

What Are the Best Countertops?

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When looking to purchase countertops, you will notice that there are many different materials you can choose from. How can you determine which one will be the right fit for your home? Stone is one of the best materials you can choose for your countertop. Having a stone countertop comes with many benefits that are explained in detail below.

Before buying any countertops, you should do a good amount of background research on the materials you are considering. Stone countertops vary greatly in physical properties and cost. For example, while both are high quality natural stones, marble and granite are very different. This guide will help give you more information about the stone countertop materials you are considering.

Stone Countertops: Advantages and Disadvantages

Stone countertops come with advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of stone countertops include:

- Distinctive Look
- Durable
- Low maintenance
- Easy Repair

The disadvantages of stone countertops include:

- Price
- Brittle
- Vulnerability
- Sealing

Each of the advantages and disadvantages are explained below.

Advantages

Distinctive Look

Stone countertops have been the main attraction of homes for many years. If you are looking for something that will give your home a distinguished look, stone countertops are a great choice. Because there are so many types of stone countertops to choose from, you can easily find one that suitable for your home.

Durable

Stone countertops are generally durable, which is especially helpful in the kitchen. Because you will be cooking in the kitchen, you will want something that will be able to withstand frequent use.

Low Maintenance

Other than looks, stone countertops are also relatively low maintenance. While stone countertops are not indestructible, depending on the type of stone you choose, the materials are more likely to be heat and scratch resistant compared to other countertop materials.

Easy Repair

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

Disadvantages

Price

For all the positive aspects listed above, you will encounter a minor setback. Stone countertops can be expensive, although prices will depend on which type of stone you choose. Rarer forms of stone will cost more.

Brittle

If your stone countertop is not evenly supported, it can be prone to cracking. In order to avoid cracking, make sure that the stone countertop is flat and level.

Vulnerability

Despite their relative durability, stone countertops cannot escape all damages. Certain types of stone, such as marble, are more prone to staining than others. Some types of stone are also particularly prone to chips or scratches, so you will need to be careful if you choose those stones for a high-traffic area.

Sealing

Your stone countertop will need to be sealed. Sealing helps protect the countertop from stains and contamination. Depending on the type of stone you choose, it may need to be re-sealed more often than others.

Types of Stone

While other options do exist, stone will give you the best countertop materials to choose from. Types of stone you can select include:

- Granite

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

Each of these stones have different characteristics that make them unique. Read more about each type of stone below to find out which option works best for you.

Granite

Granite is the most durable stone you can use for your countertop. Advantages of granite include heat and scratch resistance, high resale value and a variety of colors and patterns to choose from. One of the few disadvantages to granite is that you must make sure it is sealed properly. Other than that, granite is one of the highest quality materials you can choose for your stone countertop.

Appearance

Each slab of granite differs, meaning each granite countertop is unique. The slab can have veins, swirls or be consistent in its pattern. Granite can be found in a wide variety of colors; you will surely find a [granite countertop](#) you like.

Durability

Granite is known for its durability. This makes it the perfect choice for a kitchen, as you can set down hot pots and pans on its surface without it getting damaged. You can also cut directly on the countertop. A granite countertop will dull a knife blade. It will require re-sealing every six months to one year.

Cost

Prices for granite countertop installation typically start around \$35 per square foot installed. Prices will vary depending on factors such as how much you need installed and what type of granite you choose.

Marble

[Marble](#) is an elegant natural stone that will improve the look of your home. The benefits of marble include a high resale value and the ability to remain cool. However, marble is soft and porous, so you will need to exercise extreme caution around the surface – especially if it is in the kitchen. Marble is prone to staining and will be damaged if acidic substances like coffee or wine spill on the countertop.

Appearance

Marble slabs come in many colors, and the natural veining of the stone creates a pleasing look.

Durability

While it can last a long time if treated properly, marble is not as durable as granite for a countertop surface. Marble is soft, which makes it more likely to receive scratches and stains if used often.

Cost

Prices for marble start around \$45 per square foot installed. This number could be higher for rarer forms of marble.

Quartz

Although it is engineered stone, quartz is one of the most popular countertop materials you will find. Quartz will give you more options for customization. The benefits of quartz include low maintenance, high durability and an easy to clean surface.

