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# Kitchen & Bath design news



## Custom Touches

Personal elements and unusual pieces that resonate  
with the homeowner give kitchens custom appeal

COVER STORY:

Striking Focal Point  
Adds Kitchen Flair

Baths Favor  
Clean Lines,  
Serene Hues

Variety, Texture  
Highlight Trends  
In Countertops

1 | Created from lava stone, Pyrolave's countertops can be sculpted into extra-long lengths without any seams. Available in 16 glossy and 16 matte saturated shades, the countertops provide resistance to high temperatures, acids and corrosive products, the firm notes.  
**Circle No. 155 on Product Card**

# Surface Style

From a wide variety of materials at all price points to colors, textured patterns and interesting edges, today's surfacing options offer myriad opportunities for designers to get creative.

By Elizabeth Richards

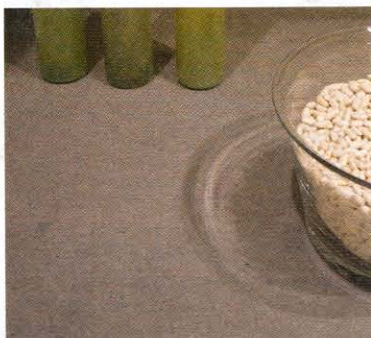
With house prices down, homeowners are more likely to be staying put, and without the concern about resale value, many are being more creative in their design choices. For countertops and surfaces, that translates to more colors, patterns and interesting mixing and matching of materials to create exciting visual focal points in the kitchen.

In fact, manufacturers recently surveyed by *KBDN* agree that unique materials and patterns are top of the list for surfacing trends.

At the same time, budget concerns, eco awareness and nature themes continue to impact the countertop market.

**CHOICES, CHOICES**

"Countertop material offerings really exploded in the last 15 years," says Jean Pauwels, distributor/marketer of Raleigh, NC-based Pyrolave, a company that offers a unique glazed volcanic lava stone surface. Previously, he says, granite, marble, laminate and solid surface were among the



2 | Abet Laminati's Rocks collection includes seven stone-inspired laminates that emulate organic material. The earthy textured surface adds a realistic touch. The laminates are part of the Volume II collection and are Greenguard-certified with low-VOC emissions.  
**Circle No. 156 on Product Card**



3 | A-Line stainless steel countertops by Advance Tabco come in various edge styles. Constructed of heavy-duty 16-gauge 304 stainless steel, they incorporate steel hat channel understructures and are available in standard or custom sizes.  
**Circle No. 157 on Product Card**



4 | Stone surfaces in the Natura Collection by Antolini Luigi & C. change their outward appearance due to engraving that creates endless optical plays. The distinctive collection is made of different materials and is available with a wide range of designs.  
**Circle No. 158 on Product Card**



5 | VT Industries has added the Marbella edge profile to its premium postformed laminate countertop offerings. With its 1/8-inch radius, Marbella creates a sophisticated pencil-line look that was previously achievable only with real granite, the firm notes.  
**Circle No. 189 on Product Card**



**6** | CaesarStone's six new colors range from classic to contemporary, rounding out 48 colors in the Classico collection. The new colors include Linen, Belgian Moon, Haze, Atlantic Salt, Wild Rocks and Late Autumn.  
**Circle No. 160 on Product Card**



**7** | The Euro-Star European kitchen solid wood countertop from CafeCountertops is engineered to resist warping and splitting. Its finish stands up to kitchen spills, including red wine, yet is safe for chopping and food prep, the firm notes.  
**Circle No. 161 on Product Card**



**8** | Formica Corp.'s 180fx series laminate collection has added seven new designs that mimic natural stone and petrified wood. Available in 5' spans, the laminates are created using an advanced printing technology. Shown is Soapstone Sequoia in Honed finish.  
**Circle No. 162 on Product Card**



**9** | Caron Industries' Top Style Collection of surfaces offers warmth, richness and durability in a wood work surface. The warm wood surfaces provide eco-friendly benefits and complement a wide variety of kitchen designs.  
**Circle No. 163 on Product Card**

only choices. Now there are surfaces made from paper, concrete, recycled material, quartz, stainless steel, zinc, natural stone, glass, ceramic and more.

