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The Kitchen Backbone: COUNTERTOPS

BY SHANE GOGGANS

What countertop material to choose ?

I often get asked "what kitchen countertops I like the best". Well, to best respond to this question is to ask one of my own. "How do you use your kitchen?" Now this might seem like a silly question, but it can really help you decide what material is most suited for you. If for instance you order in or prepare microwaveable meals then durability becomes less of a concern. But if you have a "working kitchen" then durability and ease of cleaning would be very important. So, in order to help you make that choice I have decided to use a chart showing the different advantages of each material.

Material	Approx. Cost Per SF	Can you cut on it?	Heat resistant	Stain Proof	Have to be sealed?
Laminate	\$25 - \$50	NO	NO	NO	NO
Wood	\$30 - \$150	YES	NO	NO	YES
Granite	\$75 - \$200	YES	YES	NO	YES
Ceramic Tile	\$25 - \$110	NO	YES	NO	NO*
Concrete	\$75 - \$200	NO	YES	NO	YES
Quartz	\$75 - \$200	YES	NO	YES	NO
Stainless Steel	\$85 - \$150	NO	NO	YES	NO
Solid Surface	\$65 - \$120	NO	NO	YES	NO
Glass	\$85 - \$150	NO	NO	YES	NO
Natural Stone	\$75 - \$100	NO	NO	NO	YES

*The grout joints should be sealed

Now that you know the approximate cost of materials and a few pros and cons of each material you can make an informed decision based on how it fits into your lifestyle. But something to consider is mixing up the different materials to create the look and durability that will make being in the kitchen a joy. A few quick ideas are granite tops with a tumbled marble backsplash around your cook top. Butcher block around your sink, and manufactured quartz at an island. This will create a distinctive look as well as offer you the ability to get the maximum advantage from each material.

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Protect your home from **MOLD AND MOISTURE** with these tips.

Roof

Replace missing, upturned, or irregular shingles. Direct water down the roof, never up under the shingles. Look for exposed or protruding nails. Remove moss and lichen growth anywhere on the roof using a broom or garden hose with a spray nozzle. Remove debris build-up in valleys and at wall-to-roof intersections. Inspect flashing around chimney and penetrations. If flashing has cracked or pulled away, call in an expert to repair.

Gutters/Downspouts

Clean gutters with a blower, hose or broom. Using a hose will help pinpoint leaks and other trouble spots. Use gutter cement on cracks, or replace the gutter sections according to the manufacturer's instructions. Replace rusted screws and make sure downspouts drain away from the house.

Windows/Doors/Siding

Inspect and recaulk siding, windows, utility penetrations and doors. Place a foam backer rod in seams more than 1/2 inch wide or 1/4 inch deep. Check that the weatherstripping around doors and windows seals tightly to prevent moisture from entering. Inspect stucco and brick surfaces for cracked mortar. Keep a minimum 6 inches of clearance between the siding and the ground.

Drainage

Make sure that perimeter ground slopes away from the foundation. If downspouts dead-end near the foundation, add splash blocks to redirect water away from the foundation. Inspect the outdoor deck connection to the house. This is a major source of water intrusion that often goes unnoticed. This connection should be flashed and have sufficient space between the ledger board and the deck boards to allow drainage away from the house.

Sprinklers

Water your plants, not your house. Redirect lawn sprinklers so they do not wet the siding, windows or foundation walls. Overwatering your lawn or plants can create moisture and mold problems even in the summer.