

Stone Countertops: Your Comprehensive Buying Guide

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Buying a new stone countertop is a significant investment. Therefore, you want to make sure you choose an option that will work well for your home remodeling project. Having a high-quality stone countertop can leave you pleased with your decision for years to come.

The kitchen is often seen as the centerpiece of the home. You want your kitchen to be a room that impresses. However, beyond superior looks, you also want your kitchen countertop to be practical. This is important

because it is likely that you will be using your kitchen very often.

But how do you choose the right countertop material? You know that you want stone countertops, but what kind of stone? This guide should help you get a better understanding of everything you will need to know to make your decision.

The guide below will cover various aspects that will help you through the decision-making process. Each stone is explained in detail, with information about the stone's appearance, durability and cost.

Stone Countertops: The Pros and Cons

As with any other countertop material, stone countertops come with advantages and disadvantages. One advantage that each stone countertop has in common is the superior, high-quality look it will give to your home.

The advantages of stone countertops include:

Advantages

Durable
Distinctive
Low maintenance
Easy to Repair

The disadvantages of stone countertops include:

Disadvantages

Price
Vulnerability
Need to Seal
Brittle

Here are each of the advantages and disadvantages explained.

Advantages of Stone Countertops

Durable

Stone countertops are the way to go if you are looking for something that is durable, which is highly recommended for the kitchen. Because you will be cooking in the kitchen, you want something that will be able to withstand the frequent use it will receive.

Distinctive

Stone countertops have been the centerpiece of homes for years on end. If you are looking for something that will give your home a classy and distinguished look, stone countertops should be your choice. Because there are so many types of stone countertops to choose from, you will easily be able to find one that is the right fit for your home.

Low Maintenance

Beyond looks, stone countertops also offer another benefit: The surfaces are relatively low maintenance. This is not to say that stone countertops are indestructible, but depending on the type of stone you choose, the materials are more likely to be heat and scratch resistant than other countertop materials will be.

Easy to Repair

Cracks, chips and scratches can be fixed relatively easily. These minor damages can be fixed by either you or a professional stone restorer.

Disadvantages of Stone Countertops

Price

For all the positive aspects listed above, you will encounter a small roadblock. Stone countertops are not cheap, although prices will depend on which type of stone countertop you choose. Rarer forms of stone will come at a higher price.

Vulnerability

Although stone countertops are known for their relative durability, they cannot escape all damages. Some stone, such as marble, is more prone to staining than others, like granite. Some types of stone are also particularly prone to chips or scratches, so you will need to be careful if you install it in a high-traffic area.

Need to Seal

Unlike solid surface countertops, you will need to seal your stone countertop. Sealing will help protect the countertop from stains and contamination. Depending on the type of stone you choose, it may need to be re-sealed more frequently than others.

Brittle

You must make sure that your stone countertop is evenly supported. If it is not, stone countertops are prone to cracking. In order to avoid cracking, it is important that the stone countertop is flat and level.

Types of Stone Countertops

If you are looking to buy a stone countertop, there are many different types of stone you can choose from. These types include:

- Granite
- Marble

- Soapstone
- Slate
- Quartz
- Limestone
- Travertine
- Gemstone
- Onyx

To decide which material is right for your remodeling project, each stone is analyzed below using a variety of factors.

Granite Countertops

[Granite](#) is the most durable stone that you can use for a countertop. Its benefits include heat and scratch resistance, high resale value and a variety of colors and patterns to choose from. One of the few drawbacks to granite is that you must make sure it is properly sealed. Other than that, granite is one of the best materials you can choose for your stone countertop.

Appearance of Granite Countertops

Each slab of granite is different, which means that each granite countertop is unique. The slab can have veins, swirls or be consistent in pattern. Because it can be found in a variety of colors, you will surely find a granite countertop you like. Marble.com offers over 500 different variations of [granite countertops](#).

