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Material Solutions

A host of countertop materials showcase endless possibilities for style and function in the kitchen.

BY KIM BERNDTSON

Whether the goal is to create a dramatic focal point, a durable work surface or simply add a splash of color in the kitchen, countertops offer myriad design possibilities. New innovations have made it easier than ever to fabricate everything from cleverly curved designs to beautiful waterfall edges to backlit countertops that literally light up the kitchen, while the number of color, texture and pattern choices seems to grow at record speed.

Indeed, with so many material choices, each with its own unique look and characteristics, designers' greatest challenge

often lies in narrowing down the possibilities and finding just the right surface for the job.

Of course, with the mix-and-match trend still going strong, there's no need to choose only one surface – and today's kitchens often address style, function and budgetary needs by combining a variety of surfacing materials into the space for maximum effect.

This month, *KBDN* looks at how a wide array of surfacing materials can add aesthetic and functional appeal to kitchen projects of all sizes and styles.



Photos: Audrey Hall

Category:
GLASS, METAL,
WOOD



CHARLENE PETERSEN, OWNER CASHMERE INTERIOR — BALTIMORE

Collaboration with PRG Brothers and Locati Architects
Zinc (island); Jura limestone (perimeter)

To add depth and layers to her designs, Petersen often mixes materials, as in this kitchen where she combined zinc on the island with honed/sealed Jura limestone on the perimeter. These material choices are repeated in the bar area.

The metal's propensity to change over time – naturally aging to a warm gray that can more easily be abraded compared to other surfaces – can be a pro and a con, Petersen points out. "This client is okay with any scratches and patina that will develop," she says. "It's the kind of kitchen that looks lived in. You will be able to tell that its island top is a working surface. A little wear and tear will only add to the patina."

Zinc also satisfies the client's request for a rustic, modern design style. "Zinc – especially when it isn't hammered, as in this design – provides a very fresh, rustic and modern approach, which was an important goal of this house," she says.

Rivets on the island's edge, as well as the steel bands that conceal the seams, add a fun detail.



Photos: David Duncan Livingston

LISA BAKAMIS, OWNER — LISA BAKAMIS INTERIOR DESIGN — FAIRFAX, CA

Collaboration with Arrowtown Construction

John Boos walnut (island); Caesarstone Pure White (perimeter)

Because of this kitchen's monochromatic design style accentuated with cool elements, Bakamis added warmth with a John Boos walnut countertop for the island.

"We had a lot of pattern as well as cooler colors and materials in the kitchen," says Bakamis, calling attention to the encaustic cement tile backsplash/walls and porcelain floor as well as the Pure White Caesarstone quartz perimeter countertops that support a clean design aesthetic and emphasize 'modern farmhouse' mixed with a bit of bohemia. "Other than

the range being the sole pop of color, we kept it very monochromatic, so we wanted to throw in some warmth with rustic wood. Walnut is always a beautiful material, and my clients loved the idea of bringing it in to enhance the overall aesthetic look."

Because of the home's wooded location, the designer also wanted to showcase some natural materials. "The walnut brings in an outdoor element, as opposed to everything else being man-made," she says. "It's a nice way to break things up a little bit."



Photos: Robert Naik Photography

PEG BERENS, OWNER PEG BERENS INTERIOR DESIGN SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA

ThinkGlass Crystal Brossa (island)

To emphasize this kitchen's 'Hollywood Regency' theme characterized by clean lines with lots of glamour and interesting finishes, Berens used a single piece of thick, seamless ThinkGlass glass as the countertop for the 6'x9' island.

"This client was willing to do something a little different, which is exciting," she says. "That willingness allowed us to create something really beautiful that also meets her needs. After looking at a variety of exotic stone surfaces, we fell in love with the idea of a glass countertop."



Its 1.5" depth makes a bold statement. "The glass thickness is part of what makes it so striking," she says. "We wanted to make it look substantial...like something that was grand and special."

Since the glass is clear, Berens added a thin layer of copper-finished aluminum laminate substrate between it and the cabinet box to conceal the latter and to tie into other copper elements in the home. And, although the glass is smooth on the surface, it features a soft, directional pattern underneath. "When you look into the glass, you see this beautiful copper and waves that look like water," she concludes.

