in virtually any shape you could want. You can find jumbo slabs for your project, or bind two slabs together with imperceptible seams for any customer design. This is because quartz will not chip like real stone when cut. So if you **want curves or bends for a more organically shaped countertop**, quartz can be an excellent choice.

Thanks to the resins binding these countertops together, quartz is antimicrobial and cannot be stained. Mold, mildew, and odor-causing bacteria cannot penetrate it. This makes it a great surface to prepare food. These countertops can also last up to a human lifetime depending on your manufacturer.

Although there are many benefits to quartz, there are a few cons that may mark it off your list as a possible countertop option. For example, quartz is quite expensive when compared to other options available. So if affordability is the top priority for you, it may not be the best choice. At \$60 to \$90 per square foot of the material, be prepared to pay for the quality it provides.

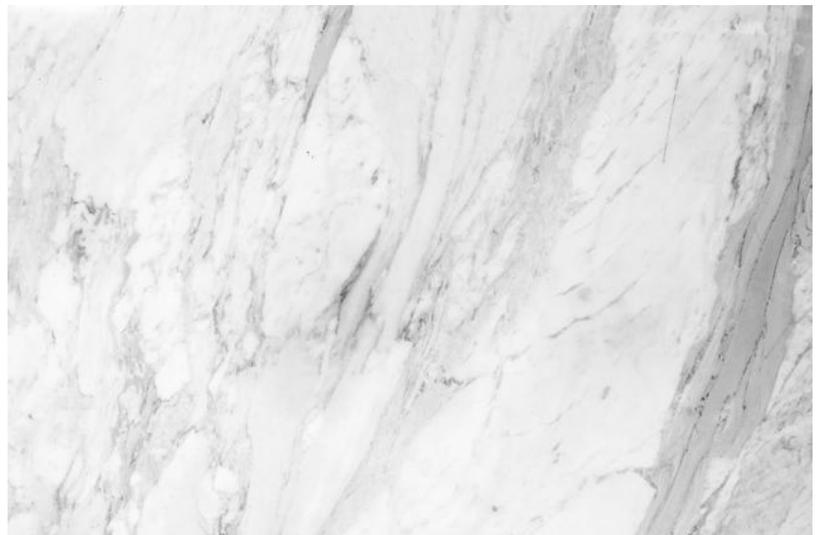
Quartz is also not the most heat resistant option. It can tolerate up to 400 degrees (Fahrenheit) of heat... but sustained heat and sudden temperature changes can cause these countertops to crack. **ALWAYS use a hot pad or some other barrier** between your hot pans and the counter to prevent damage.

Also, despite quartz being slightly more flexible thanks to the resin in its make up, it is still very heavy and prone to cracking if not handled properly. So a certified countertop installer is necessary and not negotiable if you want this countertop safely installed in your kitchen.

Quick Recap: Quartz is more expensive than average, but a very scratch-resistant material. It can be cut to all kinds of shapes and can be custom made to any design. It requires no maintenance and resists stains, bacteria, and mold. However, it does not do well with heat and can crack if exposed to high temperatures or fluctuating temperatures. It comes in many different colors and patterns and mimics stone to the point where the differences can be imperceptible.

Marble:

They are one of the most beautiful options available on the market, boasting elegant hues of solid white, solid black, contrasting veins, and a gorgeous mix of other hues. No two slabs are the same, so you're guaranteed a unique look for your kitchen.





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There are hundreds of different varieties of marble to choose from ranging from white to black. Different types of marble have different but distinct colors and vein patterns. There are also a few different finishes you can go for like polished, honed, and leather. Polished is the most likely to show scratches and etching, while honed can hide blemishes more readily. **Polished marble countertops will require professional help to maintain** in a kitchen if you want to keep it looking good.

Marble is also very well known for its ease in workability. Many famous sculptures are made from this beautiful stone and it's no coincidence. It's incredibly easy to work with and offers countless edge profiles to choose from. However, be mindful that different profile designs will be more prone to chipping than others. A bull nose finish on the edge of a marble countertop will be much less likely to chip than a right angle.

If you're interested in getting a marble countertop, be wary of the downsides of this beautiful material. Marble is more porous than granite, so it's more prone to stain and absorb liquids. This can cause bacteria buildup in the marble which can cause undesirable odors and be a health hazard if not dealt with properly. Coffee, tea, wine, juice, and other liquid spills can quickly soak into the stone. These spills can be very difficult if not impossible to clean if they stain your countertop.

