



# COUNTERTOP PERPLEXITY

Interior Designer **Dolores Pian** shares her ideas.

Planning a new kitchen or bathroom? Confused by the many counter choices? Have you gone from enthused to confused? Let's see if we can clear up your countertop perplexity.

## WHAT IS YOUR COUNTERTOP PERSONALITY?

What kind of surface fits your lifestyle? Is it easy to maintain? What is your budget? Digging deep into these questions will get you closer to the right solution for you.

## POPULAR CHOICES

**While there are a variety of materials, we'll review the most popular choices:**

**NATURAL STONE:** Consisting of granite and marble. Stone is mined from the earth in the form of granite, which is granular in appearance, or marble, with its flamboyant veining. They are porous and must be sealed to prevent staining and moisture retention. The seal needs to be maintained on a regular basis.

**MAN MADE:** As seen in plastic laminate, quartz and large format ceramic tile.

**Plastic laminate** is perfect for the budget conscious. Known under brand names such as Arborite, Formica or Wilson Art, it is hard plastic sheeting glued to plywood. It comes in a variety of designs from plain to fanciful. Sinks and faucets

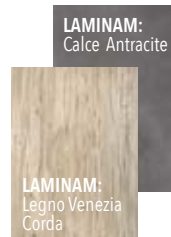


must over mount and have a water-tight seal, otherwise water will leak and will warp or rot the plywood. The edging and backsplash can be made in one piece. Countertops are available from most fabricators and large box hardware stores.

**Quartz** is a mix of natural quartz, resins and colouring agents. Common brands include Cambria, Corian Quartz, Ceasarstone and Silestone. They can imitate the pattern of stone or come in various colours to reflect your unique décor. It is non-porous, does not require a sealant and is low maintenance. Since it is a resin mix, you cannot put a hot pot directly on the counter. You must use a trivet.



**Large format tiles** are non-porous, ceramic-slab tiles. Brands such as Laminam by Stone Tile come in a standard size of 64-by-128 and a half-inch thick.



## MATTE OR SHINY FINISH

Shiny surfaces can cause extreme glare and eye strain and because of that, matte surfaces are gaining in popularity. Historically, designers have been big fans of matte surfaces for a soft, sophisticated look that minimizes fingerprints and smudges.

## COST

Costs for counters can vary wildly. With quartz in particular, cost is affected by the quality of the quartz stone being used, the method of manufacturing (some use fillers



CAMBRIA: Clareanne Matte

such as sand), country of origin and photo reproduction quality of the pattern. Ask for a specification sheet outlining all the ingredients to know what you are buying.

Other expenses include installation fees, location of the project, thickness of material, edge details and the number of cut-outs required. Generally, 90 per cent of your cost is designated to labour and 10 per cent to raw material.

Large format tiles are comparable to quartz. Granite, marble and quartz are now similar in price.

## FOOD SAFETY

When preparing food on counters, always use a separate cutting board and clean up with a mixture of vinegar and water to disinfect the counter.

## NEW AND NOTABLE

DuPont's Corian is now offering a charging surface that can power up your devices wirelessly. A transmitter is embedded under the counter. Just plug a charging ring into your device, place it on the counter and recharge your battery.



DUPONT CORIAN: Charging Surface

**Now that we've cleared up your countertop questions, have you gone from confused to enthused? ☺**