GINA ARLEDGE, OWNER THE KITCHEN STUDIO GREENSBORO, NC

Donna Sandra quartzite (island/perimeter)

The Donna Sandra quartzite used to top the island and perimeter base cabinets serves as a unifying feature in this space.

"The center island, the hardwood flooring, the wall color...this quartzite was the perfect combination of all of the elements in the kitchen," says Arledge. "It brought everything together. We had already mixed up materials and finishes with the rustic alder island and white painted cabinets, so we wanted some continuity of having the same countertop surface throughout. It also feels similar to the backsplash tile, which, along with the crisscross mullion doors, was an initial inspiration for the space."

In addition, it helped reinforce the client's wish for a farmhouse kitchen that pays homage to its existence. "This house is on a working horse farm," she says. "It was important for us to maintain the charm of its early 1900s roots while pulling in the fact that it is a working farm. We also wanted to pull in nature, which surrounds the house, with the use of natural materials such as the quartzite."

Category:
QUARTZ,
QUARTZITE,
ENGINEERED
STONE



Photo: Dustin Peck Photography



Photos: Jen Bilodeau Photography

NANCY HANSON, CO-OWNER/DESIGNER HEARTWOOD KITCHENS — DANVERS, MA

Cambria Brittanicca (island/perimeter)

Collaboration with Sherry Croft, Heartwood Kitchens; Linda Goodwin, Linda Goodwin Interiors

Although Hanson's clients initially envisioned very dark granite countertops for their new kitchen, the designer and her collaborators recommended brightening up the space with Cambria's Brittanicca quartz for the island and perimeter countertops.

"Our clients wanted a modern farmhouse design style with a clean, bright look in a kitchen that was highly functional," says Hanson. "They also wanted a maintenance-free countertop material."

The quartz material fulfilled those requests, as well as offering other advantages to the space. "The gorgeous, large-scale veining adds great modern drama," she notes, pointing out its resemblance to marble. "And, the subtle grays and bright white tie the cabinetry and countertop colors together beautifully."

The designers opted for a chunky 2.5"-thick top with water-fall edges for the island and a standard-depth 1.5"-thick top for the perimeters.

"The decision to go from dark, standard-style countertops to the bright white quartz took the kitchen to a whole other level," says Hanson.



**RYAN HEMINGSON, OWNER
R|HOUSE DESIGN BUILD
CHANHASSEN, MN**

Vicostone Misterio (island)

Vicostone Graphite (perimeter)

Bright and open with a modern country feel – those were the key directives given by Hemingson’s clients for the remodel of their kitchen.

Hemingson addressed the ‘bright’ request by choosing Vicostone quartz in white, lightly marbled Misterio for the large, arced island that grounds the new space. Dark Graphite quartz for the perimeter offers the complementary contrast the homeowners wanted.

Giving the large island a generous curve also accommodates the clients’ wish for a comfortable gathering place for entertaining, offering plentiful seating for six.

“They wanted to seat as many people as possible,” says Hemingson. “Curving it, as opposed to a straight line, also makes it easy for everyone to participate in conversation. It works well with the flow of the kitchen, too.”



Photos: Alyssa Lee Photography

Category:
GRANITE,
MARBLE,
CONCRETE



Photos: Dream Focus Photography



**BILL FEINBERG, PRESIDENT
ALLIED KITCHEN & BATH
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL**

Gaya granite (islands, perimeter, custom table)

Feinberg’s clients weren’t afraid to be bold when they decided to use the colorful and intense Gaya granite throughout the renovated kitchen of their forever home.

“The kitchen was designed around those slabs,” he says. “My clients aren’t far from the water, so the beautiful green color is reminiscent of the ocean and beach here in South Florida. I had shown them pictures of another kitchen we had done with the same type of granite, and once they saw them, it was an easy choice.”

Feinberg showcased the granite in two islands, one of which also includes a large custom table designed by fellow designer, Melissa Mailly. Waterfall edges frame one perimeter run of cabinetry, drawing attention to the natural stone’s vibrant coloration and dramatic veining. “We wanted to utilize every bit of the material!” he says.

“I love using granite, especially exotic granites such as Gaya,” Feinberg continues. “Each slab is unique, with variations from light to dark and different veining patterns.”

