

Marble A Popular Choice For Countertops

When treated properly, can last as long as granite

by Sophi Belanger
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While granite has been the en vogue material for countertops for quite some time, a new "old" material is now seeing its use grow more popular: marble.

"We looked at both granite and marble for our countertops and ultimately went with the marble," said Joanna Silberman, a homeowner in Commack, N.Y. "We know that more care is needed for marble, but it is a beautiful material and the color choices seemed endless. We also didn't want to do the same thing all of our friends have done - which is install granite."

Silberman is not alone in her choice of marble for countertops. Installers and designers around North America are noticing an increase in the installation of marble.

"I think it's great," said Rick Coon, who, along with his wife Mary, owns and operates Raccoon Stone and Tile Works, Inc., in Byron, Ga. "It all depends on the client and their mindset. Of all the marble tops I have done for clients, I'd say it's because the clients' have a European mentality."



"Granite has always been the number one conservative choice for luxurious homes," said Gervais Fortin, APDIQ, an interior designer in Montreal, Canada. "What I am experiencing now is an increasing demand for marble, white marbles precisely. I personally attribute it to the stressful, fast-paced modern life we all have to deal with which leads us to crave for an unconstrained, contemporary, Zen, pure, graceful look when we finally get home after a busy day. Without any doubts, I can say that now the majority prefer



Far Left: Designer Gervais Fortin sees white marble as being very hot among his clients.

Left: The key to using marble on countertops is proper maintenance.

marble."

Fortin, who has been a designer for more than 25 years, works mainly on renovation projects in mansions of the 19th century era. "The well-placed new owners who take possession of these types of homes undertake major renovations from the basement to the attic with an outstanding quality concern: roomy kitchen with marble, stainless steel, wood and lacquer, three and more complete bathrooms, home spa, home gym, wine cellar, garden, pool, home sauna... everything

redefined, redesigned and completed with the utmost care and quality requirements."

Coon said that marble offers a nearly unlimited amount of color choices for the homeowner. He does see certain trends emerging. "My clients tend to lean more towards the lighter colors for kitchens and the darker colors for baths," he said. "They are mostly using warm tones in beige, gold and brown. In the kitchen, they may be the more pastel colors and in bath-

continued on page 22 >

Marble A Popular Choice For Countertops

continued from page 1 >

rooms more rich colors.”

“I have been using white marble for 25 years and now honed white marble for the last 15 years, which is the biggest design trend,” said Fortin. “I can say that my realizations remain aesthetically fresh-looking, very contemporary and timeless.”

Coon said that many times his customers specifically ask for marble, but he makes sure to caution them on its care and special needs. “Marble is generally a softer material and will need more care than granite,” he said. “It is more absorbent and scratches easily. With this in mind – Marble is not the material we recommend to our customers but once we orient them on its care and what to expect, it is a beautiful material (in color) and we will make an informed decision.”

Proper care is a key to maintaining marble for years to come. Coon recommends a good stone soap, sani-wipes or a good maintenance product like a wax cleaner. “We prefer a stone polish from Bellinzoni,” said Coon. “I’ve tried quite a few products and I think this one works best.”

Fortin said that his wealthy customers do not have to worry about the care of the stone themselves. “Most of them have their cleaning maid do the sealer, just to tell you how trouble-free it is for the owners!”

Coon does report that some marbles are more suited than others for countertops. “Some are not as compatible as others in maintenance. It is important that you research the stone matrix – is it softer, overly filled or too dark (does it scratch easily)? There are some very hard Carrara stones but I think marble from my home state of Georgia has them beat in hardness and stain resistance.”

“To me, it is the best choice for durability, stain resistance and beauty,” said Coon. “It is the best chef’s stone for candy, pastries, etc.”



Above: White Georgia and White Cherokee from Georgia Marble are featured in kitchen. The designer, Gervais Fortin, says "the material picks give it a warm, inviting, homey feel."

Below: The white marble provides a beautiful contrast to the dark wood.



"In both kitchens and bathrooms either as flooring or countertops, white marbles from Georgia has always been my first pick," said Fortin. "I show my customers its winding pattern - its elegant movements. I know they are intrigued when I see their pupils expand. The real success is when my customers first encounter the final product installed in their homes: the confidence they had in my good tastes is then crystal clear before their eyes."

Fortin added: "I certainly appreciate its magnificence, generous but keen curves. On top of its aesthetic assets, it suits my resistance concerns and it secures my customers when they know how easy maintenance it is."

"Georgia Marble's structure is purely crystalline, with no stratification and only traces of foreign material," said Perus. "The myriad crystals that distinguish Georgia Marble as 'the stone that sparkles' also form an almost impenetrable barrier against moisture, dirt and discoloration."