Appearance

Even though it is not entirely natural, the appearance of quartz is right on par with natural stones. Quartz is created by combining ground quartz particles and resins and can be customized in ways that make it look like other stones, such as granite or marble.

Durability

While the material is relatively durable overall, it is not as durable as some other stone options, like granite. While a [quartz countertop](#) does not require sealing and is highly stain resistant, do not set a hot pot or pan down on the countertop. If you do this, the resin will melt and you will be left with permanent marks on the surface.

Cost

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

Soapstone

[Soapstone](#) is a softer natural stone that will give your home an inviting look. Soapstone's benefits are that it is easy to clean and is heat resistant.

Appearance

You will find soapstone in various shades of gray, some of which have hints of green, black or blue. The stone naturally darkens with age, but you can accelerate the process by treating the surface with mineral oil.

Durability

Soapstone is non-porous, so it does not require sealing. On the other hand, soapstone is vulnerable to chips and scratches because of its soft nature. You can re-polish the surface if the scratches become too prominent.

Cost

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

Slate

Slate is an appealing stone surface that will give your countertop a uniform look. [Slate countertops](#) work well with modern home designs. The benefits are that it is durable and non-porous, so you will not have to have the countertop sealed.

Appearance

Slate will give your home an up-to-date and distinguished look. It is typically be found in darker colors, like black, charcoal or gray.

Durability

Slate is a very durable surface. It is a very hard stone and is non-porous. With slate, you will not have to worry about any stains damaging the stone. The material also does not tend to scratch or chip, and it is heat resistant.

Cost

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

Limestone

[Limestone](#) is known for being an elegant and unique natural stone. It forms in clear, warm, shallow sea waters and contains ancient aquatic fossils. Limestone's benefits come largely from its look and adaptability. The look of limestone will work well in many areas of the house. However, you will need to be careful where you choose limestone, as the material is slightly softer and is more porous than marble. The material may not be best suited for the kitchen, where it would encounter high traffic. Much like any stone, limestone will last a long time if it is properly taken care of.

Appearance

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

Durability

A major disadvantage of limestone is the material's durability. Because it is both softer and more porous than marble, you will need to exercise extreme caution. Limestone may not be the sensible choice for a high-traffic area like a kitchen. But this is not to discourage you from installing a limestone countertop in a less frequented area of the house. Keep in mind that, regardless of what room it is in, limestone will last a long time if properly taken care of.

Cost

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

Travertine

[Travertine](#) is a form of limestone that is recognized for its long streaks and consistent color. Similar to limestone, it has a tasteful look that will work almost anywhere in the house. You must be extremely careful around your travertine countertop. The material is likely not the best choice for kitchens or bathrooms that are very busy, as any spills can do serious damage to the countertop.

Appearance

Travertine will offer high quality looks. It is one of the most beautiful materials you can use for a countertop.

Durability

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

Cost

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

Gemstone

If you are looking for a stone countertop that is truly unique, gemstone is a great option. Gemstone is composed of semi-precious stones and will give your countertop a stunning look that is truly like no other.

Appearance

Gemstone is among the most attractive countertop materials you can have. It is unique and sophisticated.

Durability

A [gemstone countertop](#) is relatively durable. The material is both heat and stain resistant, as well as non-porous.

Cost

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

Onyx

Onyx is an exotic and eye-catching option to choose for your countertop. The colors and patterns are one-of-a-kind. A benefit that you will get with onyx is its ability to be backlit. Because the stone is translucent, backlighting can create a unique look for your countertop.

Appearance

Onyx offers a stunning appearance. If you choose to onyx, you will end up with a countertop that your visitors cannot forget. The pure beauty of an onyx countertop will make it the focal point of any room.

Durability

If you choose [onyx countertops](#), you will need to be exercise caution. The stone will damage very easily and needs to be cleaned regularly using special solutions. The countertops also need to be re-sealed frequently. Despite all these inconveniences, if you are looking to make a statement, onyx countertops can do just that.

Cost

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

When you purchase your countertops, choosing stone will be your best option. The various materials can offer pleasing looks or functional benefits, and in some cases, both. If properly cared for, stone countertops can last for many years, which is just what you will want from such a large investment.