Staining can be avoided if it's resealed every year. However, if this maintenance is neglected, your countertop will be very susceptible to unsightly stains and bacterial buildup. Compared to other material options for a kitchen countertop, marble is much higher maintenance.

Marble is also quite soft and easily damaged. It ranks around a 3 on the Mohs Scale. Compare that to the 7 rank of quartz and you'll get an idea of how easily it can be scratched and chipped. It can be scratched by knives, pots, pans, and other cookware. The material can also be chipped and cracked by heavy use, so care must be taken with a marble countertop. It is a significantly softer stone, so it can even be damaged by your belt if you lean on it the wrong way!

Acidic liquids such as lemon juice can cause etching in marble which leaves a dull whiteish mark on the surface. This is because the acid in the liquid can break down the surface of the marble, even if it is sealed properly.

Despite these downfalls, marble is still a viable choice thanks to its heat resistance and lovely looks. It **won't be bothered by hot pots and pans** set on its surface, thus also making it a popular material choice for fireplaces.

Pricing for marble countertops can range anywhere from \$40 to \$350 per square foot, so finding a marble countertop that fits your budget is very doable! Common types of marble are much more affordable while rare marble is significantly more expensive. Installation is best left to the professionals since it's so heavy and prone to scratching.

Quick Recap: Marble is a beautiful, but comparatively softer material for your kitchen countertop. It is heat resistant but very vulnerable to scratching, chipping, and etching. It is very customizable since you can find many different varieties of marble with different colors and vein patterns to suit your needs. There are also countless edge profiles that are available thanks to the workability of marble. It is prone to staining and liquid absorption due to its porous nature, so regular resealing is necessary to keep your countertop in optimal condition. Marble is a beautiful countertop choice, but it is not recommended for kitchens or other areas that see heavy countertop use.

Soapstone:

This stone material is made from slabs of metamorphic rock known as soapstone. It contains a higher concentration of talc, making it **softer than other stones** used for countertops. It has a texture similar to soap: smooth and matte. A soapstone counter can also be shiny if you apply oil to it a few times a year.



You get a delightful visual mix of marble and granite with this lovely stone countertop. Soapstone comes in darker colors typically found in granite with marble like veining that spider webs throughout its surface.

Most varieties are dark green or charcoal grey. However some uncommon colors such as soft white can be found that contain little traces of pearl, blue, and green. The veins are typically gentle, but there are stones that can exhibit more intense veins that contrast with the rest of the



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counter. It comes in many beautiful colors that can vary greatly. So your options are vast if you want a beautiful and visually striking countertop for your kitchen.

While being visually appealing, soapstone is also **resistant to etching from acids** and can be repolished to remove scratches because it is softer than other stones. It's naturally nonporous and requires no oiling to keep in good shape, but you can use mineral oil on its surface if you want to darken the color and keep your countertop looking uniform in color as it ages. Oiling also gives soapstone a shinier, wetter look. If oil is not used, soapstone will look more dry and aged, so it's up to you what look you want to go for.

Soapstone is also much denser than granite, quartz, and marble. This makes it a more sanitary stone to prepare food on. There's no risk of anything being absorbed into a soapstone countertop as it ages, so bacterial buildup is minimal. Cleaning a soapstone counter is incredibly easy since it doesn't absorb most spills. However, oil and grease can discolor a new soapstone countertop before it develops fully. These patches of oil and grease can be cleaned with acetone and you won't have to worry about spills in the future once full maturation is reached. Routine cleaning with gentle all-purpose kitchen cleaner will keep your countertop in good hygienic shape.

(Note: Stone countertops age as they are exposed to air and elements. As they mature they develop what's called a "**patina**", which simply refers to the top layer of the stone and how it looks.)

If a soapstone counter develops an uneven patina, you can fully remove the patina by sanding the top of the counter with fine grit sandpaper and then oil it with mineral oil to restart the process. It is a very forgiving countertop that can be simple to fix.

Despite being a denser and less porous option in comparison, soapstone is even softer than marble. It ranks around 2.5 on the Mohs Scale, while marble is slightly harder at a rating of 3. It is very susceptible to scratching and chipping with regular wear... and cutting directly on it with a knife WILL leave blade marks. However, it is **incredibly heat-resistant** and is frequently used in fireplaces. Placing a hot pan directly onto a soapstone counter will not damage it, but if you set it down too hard or quickly, the force may scratch your counter.

