

FINISHING TOUCHES

COUNTERPOINT

BY SANDI GREENE

STEP INTO ANY KITCHEN, AND THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICE IS THE COUNTERTOPS. WHETHER YOU CHOOSE CONTRASTING COLORS OR AN UNUSUAL MATERIAL LIKE BUTCHER BLOCK FOR YOUR KITCHEN SURFACES, THE KEY TO MAKING THEM MEMORABLE IS CREATIVITY.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Create energy in your kitchen by using contrasting colors and mixing materials.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN



AS NAILS: DuPont's Corian (left) and Zodiaq (right) brands combine synthetic materials and stone to create countertop surfaces with built-to-last durability.

HUES

Colors have always been a hit with consumers, and today's countertop shoppers are no exception, says Ginguai Ebnesajjad, director of product styling and development for DuPont. "Countertops that evoke a connection with nature, such as blues and greens, as well as earth tones—not the muddy colors of the 70's, but clean, muted shades—are the favorites, because they create a more relaxing environment." This is good news for Valley residents, since these colors work particularly well in the desert. "While warmer hues may be hot right now, Ebnesajjad stresses that you should stick with what you like. "There is very little that is 'in' or 'out' these days," he contends. "It's really much more about a personal preference and expression."

THE CONTRAST

When it comes to materials and colors, feel free to mix and match. "The more contrast you use in your kitchen colors," Ebnesajjad says, "the more energy you create." In order to ensure

such diversity, try choosing a masculine color for your island and a softer shade for your countertops and cabinets. You may even want to use varying types of stone for different areas of the kitchen.

A MATERIAL WORLD

While granite is probably the most often installed type of countertop out there, there are plenty of new possibilities to contemplate as well. DuPont's two main brands, Zodiaq and Corian, for instance, contain mixtures of synthetic material and stone, which translates into a naturally inspired look that boasts engineered durability.

Another choice is concrete. As one of the pioneers of concrete countertops, architect and designer Fu-Tung Cheng touts the rock-hard building material's virtues. "The possibilities for creative expression are endless," he says. Concrete can be fashioned into any shape, form or design, which makes it a top pick for homeowners looking for something versatile.

Other stylish surfaces include butcher block, acrylics and marble. John Keehn, vice president of Performance Solid Surfaces in Scottsdale, says consumers often choose countertops based on three factors: price, home design and performance. "Natural stones have higher-end patterns and are desired because of the random design colors [and/or] patterns," he says. "But [these surfaces] are a lot more maintenance than something like quartz or Corian."

With the array of surface selections out there, the only limit to what you can have is your imagination. More often than not, if you can dream it, you can get it.

Resources

DuPont, 800.441.7515, www.dupont.com

Fu-Tung Cheng, 510.849.3272, www.chengdesign.com, www.concreteexchange.com

Performance Solid Surfaces, 480.607.5200, www.performancesolidsurfaces.com