Durability of Granite Countertops

Granite is known for being an incredibly durable natural stone material. This makes it perfect for the kitchen, as you can set down hot pots and pans on its surface without the countertop sustaining damages. You can also cut directly on the countertop, although this is not recommended. A granite countertop will dull a knife blade. The countertop will require re-sealing every six months to one year.

Cost of Granite Countertops

Installation prices for granite countertops typically start around \$35 per square foot installed. Prices will depend on various factors, such as how much you need installed and what type of granite you choose.

Marble Countertops

Marble is an elegant natural stone that will give your home character. Its benefits include a high resale value and the ability to remain cool, even if it is in the kitchen. On the downside, marble is soft and porous, so you will need to exercise extreme caution around the surface – especially in the kitchen. Marble is prone to staining and will get damaged if acidic substances like coffee or wine spill on the countertop.

Appearance of Marble Countertops

Marble slabs come in many different colors, and the natural veining of the stone creates a pleasing look. You will be able to find any style of [marble](#), from Crema Marfil to Rainforest Green, on Marble.com.

Durability of Marble Countertops

Unlike granite, marble is not as durable for a countertop surface. Marble is soft, making it more likely to receive scratches and stains if used frequently. However, if you are careful and take proper care of your marble countertop, the natural stone will provide you with a look you will love for years.

Cost of Marble Countertops

Installation prices for marble start around \$45 per square foot installed. This number could be higher if you choose a rarer form of marble.

Soapstone Countertops

Soapstone is a softer natural stone that will provide the area you put it in with a warm and inviting look. The stone works particularly well in rustic kitchens. Its benefits are that it is easy to clean and is also heat resistant.

Appearance of Soapstone Countertops

[Soapstone](#) is typically either dark gray or green. The color will darken with age, giving your countertop a beautiful worn look.

Durability of Soapstone Countertops

Soapstone is non-porous, so it does not require sealing like many other types of stone countertops. Despite this benefit, soapstone is prone to chips and scratches due to its soft nature. However, you can re-polish the surface if the scratches become too prominent.

Cost of Soapstone Countertops

Installation prices for soapstone start around \$55 per square foot installed.

Slate Countertops

Slate is an attractive stone surface that will give your countertop a more uniform look. [Slate countertops](#) work well in modern settings. Its benefits are that it is very durable and non-porous, so it will not require

sealing.

Appearance of Slate Countertops

Slate will give your countertops an up-to-date and distinguished feel. The material can typically be found in darker colors, such as black, charcoal or gray.

Durability of Slate Countertops

Slate is also a very durable surface for stone countertops. It is a very hard stone and is non-porous. With slate, you will not have to worry about stains. The material is also very hard to scratch or chip. In addition, slate is heat resistant, making it a solid choice for your kitchen remodeling project.

Cost of Slate Countertops

Installation prices for slate typically start around \$50 per square foot installed.

Quartz Countertops

Although it is engineered stone, do not be fooled: Quartz is one of the most popular stone countertop materials you will find. Because quartz is manufactured, customization is easily achievable, meaning that you will be able to get the exact countertop you desire. The benefits of quartz include low maintenance, high durability and the convenience of an easy to clean surface.

Appearance of Quartz Countertops

Even though it is not entirely natural, the appearance of quartz does not suffer when compared to natural stones. The stone, which is created by combining ground quartz particles and resins, can be customized in ways that make it look like other stones, like granite or marble. Quartz comes in many different colors and patterns. If [quartz](#) is your choice, Marble.com offers 85 different styles to choose from.

Durability of Quartz Countertops

Despite a long list of benefits that the material has, quartz is only moderately durable when compared to other stones, such as granite. While a quartz countertop does not need to be sealed and is highly stain resistant, do not set a hot pot or pan on the surface of your quartz countertop. If you do this, the resin will melt and you will be left with marks that cannot be removed.

Cost of Quartz Countertops

Installation prices for quartz countertops usually start around \$50 per square foot.