Due to this softness, a soapstone countertop will eventually show signs of wear. Some people enjoy the look of it while others don't. So if that sounds like it might concern you, make sure to ask your countertop manufacturer for some pictures of aged soapstone. This will give you a visual to compare with to make sure you will love the look for a long time to come.



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Soapstone is also one of the pricier options. So expect to pay around \$75 to \$200 per square foot depending on the rarity of the stone it is mined from. Since soapstone is heavy and easily marred, we recommend getting it professionally installed to avoid any risk of damaging your new countertop in the process.

Quick Recap: Soapstone is a great looking countertop that comes in a variety of different colors. It can be oiled to give it a shinier look and to help it develop an even patina. The surface can be discolored by spilled oil and grease when it is new, but once it has aged these liquids will have no effect on it. Soapstone is dense and non porous, but very soft and easily scratched. Knives can leave marks on it and setting rough bottom pans on its surface can leave marks. It can also chip if something is dropped on it, so if durability is something you're looking for, soapstone may not be the best choice. It is **very heat resistant** and can withstand hot pans and pots with no risk of damage from the temperature.

...

And that wraps up all of the most popular stone countertop types! Now if one of the above materials wasn't exactly what you were looking for, you might be one of the many homeowners who would prefer a non-stone material type.

Or if you just want information on all of your options before you make a decision, don't worry – we understand! It's time for Section #2: the 5 most common countertop materials that are not based on stone!

Section #2: Non-Stone Material Types:

Now there are many reasons someone might not want a stone countertop, such as overall aesthetic... or the higher maintenance and price tag associated with stone tops. Luckily, there are many other countertop material options that are not based on stone. There is a countertop out there for everyone, and which one is best for you has more to do with your personality and lifestyle than most people believe.

So let's get right into it...

	WOOD	S. SURFACE	LAMINATE	STEEL	GLASS
Physical Durability	9	10	6	5	6
Elemental Durability	10	8	7	10	10
Affordability	2	6	5	5	5
Customization	5	8	7	7	10
Convenience	9	10	8	7	10
Total Score:	35	42	33	34	41

Wood:

Wood countertops are a warm alternative to stone countertop materials. They are made from pieces of hardwood laminated together, producing a strong and organic kitchen surface. They also produce less noise than stone or quartz tops, so you won't have as big of a racket if you have a busy household.

This countertop material was traditionally made from butcherblock and used as a chopping surface. However, wood countertops have moved on from a practical necessity to a luxury that's natural to the touch and easy on the eyes. Wood countertops come in a variety of wood types ranging from budget-friendly to exotic and expensive hardwoods.

It can also be **revived and refinished if damaged**, making it a very forgiving material. However it requires much more maintenance than stone countertops. Unfinished wood tops require monthly oiling to prevent the absorption of liquids... otherwise the wood's pores will soak





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liquids up like a sponge. Thus any spills will require quick action to prevent chance of stains. Wood also warps under various conditions, so a wood countertop may move slightly. Thicker wood countertops will be more stable, but are not necessarily impervious to this factor.

This countertop material is strong and soft, so installation is much more straightforward and can be done yourself. Dishes will also be less likely to break if dropped on a wooden countertop. In the past, these countertops were made from rounds of sycamore and were prone to splitting. Then in the early 1900s it was discovered that gluing pieces of maple in a block provided a much more durable and longer lasting surface for kitchen work. Nowadays wood countertops come in three main styles: edge grain, end grain, and face grain.

"Edge Grain" is best for larger surfaces and makes a great choice for larger areas. It is constructed from boards of wood turned on their sides and glued together, exposing the narrow edges of the boards on the surface of the block. Edge grain is best for long kitchen counters or island tops. It's more stable than other styles of wood countertops and is less prone to warping. It is also more budget-friendly due to its straightforward manufacturing process.

"End Grain" is made up from block of wood turned on their ends to form a grid like pattern on the surface of the countertop. It requires more wood and labor to manufacture, making it 40 percent more expensive on average than edge grain. It is best used as a cutting surface and is easy on knives. It is the least likely to show cutting marks from knife work. However, it's presently more valued for its checkerboard aesthetic as compared to its functionality.

"Face Grain", or **"Plank Grain"** is made from boards laid flat and glued together at the narrow edges. It highlights the grain of the wood but also exposes the softer areas of the wood, making it the most likely to reveal scratches and dents. This style is best left for less busy areas. It's not as durable as the other two options and is more suited as a piece of eye candy.