Category:
GRANITE,
MARBLE,
CONCRETE



Photos: Peter Rymasz

**DAVIS F. TAMBURIN, RA, AIA and KENNETH J.P. WILKINSON III, CID
KENNETH DAVIS LUX — NY, NJ, MIAMI BEACH AND LAS VEGAS**

Custom concrete (island/perimeter)

Custom concrete countertops for this kitchen's island and perimeter are an integral part of what makes this transitional kitchen timeless. "Our clients didn't want to have to renovate within a few years because something was dated," says Wilkinson. "We wanted to provide them with a timeless kitchen with more contemporary finishes – such as the concrete countertops – that would last into the future."

The custom color was specially created to complement the floor tile, grout and mosaic backsplash while a custom float finish fits midway between

highly polished and matte. "We went through about six color samples before finally settling on the right one," states Tamburin. "We also worked on a custom finish so this countertop isn't standard by any means."

Its substantial 3" depth, built up with edge banding, adds interest while giving a presence and importance to the material. "It really brings the kitchen to the next level," Tamburin points out.

The material's durability will also suit the family of five's everyday needs, given that the island serves as their main dining area, he further notes.



Photo: Paul Bornichsen

**CHERIE BROWN, DESIGNER
KITCHENS BY KLEWENO
KANSAS CITY, MO**

Fossil Brown marble (island)

Cold Spring Black granite (perimeter)

While a nautical theme was already at the heart of this kitchen transformation, the discovery of this Fossil Brown marble – with fossilized sea creatures embedded within – took the design principle to the next level.

"The entire kitchen makes a subtle reference to the ocean," says Brown, noting her clients are avid sailors. "The wavy motion of the cabinets above the cooktop, the backsplash tile that ripples and sparkles like water, the curve of the island cabinetry, the custom nautilus glass table, even the brass 'framing' around the cooktop that pays homage to the brass found on their sailboat...all of it had already been planned," she says. "We were wondering what to use for the island tops when we found this marble while walking through the stone shop. It fit the space perfectly!"

Brown accented the dramatic marble with polished Cold Spring Black granite for the perimeter. "We wanted something neutral in the background so we could have drama at the island where it's more visible," she says.

Category:
SOLID SURFACE,
LAMINATE



Photo: Valerie Wilcox

**LEANNE TAMMARO and
ADOLPHINA KARACHOK
DESIGNTHEORY
TORONTO, CANADA**

Collaboration with Stephanie Pellatt, Pivot Design
Corian Glacier White (perimeter)
Carrara marble (island)

Tammaro and Karachok's clients were looking for a modern, functional kitchen that complemented the aesthetic of the new modern addition. As such, the duo added walnut accents to the cabinetry to add warmth and connect the new space with the slightly more traditional original wing of the house. "By adding the birdcage light fixtures over the island, it added an essence of whimsy that the space was calling for," says Karachok.

When it came to selecting countertop materials, their clients greatly disliked seeing seams, so they recommended Corian Glacier White for the perimeters. "Corian offers a near seamless look while maintaining a solid surface with a natural or matte finish," notes Tammaro. "We mixed this white perimeter surface with a modestly veined Carrara marble in areas where we did not require seams. This added a beautiful, subtle pattern and texture to the space and added another layer of interest."

**GAIL MONICA DENT, PRINCIPAL
PROVANTI DESIGNS
REDMOND, WA**

**Formica Group 180fx Travertine Silver
laminare (island/perimeter)**

These Travertine Silver laminate countertops offer the look of silver travertine, without the maintenance associated with the natural stone.

"Real silver travertine isn't well-suited for kitchens," Dent says. "But this laminate, which has a true-to-scale pattern, mimics the real stone. When you walk into the room, the island pops and makes it a focal point of the space."

Dent finished the edges with IdealEdge in a 45-degree beveled bullnose profile for a finished look, "without a glue line," she says, adding that while she included a drop-in sink, this laminate can also be used with an undermount model.

The laminate also fit within her client's more petite budget. "They wanted a kitchen that was lighter and brighter and had more storage," she says, noting that they removed a wall to make the space larger and improve traffic flow. "Using laminate for the countertops is a great example of what can be accomplished without a large budget."



