

kitchen & bath DESIGN NEWS®

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Tere-Stone from **Taylor Industries** is a cast-filled polyester material utilizing a composition and a casting process. It consists of natural stone Dolomite with an ultra-high-performance Terephthalic Resin and an 'NPG' Isophthalic Polyester Gel Coat system, providing a standard high-luster finish or an optional matte finish. Circle No. 226 on Product Card



ThinkGlass creates durable glass countertops in nearly any shape, hue or texture requested, according to the company. Now, the company can also illuminate its designs – from within – through the use of LED lighting. Circle No. 227 on Product Card



Kuehn Bevel manufactures decorative edge products for laminate countertops. Its flat back is featured with Formica's 180fx color Blue Storm. All laminate moldings are made with moisture-resistant MDF and all countertop moldings are individually wrapped for protection. Circle No. 228 on Product Card

The HiLites Wallsplash from **RangeCraft Manufacturing** is an alternative to traditional kitchen backsplash materials. It may also be used for feature walls and decorative borders. The backsplashes are available in Stainless Steel, Brass and Copper. Circle No. 229 on Product Card



er than ever, so durable, low-maintenance materials that still meet the needs of the family are key," says Chmiel.

Paradiso says that durability is a given, with buyers expecting countertops to last. "Ease of maintenance has become a key factor in people's selection, even over price, over durability, over product performance. They don't want to have to scrub their countertop every day."

Chmiel agrees. "The integration of an undermount sink in a countertop removes the raised lip of a drop-in sink, allowing for easier clean up of spills and crumbs," says Chmiel. "With sink manufacturers introducing undermount options specifically for laminate, undermount sink usage will be even more prevalent in the future," she adds.

Schmitt notes, "In the laminate countertop sector, people are achieving the look and functionality of the undermount sink paired with the laminate countertop products."

"Integrated sinks are another feature that provides a smooth surface with easy clean-up," says Weadock.

Designers must also take into account the various ways a homeowner will put their countertop to use to make the best choice for their clients. Marquez says countertop usage is reflecting a move toward congregating around a table, island or counter to socialize. "Integrated tables' or 'social tables' that merge an island with a countertop or feature a surface with a drop-down or wrap-around countertop, with a level lower, are becoming increasingly popular for a number of entertainment and aesthetic reasons," he says. "Some homeowners prefer to have the 'children's table' connected to the main kitchen island to have continuation of seating and serving space. Others prefer the varied aesthetic the drop-down or wrap-around surface of an integrated table provides and desire the level of drama it adds to the overall design of the kitchen."



Specialtystainless.com offers a range of custom stainless steel countertops with built-in sinks. This Farm House style design incorporates two stainless steel radius corner sinks fitted seamlessly into the flush-mounted stainless steel countertop, complemented by an integral full-front stainless steel apron. Circle No. 230 on Product Card



Among the colors **DuPont** has added to its Corian Collection of solid surfaces is Basil, which features waves of nutmeg and green fennel peppered with gold metallic flecks. Basil – along with Hickory Smoke, Clove, Allspice, Cilantro, Arrowroot, Blue Spice and Hazelnut – were all inspired by the varied hues and textures of spices. Circle No. 231 on Product Card



Okite decorative quartz countertops are highly heat-, stain- and scratch-resistant, according to the company. The countertops are durable and nonporous and, because they are quartz, never need sealing. Circle No. 232 on Product Card

SURFACE SPACE

The evolution of the kitchen into a more multipurpose space means countertops get more use as well. Beyond prep space for cooking, the surfaces are used for dining, studying, crafts, storage and more. As this occurs, most manufacturers say the amount of surface area is naturally getting larger.

"Kitchens are the gathering places in the home and are being used for so much more than just food preparation," says Schmitt. "Oversized bars or islands are trending as people are opting for a less formal dining area and are including seating and functionality into the space."

Weadock agrees, adding, "We are finding that by creating surface layers, kitchens become more functional for these diverse activities."

Paradiso believes, "Islands are picking up more attention. We definitely see the island becoming the focal point within the kitchen." These islands tend to have more extravagant design and intricate edge treatments, he says.

And, "though kitchens may be getting smaller, the islands are getting larger," Morici maintains, explaining that LG Hausys manufactures quartz in a jumbo size slab (130"x63" as opposed to the traditional 120"x54"), which allows fabricators to get an island done with one slab.

Kitchens are moving to a more open concept, and may be replacing formal dining areas as well. "As homeowners are forgoing their formal dining rooms, the countertop surface area has expanded to incorporate the dining function," says Chmiel.

"Architects and designers are knocking down walls more than ever before to create a continuation of space – fusing together the kitchen and living room. This open plan continues to gain popularity and, as a result, more surface space is becoming a preference in making the kitchen truly the 'heart of the home,'" says Marquez. "In achieving an open-plan look, designers are now removing more cabinetry and wall fixtures and opting for expansive kitchen islands that add a multi-functional element to the kitchen – a worktop for counter space and storage beneath," he concludes. 



VT Industries has added the Marbella edge profile to its premium postformed laminate countertop offerings. With its 1/8" radius, Marbella creates a sophisticated pencil-line look that was previously achievable only with real granite. Circle No. 233 on Product Card



Manufactured by **The Swan Corp.**, Swanstone solid surface products are heat-, stain- and scratch-resistant, according to the company. Compression molding provides added durability for high-traffic areas, the firm adds. Swanstone is available in a wide variety of colors and products. Circle No. 234 on Product Card