Each type of wood countertop can also be given different edge treatments that can fit any look you're going for. A few examples include roundover, chamfer, large roundover with fillet, and ogee.

They can also be finished in several different ways. Oil offers a matte look and is a food-safe surface for prepping food. An oil-wax blend is made from mineral oil and beeswax or paraffin wax. It adds extra protection and helps bind the oil to the wood. It has a delightful satiny finish. Finally, "clear coat" is the most permanent option. An acrylic, urethane, or resin-based curing oil provides superior water, stain, and wear protection while also creating a fantastic food-safe surface.

However, it takes much more effort to refinish; the top would need to be stripped of its old coating and then refinished. Some companies offer propriety finishes that may never need recoating.

Quick Recap: Wood countertops offer a great variety of looks to help you pick the perfect fit for your kitchen. They are easy on kitchen cutlery and offer a warmer, softer look and feel to any kitchen. However, they are prone to warping due to the nature of wood and are somewhat prone to staining. So extra care must be taken to keep a wooden countertop in good shape. Depending on the type of finish you choose, re-oiling of a wooden countertop can be crucial to its longevity in the kitchen. Maintenance is more important on these countertops than most other choices.

Solid Surface:

Solid surface countertops have been around for over 50 years, and have become one of the most common choices for homeowners. Countertop manufacturers first began developing solid surface countertops in order to create a homogenous, non-porous material that is resistant to cracking and soaking up liquids.



They wanted something that could pass off *visually* as a natural material... but be unlike stone which is made of many different minerals and contains little pores throughout the stone.

This countertop material has become **THE go-to midrange countertop** material for many reasons. Solid surface is much more durable and visually pleasing than laminate, so homeowners that want something more natural looking without spending a lot of money tend to gravitate to this option. This material isn't quite as convincing as quartz when imitating stone, but it is passable and still very visually appealing.



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Because solid surface countertops are homogenous, they can be easily repaired by simply sanding down the surface with an orbital sander followed by fine grain sandpaper. Repairs can be done by homeowners with ease, so if the surface becomes scratched, the scratches can be removed by sanding it down.

Unlike stone countertops such as granite and marble, solid surface ones are nearly non-porous. They won't absorb spills, and can't be etched by acids. This makes them very sanitary countertops that keep bacteria from settling in. They are also less likely to crack and break thanks to the more flexible materials they are manufactured from.

For example, solid surface countertops are typically either made of **acrylic** or **polyester**. Both are composed of 33% binding resins and 67% minerals... but you can generally think of them as made of plastic. Acrylic-based solid surface countertops are higher quality and are more durable than their polyester-based brethren, but polyester can carry more vibrant colors. Both types come in hundreds of different colors and designs. You can choose from solid colored options to more elaborate and natural looking stone mimics.

They are a fairly scratch-resistant countertop material, but not nearly as much as granite or quartz. Solid surface can be scratched by knife blades if used as a cutting surface. It can still be a great surface to prepare food on if you use a cutting board to protect it.

Since these countertops are made primarily from plastic, they are **not very resistant to heat**. A solid surface countertop will warp, melt, and discolor under very high temperatures, so keep that in mind if you're planning on using this material near a range or cooktop. Hot pads should always be used to protect a solid surface countertop from warping under a hot pan. This heat sensitivity has an upside however...

Solid surface is great for covering large areas of counter because pieces of solid surface can be easily heated and melted together to create one large slab on site without seams. Solid surface can also be molded into unique shapes, making it perfect for less traditional countertop shapes if you also don't want to spend a lot of money.

These countertops can range from \$35 to \$85 per square foot, making it a very affordable material that is also durable and aesthetically pleasing. It requires virtually no maintenance to keep in good condition and only requires work if you want to buff out some scratches.

Quick Recap: Solid surface countertops are an extremely popular midrange material for countertops. They come in a variety of colors, but most designs are manufactured to look like stone. Solid surface is made from resins and minerals and is more resin-based than other materials, making it very prone to warping from heat. It's also much more prone to scratching than other choices, but the scratches can be easily removed by sanding. This countertop material is a wonderful choice that is medium in cost and quality, but great in the looks department while being very easy to maintain!

Laminate:

Laminate is a material made from thin sheets of fused paper and topped with melamine resin. It contains 4 layers: each of which has a specific function.

