



Rock Steady

by Trish Maskell

NATURAL STONE COUNTERTOPS BRING THE OUTDOORS IN

Q:

I am having my kitchen remodeled and am leaning toward natural stone for the countertop. What do I need to consider?



Printed Matter | To avoid stains on natural stone countertops, apply three coats of penetrating sealant post-installation. AKDO's Jerusalem Gold limestone, paired with its Argyle mosaic, creates a fashion-inspired yet timeless look. See Resources.

A: Do not spoil the excitement of a new kitchen by being overwhelmed by the wealth of choices. Your countertop should last a lifetime; this is not the place for the latest color trend. You can ring in the changes throughout the years by introducing voguish colorful kitchen paraphernalia, but the countertop should remain a transitional surface that will neither bore nor exasperate you. Truly, you want to be as thrilled with your surface in two decades as you are on the day of installation.

A word of warning: Everyone will have an opinion about shade and texture but remember that it's your kitchen. To refine the selection process, consider a basic color that's right for you. Be sure to take with you a piece of your kitchen cabinetry when you visit showrooms; you'll be surprised at the impact the color of the stone has on the door panel, and vice versa. Though common sense may dictate that delicate shades are reserved for the bathroom vanity, Absolute Black granite is not your only option for the kitchen. Among many available fin-

ishes, you will find honed, polished and brushed.

As for the actual stone, again, everyone has their opinion but it's really a question of your expectation. How do you want the stone to look in 10 years? Granite, the most widely used natural stone countertop in the country, requires minimal maintenance and is much denser and harder than marble and limestone. But classic European kitchens with surfaces of Carrara marble or Jerusalem Gold limestone (which is more porous and requires a bit more maintenance) garner a beautiful patina over time. Inquire about the features of each stone and consider how these relate to your particular goals.

Some additional words of advice: Upon installation, seal the stone with three coats of penetrating sealant. The use of an inexpensive topical sealant (or the total lack of a sealant) is often to blame for stained countertops. Second, always use a cutting board, regardless of the stone you choose. And to maintain the stone's beauty, simply use a pH-balanced stone soap when cleaning.

Trish Maskell is an industry analyst and trainer for AKDO, a natural stone showroom and warehouse in Bridgeport. Have a question about kitchen or bath design or appliances? E-mail it to Kitchen&BathIQ@CandGpublications.com. Each month select questions will be answered in this space by design professionals.