



# COUNTER Revolution

Photo courtesy of Pyrolave

*Nine great options to take your kitchen from drab to fab.*

## Expert's Opinion

"Lava stone's vibrant colors and high gloss finish makes it a wonderful accent material for a raised ledge on an island or as a tabletop. It's between \$250 and \$300 per square foot installed."

—Bertin Radifera, Aidan Design

## What's Hot Now

Whether you choose glass, natural stone—granite, limestone, lava stone, or slate—or even manmade materials that mimic them, the trend is away from over-the-top details toward a simpler look. "Flat panel doors and honed stone" are popular says Judy Bracht, a certified kitchen designer at Stuart Kitchens in McLean. "People are getting away from shiny surfaces," and going for a

IN THE BUSIEST ROOM OF THE house, kitchen countertops bear the brunt of daily activity. Scratches, stains and dings add up over time. New countertops revive the heart of your home without the expense of a complete remodel. While budget is a critical factor in choosing materials, remember to also consider performance, durability and style.

## LAVA STONE

A natural stone, lava stone is glazed with colored enamel and fired in a kiln like tile. It has a glossy, crackled surface that is extremely hard. Waterproof, it's heat, chemical and impact resistant. Colors can be customized.

BY MARION BUTTERWORTH



Photo by Matthew Millman, courtesy of Cheng Design

more casual look, she says. "People associate high sheen with formality. The trend is toward a warmer look like that found in slate or limestone," Cheryl Bowie of Jennifer Gilmer Kitchen & Bath concurs.

Edge detail is important. Designers are going beyond waterfall, ogee, cove and stair tread edges, banding edges with stainless steel or making them thicker than the rest of the countertop. A deeper edge allows a greater vertical view of the material and makes a bolder statement.

Another development is the mixing of materials in large spaces. "We're seeing more wood, stainless steel and glass, and we're mixing them," says Bracht. A glass bar that floats above a granite island increases "surface space without consuming visual space," says Dee David, owner of Dee David and Company. "We've mixed slate with wood and contrasted smooth, waxed concrete with textured concrete in the same kitchen," says Bowie.

## CONCRETE

Concrete can be ground, polished, stamped or stained. It can have glass, marble chips or other objects embedded in it and mimic marble, granite or limestone. Completely customizable, you can sculpt, mold, and texturize it. Although heat resistant, you must be careful to clean up acidic spills quickly. Geocrete™ counters are finished using a process developed by Cheng Design that creates a glass-like surface.

## Expert's Opinion

"Concrete countertops are a completely handmade product. Most clients look at them as a piece of art. Every piece is entirely unique."

—Kathleen Carr, Concrete Jungle





Photo by Michael Kress, courtesy of River Glass Designs Inc.

#### GLASS

Elegant and timeless, glass opens up possibilities and space. It's a dramatic visual surprise, enveloping the eye in this exceptional eat-in kitchen counter. The top is as smooth as, well, glass, while the bubbly bottom gives it depth. Three one-half inch thick pieces of glass were fused together over a mold that mimics slate to create this uncommon countertop.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"It's drop-dead gorgeous. It's easy to clean. It's a focal point, a work of art."* —Mike Spiegel, River Glass Designs Inc.

#### CORIAN®

Corian® is an acrylic-based, solid surface material, available in almost any shape with custom drain boards and integrated sinks. Offered in 120 colors, nicks and scratches buff out easily. It ranges in price from \$45 to \$75 per square foot installed.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"You can buff Corian® with a Scotch-Brite scouring pad, and it will look like new. 'Tumbleweed,' 'Sagebrush' and 'Earth' look like stone."*

—Judy Bracht, Stuart Kitchens

#### Homeowner's Opinion

*"We had a very odd shaped countertop. The Corian® looks like one continuous piece."*

—Mike Carpenter, Sterling



Photo courtesy of Dupont and Premier Industries Inc.

*"Corian® is pretty much indestructible."*

—J. Paul DeBoeck, Premier Industries Inc.



Photo by Veronica Pombo, courtesy of Nancy Thornett Associates

#### LIMESTONE

Limestone is available in shades not found in other natural stones. It can be damaged by acids if not properly sealed. Expect to spend about \$75 per square foot installed.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"Limestone is a classic look because it doesn't jump out at you. It comes in gray, beige, gold, and even a gorgeous blue. A flamed finish creates texture and cracks for a natural look."*

—Tracy Thornett, owner, Nancy Thornett Associates Inc.

#### Homeowner's Opinion

*"Limestone's rustic quality gives it an antique look."*

—Nancy Samit, Bethesda





Photo courtesy of RGM Stone Products Inc.

### SLATE

This nonporous, stain and heat resistant surface never needs sealing. Scratches can be rubbed out. Cost is about the same as granite. It's available in subtle red, green, purple and blue, as well as gray and black. Maintenance is an occasional application of food grade mineral oil.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"Using slate as an accent on an island is a great way to introduce the texture and look without creating maintenance issues."*

—Al Donnelly, Kitchen Magic



Photo courtesy of Reico Kitchen and Bath

### GRANITE

People choose granite because of its depth and richness of color says Reico spokesperson Andy Armstrong. Extremely heat resistant, it can be fabricated in free form shapes with antiquated or even leather finishes. It must be sealed. Impregnated sealers wear out eventually, but are easily reapplied. Epoxy resin sealer is permanent, resulting in maintenance-free granite.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"The variety in granite is infinite."*

—Fernando Alban, owner, Chesapeake Kitchen Design

#### Homeowners' Opinions

*"Granite is not repetitive. It has different patterns and colors in it."*

—Peggy Poos, Clifton

*"There's nothing that I don't like about granite. I only wish I'd done it sooner. It just pops. It changes your kitchen from a workplace into a showplace. At parties, which always seem to end up in the kitchen, the conversation often turns to the granite."*

—Beth Allgaier, Oak Hill

*"Seeing and approving the slab before purchase is a must because colors vary from block to block."*

—Olcay Akkaya, GraniTech Inc.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"Engineered stone is popular with designers because it comes in colors like bright red and orange."*

—Farah Ahan, owner, Signature Kitchen, Bath & Closet and Bedrock Marble Granite & Design

#### Homeowner's Opinion

*"I worked as a chef, and didn't want my kitchen to look 'professional.' No stainless steel appliances. I fell in love with 'Brazilian Brown' Silestone. It has dark brown, black and lighter tones."*

—Linda Alleman, Falls Church



Photo courtesy of Signature Kitchen, Bath & Closets

### ENGINEERED STONE

Silestone, Zodiaq, CaesarStone and Cambria are all brands of engineered stone made primarily from quartz. Engineered stone appeals to people who prefer less movement and a more consistent pattern. Cost ranges from \$50 to \$150 per square foot installed.

#### Expert's Opinion

*"Stainless complements contemporary looks and mixes well with marble. It says, 'I'm a professional cook.'"*

—Cheryll Bowie, Jennifer Gilmer Kitchen & Bath Ltd.

### STAINLESS STEEL

Stainless' reflective qualities make it a universal neutral. It can be embossed, and finishes include brushed, antique and custom freehand designs.



Photo courtesy of Frigo Design

For more information on the businesses featured in this article, please refer to our Resource Guide on pages 142-143 or send an e-mail to [resource@whgmag.com](mailto:resource@whgmag.com).