

What is the Difference Between Granite and Marble Countertops

When shopping for what are the most popular stones for countertops, two names will show up above the rest: granite and marble. Granite and marble are both gorgeous stones that add value to your home and can be with you for the rest of your life as long as they are taken care of properly.

That being said, granite and marble have very specific differences that must be considered when making a decision to choose one or the other. They both may be stone, but they have [many distinctions](#) regarding property, composition, availability, and durability.

Before making your decision, let's explore the differences between granite and marble countertops.

Table of Contents

- [Composition](#)
- [Quarry Location](#)
- [Hardness](#)
- [Scratch Resistance](#)
- [Stain Resistance](#)
- [Chip Resistance](#)
- [Heat Resistance](#)
- [Non-Porous Surface](#)
- [Ease of Maintenance](#)
- [Outdoor Use](#)
- [Sealing](#)
- [Appearance](#)
- [Cost](#)
- [Health Risks](#)
- [Historical Use](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

Composition

Granite and marble are both stones, but they are made in different ways.

Granite is formed when molten rock is slowly cooled in the Earth's crust for many years. During the cooling process, other stones and crystals like feldspar and quartz become embedded together to create the speckled look of granite.

Marble was originally limestone rock which was fused with other minerals by extreme heat and intense pressure over thousands of years. This process is also called metamorphosis and it gives marble the clean and crystalline look which is very popular. Marble and other stones made this way are called metamorphic rock.

[Quarry Location](#)

Stone countertops are quarried in very specific locations around the world.

Granite is quarried in Italy, USA, Canada, China, Africa, and South America.

Marble is quarried in Italy, Spain, India, and China.

Hardness

Stones are rated on the MOHS hardness scale to determine how strong and hard they are. For reference, diamonds are known as the hardest mineral on earth, and have a MOHS hardness rating of 10.

Granite has a MOHS hardness rating of 8, making it very strong and sturdy. This higher rating makes Granite a more reliable choice for kitchen countertops where it can withstand active use.

Marble has a MOHS hardness rating of 4, making it very soft and delicate. This lower rating makes homeowners need to use caution with marble, where it be more visual appeal than physical application and usage.

Scratch Resistance

Good stone countertops need to have a moderate to high levels of scratch resistance, especially when installed in the kitchen. Kitchen countertops are home to many sharp objects where cutting is a common occurrence.

Granite has very high scratch resistance, scoring 8 / 10.

Marble has medium scratch resistance, scoring 6 / 10.

Stain Resistance

Stain resistance gauges how easy it is for stains to form on the stones surface. High resistance to staining means it is difficult for stains to form on the stone.

Granite has very high stain resistance, scoring 8 / 10.

Marble has medium stain resistance, scoring 6 / 10.

Chip Resistance

Chip resistance gauges how easy it is for the stone to be damaged where pieces can chip or crack.

Granite has very high chip resistance, scoring 9 / 10.

Marble has medium chip resistance, scoring 6 / 10.

Heat Resistance

Heat resistance gauges how easy it is for the stone to disperse heat and stay cool. For example, metal absorbs and holds heat very quickly.

Granite has very high heat resistance, scoring 9 / 10.

Marble also has very high heat resistance, scoring 8 / 10.

NOTE: Just because a material has high resistances, does not mean it is scratch / stain / chip / heat proof. Granite, marble, and other surfaces can still be damaged if enough force is applied or improperly maintained.

Non-Porous Surface

Many stones have grooves and pores in their surface called pitting. Pitting is common occurrence in all natural stones. Pitting can be problematic when installed as countertop material since food and drink debris can become lodged in the pores and erode away the stone over time.

Granite is very solid and has few pores, scoring 8 / 10.

Marble is more porous, scoring 6 / 10.

Ease of Maintenance

Everyone wants something that is easy to take care of. Having countertops that are easy to clean will save you a lot of money in the future in case a spill lingers or stains.

Granite is very easy to clean and maintain, scoring 9 / 10.

Marble is delicate and requires more work to maintain, scoring 6 / 10.

Outdoor Use

Countertop surfaces does not just mean kitchen counters, but also outdoor bar surfacing or perhaps a barbeque countertop. Stones need to be strong enough to withstand the various elements and hazards of nature.

[Granite](#) is very strong and can be used outdoors.

Marble is so delicate that it should not be used outdoors.

Sealing

Sealing a countertop provides an added layer of protection against crumbs, dirt, and spills. Both granite and marble should be sealed as they contain some amounts of pitting.

Appearance

Every stone may seem similar at first glance, but their unique composition creates miniscule details that makes them stand out amongst each other.

[Granite](#) is often speckled with other stones like quartz, feldspar, and biotite mica with a variety of shading and tones.

[Marble](#) has a more solid appearance with delicate shading, solid veins, and less variety.

Cost

Stone countertops are charged by the amount of [square foot being installed](#). On average, granite and marble cost about the same. However, a higher end marble slab will be more expensive to purchase than a higher end granite slab.

Health Risks

Stone countertop companies make it a mandate to highlight their products are environmentally safe when purchased.

Granite slabs may contain miniscule radioactive elements like Radon, Uranium, or Thorium. Long term exposure to these decaying elements have been known to increase the risk of cancer.

Marble slabs may contain particles of Asbestos or marble dust from quarries which can increase risk of lung disease.

When shopping for granite or marble countertops, research if the company is certified by the GreenGuard Environmental Institute. This industry-independent organization aims to protect human health by checking air quality of indoor products to ensure they are free of chemical or other pollutants.

Historical Use

Granite and Marble both have a lot of fun facts for them which adds depth and history to your countertops.

Granite has been used in many famous works like Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, Princess Diana Memorial Fountain in London, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

Marble has been used in equally famous structures and works like the Taj Mahal in India, Washington Monument in Washington D.C., and the Statue of David and Pantheon in Italy.

Conclusion

Granite and marble are both exceptional stones which makes for excellent material for countertops.

Marble is more delicate so you will need to be careful using it in high traffic areas or with sharp objects, but the rich history that comes with marble ties you to a part of history.

Granite is extraordinarily strong, easy to maintain, and comes in a variety of designs, but has not been as widely used for structures until the most recent advancements in history.

Every stone has their benefits and weaknesses, but it always comes down to what do you want most for your countertop? Whether it is granite, marble, quartz, or another stone, you can't go wrong.