Limestone Countertops

Limestone is known for being an elegant and unique countertop material. The stone is formed in clear, warm, shallow sea waters and contains ancient aquatic fossils. Its benefit comes largely from its look and

adaptability. Aesthetically speaking, limestone will work well in many areas of the house. However, you will need to be careful where you choose to implement limestone, as the material is slightly softer and is more porous than marble. This means that the material may not be best suited for the kitchen. Despite this, much like any stone, the look of limestone will not disappoint if it is properly taken care of.

Appearance of Limestone Countertops

Limestone will give your home a nice touch of natural beauty that can help visually enhance any area you put it in. The natural stone is very adaptable and will look nice regardless of the overall design in the room.

Durability of Limestone Countertops

A major downside to limestone is the material's durability. Because it is both softer and more porous than marble, you will need to be extremely careful with limestone. Perhaps limestone is not the right choice for a high-traffic area like a kitchen. But this does not mean that you cannot install a [limestone countertop](#) in a less frequented area of the house. Keep in mind that, like any other stone, limestone will have a pleasing look if properly cared for.

Cost of Limestone Countertops

Limestone costs about \$30 per square foot, uninstalled.

Travertine Countertops

Travertine is an elegant form of limestone that is known for its long streaks and consistent color. Much like limestone, it has a tasteful look that will work almost anywhere in the house. On the other hand, as with limestone, you must be extremely careful around your travertine countertop. The material may not be the best choice for kitchens or bathrooms that are very busy, as any spills can do serious damage to the countertop.

Appearance of Travertine Countertops

[Travertine countertops](#) will give the room you put them in a sophisticated and classy look. The natural stone is among the most beautiful materials you can choose.

Durability of Travertine Countertops

If you have travertine countertops, you will need to be very cautious around the surface. Any spills, especially acidic substances like orange or lemon juice, can cause permanent damages to the countertop.

Cost of Travertine Countertops

Travertine costs roughly \$30 per square foot, uninstalled.

Gemstone Countertops

If you are looking for a stone countertop that is truly flashy and unique, gemstone can give you what you are looking for. Gemstone is comprised of semi-precious stones and will give you a stunning and beautiful look that is truly like no other.

Appearance of Gemstone Countertops

[Gemstone](#) is among the most attractive countertop materials you can have. It is elegant, sophisticated and unique. It is sure to impress both you and your guests every time you pass by the countertop.

Durability of Gemstone Countertops

A gemstone countertop is relatively durable, as the material is heat and stain resistant. The stone is also non-porous, making it easy to clean when compared to other countertop materials.

Cost of Gemstone Countertops

Gemstone is the most expensive option on the list. It will cost you around \$100 per square foot.

Onyx Countertops

Onyx is an exotic and unique option to choose for your countertop. The colors and patterns are one-of-a-kind and will surely grab attention. An interesting and special benefit that you will get with onyx is its ability to be backlit. Because of the stone's translucency, backlighting can create a truly special look for your countertop.

Appearance of Onyx Countertops

[Onyx](#) offers a stunning appearance for your countertop. If you choose to use the stone, you will certainly end up with a countertop that your visitors will never forget. The pure beauty of the stone countertop will easily make it the focal point of any room.

Durability of Onyx Countertops

If you do choose to go with onyx countertops, you will need to be extremely careful. The stone will damage very easily, and you will need to clean it regularly using special solutions. Onyx countertops also need to be re-sealed very often. Despite all these inconvenient factors, if you are looking to make a statement, onyx countertops will certainly do just that.

Cost of Onyx Countertops

Onyx costs about \$75 per square foot at a minimum.

How Can I Get an Estimate for a Stone Countertop?

It is important to note that the prices listed above are merely average prices for each type of stone countertop. To get a more accurate idea of what the cost will be, you should get an [online estimate](#).

If you want to get a better idea of how the different countertops look, you can try various [3D design tools](#).

Regardless of which option you choose for your countertop, natural stone will offer you many benefits. The end result will undoubtedly leave you satisfied.