

Caring for kitchen countertops

Kitchen remodels are a popular home improvement project that help homeowners recoup large percentages of their initial investments at resale. A kitchen remodel can invigorate a home and make the most popular room in the house more functional.

According to HomeAdvisor, a home-improvement informational guide, homeowners spend an average of \$22,000 on kitchen remodels. However, lavish projects can cost more than \$50,000. Protecting such investments is important and requires that homeowners understand how to properly maintain kitchen features so they have the longest life possible. This includes the new countertops that make the kitchen look complete.

Countertops come in various materials, not all of which should be treated the same way. Quartz, granite, marble, laminate, and tile countertops require different types of maintenance.

Quartz

Engineered quartz countertops are popular. Quartz countertops are nearly maintenance-free and resistant to stains,

scratches and even heat. Quartz will not need to be sealed like natural stone and can be cleaned using just a damp cloth with a mild, nonabrasive soap.

Granite

Polished or honed granite countertops offer a high-end look that adds instant value to a kitchen. Natural variations in granite give each kitchen a custom look. To keep granite countertops clean, avoid abrasive cleansers that can scratch, and opt for warm, soapy water instead. Stains are possible, but can be remedied with a baking soda paste left to sit for a couple of hours, advises Angie's List. Wipe up oils, acids and soda promptly to avoid stains, and follow advised sealing routines.

Marble

Marble is a natural stone that is porous and will need to be resealed periodically. Because marble has high levels of the mineral calcite, it can be reactive when acids come in contact with it, and etch marks may appear. Promptly wipe away tomato juice, lemon juice, perfume, or toothpaste. Marble is softer than granite and will wear at a faster rate. Avoid scratching

and exercise caution when using knives or sharp objects around marble.

Laminate

One of the more budget-friendly materials, laminate countertops can be fabricated to mimic the look of natural stone, wood or even quartz. Laminate is less resistant to damage than other materials and will need a gentle touch. Formica® says to never use abrasive cleansers, scouring pads or steel wool when cleaning laminate countertops. For tough stains, an all-purpose cleaner should suffice when applied with a nylon-bristled brush. Test any cleanser in a discreet area first.

Tile

Cleaning tile countertops requires getting into crevices along the grout lines. A toothbrush and a mildew-fighting cleaner or bleach diluted with water is advised. Also, unglazed tiles need to be sealed yearly. Some soap may leave residue, which can be removed with a solution of vinegar and water.

Check with the manufacturer or installer of the countertops to learn more about the ways to clean and maintain new counters.



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