

BUTCHER BLOCK

ECO ALERT! Always look for the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) symbol, which signifies that no new trees were cut down for manufacturing purposes.

pros

- Reasonably priced • Scratches can be removed by sanding

cons

- Moderately resistant to heat and water • Vulnerable to fire and burns

maintenance

- Wash with damp cloth and mild dish detergent • Treat regularly with mineral oil • Don't varnish and avoid vegetable oil, which leaves a sticky residue

cost

- \$65+ per square foot (installed)

CONCRETE

pros

- Colour-customization available • Very durable • Resistant to heat

cons

- Requires annual resealing • Heavy • Can crack • Vulnerable to stains

maintenance

- Wash with damp cloth and mild dish detergent • Clean up spills immediately to avoid staining

cost

- \$70+ per square foot (installed)

LAMINATE

pros

- Variety of colours and styles • DIY option • Affordable • Easy to maintain

cons

- Vulnerable to heat and stains, as well as burns and scratches

maintenance

- Wash with damp cotton cloth and mild dish detergent • Use trivets to avoid heat damage

cost

- \$15-30 per square foot (installed)

countertops 101



SOLID SURFACING

(Corian)

pros

- Huge selection of colours and styles • Durable • Low maintenance • Resistant to heat, stains and dents

cons

- Any abrasions require professional care • Expensive

maintenance

- Gently sponge using a mild abrasive liquid cleaner • Wash with damp cloth; towel dry

cost

- \$50-100 per square foot (installed)



SOAPSTONE

pros

- Visually rich-looking • Smooth touch and finish • Highly resistant to heat and stains

cons

- High maintenance • Vulnerable to cracks, which can't be fixed • Expensive

maintenance

- Coat with mineral oil once a month to preserve colour • Wash with damp cloth and mild dish detergent • Small scratches can be removed through sanding

cost

- \$60-100 per square foot (installed)



PAPERSTONE

ECO ALERT! Made from 100 per cent postconsumer recycled paper.

pros

- Wide range of colours available • Harder than wood • Resistant to heat, stains and scratches

cons

- Colour can lighten over time with UV exposure • Very expensive

maintenance

- Requires semiannual sealing with PaperStone Finish (contains 100 per cent food-safe ingredients)

cost

- \$190+ per linear foot (installed)

Finding the perfect countertop is easier than you think. Whether you're looking for affordability, function or style, today's market is full of options. To help you make the right choice, we take a look at the wide range of materials available, including new green products.

Written and produced by Clare Douglas



STAINLESS STEEL

ECO ALERT! Stainless steel is the most recycled material in Canada. Chances are your new countertop is constructed out of recycled steel.

pros

- Very durable • Hygienic • Low maintenance • Simple buffing can help keep up appearance • Resistant to heat and rust

cons

- Vulnerable to dents and marks (especially fingerprints) • Can be noisy when working on unless wood is used as reinforcement during installation

maintenance

- When washing, wipe with grain • Avoid bleach, which stains • Mild abrasive powder can be used

cost

- \$60+ per square foot (installed)



ENGINEERED STONE

(Zodiaq, Silestone)

pros

- Smooth finish • Hygienic • Low maintenance • Durable • No sealants or waxes required • Resistant to stains, heat and bacteria

cons

- Doesn't look as rich as marble or granite • Any abrasions require professional care • Expensive

maintenance

- Wash with damp cloth and, if necessary, nonbleach, nonabrasive cleanser • Clean up spills immediately to prevent staining

cost

- \$60-100 per square foot (installed)



ICESTONE

ECO ALERT! Made from 100 per cent recycled glass.

pros

- Offers more colour-customization options than granite • Stronger than marble • Resistant to heat and scratches

cons

- Can stain if not properly maintained • Expensive

maintenance

- Wash daily with mild soap and water • Avoid ammonia- and bleach-based cleaners

cost

- \$120 per square foot (installed)

CERAMIC TILE

pros

- Large variety of colours and styles • Highly resistant to heat and moisture

cons

- Vulnerable to cracks and chips • Tiles take time to install and set • Grout can accumulate dirt

maintenance

- Wash with damp cloth and mild dish detergent • Use epoxy on grout to prevent staining

cost

- \$20-70 per square foot (installed)

GRANITE

pros

- Wide selection of colours available • Aesthetically pleasing • Very durable • Resistant to heat, water and stains

cons

- Requires regular maintenance

maintenance

- Dust twice a week with soft cloth • Requires annual resealing • Cleaning products containing acid or alkaline can strip stone polish

cost

- \$60+ per square foot (installed)

MARBLE

pros

- Attractive look • Highly resistant to heat and water

cons

- Requires semiannual resealing • Vulnerable to scratches and stains • Expensive

maintenance

- Wash with lukewarm water • For polished finish, use marble polish semiannually to maintain shine • To create honed finish, apply a clear silicone-based sealer

cost

- \$70+ per square foot (installed)

WHERE TO FIND IT, PAGE 88

"My current countertop is wood, but in **my dream kitchen** it would be **concrete**. The challenge is to get concrete to the right thinness (it's really a thinness, not a thickness), so it's elegant. The sinks would also be concrete, so everything's continuous and unified." Jamie Kennedy, chef, Jamie Kennedy Kitchens, Toronto

"I have **marble kitchen countertops** in my **home and cottage**. I love marble because it feels soft and has a translucent look. Because it's delicate, marble can be difficult to live with, but I'm not too hard on it, so it works really well for me." Mark McEwan, owner and chef, One, North 44, Toronto