The first layer is the melamine and it is the transparent surface that protects everything else below it. The next layer (known as the "*wear layer*") is below it and is composed of paper.

The third layer is the decorative layer with the printed design of the laminate. This can be any color or design, so the possibilities are endless! Finally, the very bottom is constructed of kraft paper, and hardened with resins.

Laminate is a thin sheet that can lay on top of particle board or wood, making it an **extremely affordable** countertop choice that still resists stains, scratches, and water. It is much less likely to crack compared to quartz and granite, and is very low maintenance.

Thanks to improvements in printing technology, laminate can come in virtually any color and pattern. So if you want something a little more creative than what stone has to offer in terms of looks... laminate can be a great choice! However, it is not very heat resistant and can be permanently damaged by hot surfaces set upon it, so using a **hot pad is necessary.**



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Delamination can also occur when an edge or top can pop loose from the base. It's an easy fix, but as laminate simply does not have the same durability as quartz, granite, and stone.

The biggest advantage laminate has over other countertop materials is its price. Laminate is amazingly inexpensive while still being resilient. It's also a doable DIY project if you're planning on installing laminate counters yourself. However, a professional is recommended to perform installation around a sink or to wrap the edges of the laminate over your counter.

Quick Recap: Laminate is an amazingly cheap and effective choice. It can resist stains, scratches, and bacteria while being easy to install. However, it cannot handle high heat and will become damaged if you set hot pans on it. It also is not as durable as granite or stone, and the edges can peel off with time. Laminate maintenance is simple, but the lifespan of laminate isn't as long as a solid countertop choice like quartz. Laminate comes in limitless colors and designs, both natural and manmade.

Stainless Steel:

Stainless steel is virtually indestructible in the kitchen and non porous. It doesn't absorb liquid, and it is heat resistant, making it an excellent choice for a countertop. Bacteria has no way of settling into a stainless steel surface if cleaned regularly, so it's a great choice in an area that touches a lot of food. This is why you see it used so commonly in kitchen restaurants.



Stainless steel can also be the **perfect choice if you have young children** or have a home that might see more spills than the average family. If anything is spilled on a stainless steel countertop, it can be wiped away with no problem or worry of leaving a stain.

Steel offers a sleek and modern look for your kitchen with amazing benefits. Its reflective surface can make your kitchen look larger than it is by bouncing off light and creating a brighter



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look in the room. Proper lighting is key to get the most out of the look of a steel countertop and a design specialist is recommended if you want the perfect look.

Hot pots and pans can be set on a stainless steel counter without damaging it. However please keep in mind that the **heat will transfer to the countertop!** So take care to remember anywhere there was a hot pan recently so that you can avoid touching a hot countertop. It also keeps nicely cool in the summer months if you want a nice cool surface to work on. However, if you're going for something more warm and cozy looking, stainless steel may not be the best choice.

Despite being practically immune to damage and staining, stainless steel can be scratched. Scratching isn't necessarily a bad thing on one of these countertops, however. A stainless countertop will patina over time and develop its own unique character. After a few scratches, the blemishes will begin to blend in with each other and develop a nice natural look.

It is important to note that stainless steel can also be dented. Some denting can be avoided if the countertop is installed by a professional... but a proper installation can't prevent all denting from occurring. If you drop something heavy on it or bump into it with a lot of force, it could still dent. Thicker countertops will be less likely to ding, but thinner ones will be not usually so fortunate.

Stainless steel is a **virtually maintenance free** material option, but if you want to keep your countertop looking flawless... then frequent cleanings are a must. The shiny surface of a stainless steel countertop will gather fingerprints and smudges easily, and crumbs will be more visible. They won't damage the surface, but if you're particular with maintaining cleanliness to a fault, be prepared to wipe down a steel countertop more often than you would any other kind of countertop.

Quick Recap: A stainless steel countertop is pretty much indestructible. It can still scratch and dent, but it will not stain or crack. It can withstand heat and any liquids, so it makes a perfect surface for preparing food. Some people find that the look of stainless steel isn't very welcoming or warm, but it can fit into any modern kitchen and can even look great in a more traditionally design room. It's very low maintenance but will require frequent wipe downs if you can't stand the look of fingerprints, smudges, and crumbs. These will stand out much more on a stainless steel surface. Installation is best left to a professional to reduce the risk of dents.

