



DECORATOR DATABASE

EVALUATING COUNTERTOPS

There is an impressive variety of materials available for countertops and your **Floor To Ceiling®** kitchen showroom has all of them. Before you make a selection, consider both your goals and performance expectations in relation to the dollars you want to invest in this part of your total remodeling project.

1. **Plastic laminate counters are the least expensive.** Laminate performs well for relatively low cost and offers more color and pattern choices than any other material, making it an outstanding value. (Drawbacks to laminate: once scorched or scratched, the surface cannot be restored to like new condition. Seams are visible and can be potential trouble spots.)
2. **Solid Surface** is manmade acrylic/resin material. Outstanding features include a seamless appearance and repairability of scorches and scratches. Another advantage of solid surface counters is the flexibility the material offers the designer to use creative inlays, contrasting colors, seamlessly joined and customized edge treatments. (One disadvantage of solid surface products may be that repairs are best left to professional fabricators.)
3. **Tile** is extremely popular in warm and coastal climates. Impervious to heat and virtually impossible to scratch, it is also a great choice for adding texture and pattern to your design. (A drawback to tile counters may be the difficulty of keeping even properly sealed grout stain-free and in good condition.)
4. **Formulated natural stone**, one of the newer countertop materials to come on the scene has swiftly become a favorite. Exhibiting characteristics of both solid surface and slab natural stones like granite or marble, this material is formed by mixing natural quartz chips and pigments with a resin base. Like solid surface materials, properly fabricated, formulated natural stone counters have seams that appear almost imperceptible. Non-porous, heat resistant, impervious to water and most staining agents, odors and mildew, formulated natural stone material is a high performance product for both beauty and durability.
5. **Natural (slab) granite or marble** is considered top-of-the-line among countertop materials and is usually the most costly. Best for workcenters not requiring seams, granite and marble are cool to the touch, making both desirable surfaces for a baking center. Extremely resistant to scratching and heat, there is no danger of scorching. (Disadvantages to slab stone counters include visible seams and the potential for stains; especially marble.)



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6. **Concrete** continues to grow in popularity as a modern countertop material. It is durable and practical and can become a unique statement through the use of shape, color and embedded accents. Countertops range in price from \$70-\$200/sq. ft., so they are generally not for tight budgets. They can be either pre-cast or cast on site in 1½” thick slabs to complement just about any motif, ranging from country to sleek, minimalist. Like granite, concrete is somewhat porous, so it must be sealed.

A word of caution, providing an attractive and functional concrete countertop is an entirely different application and requires a different skill set than simply elevating a sidewalk to countertop height. The best work is done by an artisan, so make sure you know the experience and expertise of your fabricator.

Kitchen and bath countertops are some of the most used surfaces in the home. Selecting the material that provides the best value for the way you use it is an important decision. Your **Floor To Ceiling®** kitchen or bath design professional will show you all the options and help you select the tops that are perfect for your new kitchen or bath.