Photos: John G Wilbanks Photography



TINA RODDA, OWNER/DESIGNER KITCHEN COVE CABINETRY & DESIGN PORTLAND, ME

Reclaimed wood (island)
Fantasy Brown (perimeter)

When Rodda's clients undertook the renovation of their turn-of-the-century cottage along the coast of Maine, they knew they wanted to preserve some of its special elements.

"They adore this place and they want to be good stewards to it," she says. "So when they renovated it, they were looking for ways to incorporate parts of the old structure."

As such, several floor joists were repurposed by the contractor for the island countertop, which sits atop an antique cash wrap counter. Other repurposed elements include barn doors accented with leather pulls that lead to the pantry. Walnut cabinets were also part of the historic cottage, so the designer included dark base cabinets in tribute.

Rodda gave her clients plenty of workspace around the kitchen's perimeter, which she accented with Fantasy Brown in a leathered finish. "It really looks like the ocean," she says. "It has some wonderful grays and blues, but it also has a warm brown running through it. Because there is so much of this material, the wood island top adds warmth."



Category:
RECYCLED
MATERIALS



Photos: James R. Solomon



Photo: Roger Turk

KARL DROPPING, OWNER NORSK DESIGN-BUILD REDMOND, WA

Vetrazzo Floating Blue (island/perimeter)
Custom Kerry Johnson Glass (raised island bar)

This homeowner loves the color blue, as well as glass. Dropping was able to combine both passions with this Vetrazzo Floating Blue recycled glass countertop.

"Blue is 'her' color, and she's a big fan of glass," he says, noting its plentiful usage throughout the waterfront home, including the colorful sculpture that was relocated to the living room during the remodel. "She likes the look and feel of glass, and incorporating it in this project was important to her."

Using a recycled product also gives his client something unique. "Because it is manufactured with recycled materials, every slab is different," he points out.

Dropping accented the island with a custom Kerry Johnson Glass raised bar top with a free-formed front-edge radius. He supported it with custom stainless steel standoffs so it appears to float. Its smooth top is complemented with a textured bottom for a distinctive look.

The designer curved the focal-point island, as well as the custom stainless steel hood above it, to enhance conversation when entertaining.

Category:
ULTRA COMPACT
SURFACING,
SINTERED
STONE



Photos: Julie Mannell Photography



ALINDA MORRIS, OWNER
ALINDA MORRIS INTERIOR DESIGN — GIG HARBOR, WA
Neolith Iron Corten (island); Lapitec Grigio Cemento (perimeter)

When Morris discussed countertop material choices with her client, one challenge was finding something that complemented the existing concrete flooring while showcasing a modern industrial design style and elements of nature.

"Everything my client showed me was rustic, industrial spaces," she says. "I needed to find a way to pull the rust color into the design, while bringing together all the ideas she presented from a variety of storyboards."

The logical choice proved to be 12mm Neolith Iron Corten in a satin finish, which she repeated as the ventilation hood façade.

"There are a lot of different textures in the space," she says, drawing attention to the custom gray-stained oak cabinets and reclaimed wood island base, floating shelves and beams. "Finding continuity was important."

Morris complemented the perimeter with 3cm Lapitec Grigio Cemento, also in a satin finish. "My client loves its color and initially she wanted to do the entire kitchen in the Lapitec," she says. "But its dark color would have been too much for the space, so the addition of the Neolith helps to lighten it up."



Photos: Eymeric Widling

AMY ADAMS, SENIOR DESIGNER
LD&A (FORMERLY LYNN DONALDSON & ASSOCIATES) — CALGARY, CANADA
Dekton Aura (island)
Caesarstone Piatra Grey (island, perimeter)

Initially, the selection of Dekton Aura as the raised island in the kitchen was driven by the desire for a marble look for the fireplace in the living room, which shares space with the kitchen and dining room.

"We needed a product that could tolerate heat from the fireplace and also be book-matched for a striking central feature," explains Adams. "To create a relationship with the kitchen, we opted to also use it on the island, as well as on the opposing custom dining room buffet. Because Dekton is so resilient to heat and stains, it was an ideal countertop material choice for achieving the marble look, without having to use natural marble."

Mitered edges mimic the through-body profile of natural stone, while waterfall edges provide a sleek and clean contemporary look.

Adams offset the high-gloss white cabinetry with dark Caesarstone Piatra Grey quartz. Its polished surface offers a complementary juxtaposition with the matte finish of the Dekton.