Glass:

Glass is another versatile countertop option. It comes in a variety of colors and can be cut into interesting shapes and virtually any size. Glass can be textured in interesting ways that can't be done with any other material. Some unique looks can even be achieved by pairing glass with another material.



Glass countertops can either be cut from one pane of glass, or crushed and mixed with concrete or acrylic to create an eye-catching mixture.

Crushed glass countertops come in countless designs and can look amazing in a contemporary kitchen. The tops are flashy and eclectic with the glass pieces reflecting the light like little crystals. Crushed glass set in acrylic has the appearance of the glass floating in liquid, while glass set in concrete has a more mosaic, artistic look. Both offer a good amount of durability, but acrylic will be less resistant to heat.

Back-painted glass countertops are a solid color and have a clean look about them. They also come in many colors and go well with a **sleek minimalistic look**. If you want something a little more flavorful, you can even have a painted design embedded into the glass for the ultimate creative look. Combine the ability to embed paint with any texture you would want and you have the ultimate customizable kitchen countertop.

Glass looks especially gorgeous with LED accent lighting. You can have color changing LEDs embedded in your glass countertop as well, giving you complete control over the color of your lighting. Setting the perfect mood is easy with these extra features available to you with a glass countertop.



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Glass is also very spill-resistant, and also heat resistant if tempered. Like stainless steel, it is non-porous and will not warp with heat. These two features make it an excellent option if you do a lot of food prep. **It cannot stain** so spills are nothing to worry about with a glass countertop.

Many glass countertops are now made with recycled materials, so if you're looking for something that will make you and the environment happy, it can be a wonderful material! It's also much cheaper than stone and wood options, making it a budget friendly option while still being a beautiful, resilient countertop material.

However, glass is still prone to damage and is not quite as indestructible as stainless steel. It can crack, chip, or dent from sharp or heavy objects. Repairs can be costly and difficult, so if you're afraid that you might damage your countertop with everyday use, glass may not be the best option for you.

Glass countertops can be moderately expensive and starts at about \$75 per square foot if you want a tempered option, which is definitely the way to go. It's also difficult to install, so it's best left to a licensed contractor.

Quick Recap: Glass countertops are incredibly customizable and durable. They can be colored, textured, and lit in an infinite number of ways for the perfect artistic look. Glass is also durable and can be very heat resistant if tempered. Present day glass countertops can also be made from recycled materials, so if you're looking for an eco friendly kitchen countertop, glass is an excellent choice. It can be scratched and chipped, but does not require any sealing or maintenance to prevent stains or liquid absorption. It can be relatively expensive compared to other material options, especially for more intricate designs.

CONCLUSION:

The examples described above aren't even all the options available to you to pick from. How do you decide when there are so many choices? A good process to follow is to first determine your budget. If you're working with a tight budget, keep in mind that countertop materials made from stone are much pricier than other options. Once you have a number in mind,



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determine how many square feet of countertop you will need. Write that number down and then begin thinking about what kind of look you want for your countertop.

Start looking online for various countertop materials and checking their pricing per square foot. **Always keep your budget in mind.** To check how closely the materials you're looking at match to your budget, multiply the per square foot price by the square footage of your countertop, then add on predicted installation costs and other material costs needed to install the countertop. Lastly figure out what the tax would be for the goods and services, and you'll have an idea of what the whole countertop will cost. Think of what kinds of features you want in your countertop and look up pricing for the ones that fit your needs while also fitting your budget.

If you need your money to go further, try to stick with prefabricated countertops that are already cut to size and shape. Sending a countertop to a fabricator to be custom built will cost much more than buying a premade countertop that's ready for installation.

If you value the overall quality and aesthetic more than the cost, think of the different things you would need your countertop to do. Do you bake a lot at home? Having a heat resistant countertop material to set hot trays straight out of the oven would be a useful thing to have. Do you have messy eaters or young children? A material that is spill proof would save you a lot of worry and headache. Imagine what you'll have going on around the countertop and think about what you need your countertop to do. Then pick a countertop material that coincides with those needs, and also achieves the look you desire for your new kitchen.

Following these guidelines will help keep your kitchen remodeling process smooth and stress-free! After reading this article, you should be prepared to make better decisions and plan properly before setting out on a your remodeling project.

If you want to see what a true professional can do for YOUR project, call us at (513)800-4144. Or if you're not from Ohio but you'd like assistance finding a professional remodeler in your area, send a quick email to john@mccanncustomremodeling.com