"Designers are looking for new materials and they have plenty of choices," agrees Bertrand Charest, president of ThinkGlass, a glass countertop manufacturer in Boisbriand, Quebec.

Because there are so many options, consumers can shop within a wide range of price points, adds Lorenzo Marquez, marketing v.p. of Stafford, TX-based Cosentino North America. "For designers, value means providing clients with the solution that delivers the style they're looking to achieve, while staying within the budget prescribed for the project. Sourcing reliable materials that deliver on quality and performance is key to enhancing a designer's relationship with the client," he states.

Mary Warner, brand manager at Vetrazzo in Tate, GA sees recycled materials as the new wave of material, with glass steadily growing. "People see natural stone and they relate that to a decade ago," she says, "whereas recycled glass surfaces demonstrate an awareness of recycling or sustainability. These surfaces, often available in myriad colors, also allow homeowners and designers to create very personal spaces." She adds, "Gone are the days of house flipping. People are staying put and want to make a mark on the space in which they spend a lot of time."

Trisha Schmitt, v.p./corporate marketing for VT Industries in Holstein, IA says, "The popular looks include both natural stone and laminates and edge treatments that have a stone-like appearance." She cites the company's new 1/8"-radius Marbella edge as an example. "With marble becoming such a trending countertop material, our Marbella edge paired with the new

laminates can really give you that look at an affordable price," she says.

Laminate designs that mimic large-scale exotic stones are also popular because they provide new options to consumers looking for a low maintenance stone look at a more affordable price point, according to Gerri Chmiel, senior design manager at Formica Corp. in Cincinnati, OH. "Manufacturers are striving to create new surfacing designs that reflect the look of trendy materials at lower price points," she says.

Dale Mandell, sales director – North America for Samsung Surfaces based in Los Angeles, CA says, "We're seeing increased interest in countertop materials that are somewhat less traditional. For instance, we've noticed an increased demand for colors and patterns that are less similar to granite, more monotone and modern, with subtle design elements such as metallic flecks."

### ECONOMIZING WITH STYLE

While the economy continues to present challenges, the plethora of countertop materials available creates designer options even for those with smaller budgets. "Exotic granites and engineered stones remain popular for homeowners undertaking expensive kitchen renovation projects, while new large-scale laminate surfacing options appeal to homeowners who desire an exotic look [on a] smaller budget," says Chmiel.

The economy has also led to more mixing and matching of materials, according to Warner. "We see a lot of kitchen islands made of one of the more vibrant Vetrazzo mixes, but then the perimeter is completed in a natural stone or neutral quartz material," she says.

While sometimes compromises must be made in

**10** | The look of the Waterstone Collection of quartz from Cambria was influenced by the natural movement of water over stone. Ranging from neutral to vibrant tones that are reminiscent of granite and marble, each color is named for a location in Wales and England. Buckingham, shown, is one of 12 new colors from the company.  
**Circle No. 164 on Product Card**



**11** | Constructed of solid Sapele Mahogany, this butcherblock counter from The Grothouse Lumber Co. was designed by Tyler Florence for the House Beautiful Kitchen of the Year. A Latin phrase from the patron saint of chefs is etched along the counter edge.  
**Circle No. 165 on Product Card**



**12** | The Spring 2011 Series of Silestone from Cosentino North America includes designer-inspired colors such as red, white platinum and gray. Silestone natural quartz products are non-porous and scratch-, stain- and heat-resistant, the firm notes. Shown is Cemento.  
**Circle No. 166 on Product Card**



**13** | Craft-Art Rustic Black Walnut countertops offer a knottier version of Black Walnut. The heartwood is a rich, dark brown with more wavy or curly grain than standard Black Walnut. Craft-Art offers more than 25 different wood species.  
**Circle No. 167 on Product Card**



**15** | DuPont has added five colors to its Zodiaq quartz surfaces line, each inspired by the hues and textures of various spices. Included are Coarse Pepper, Caraway, Poppy Seed, Chicory, and Sage.  
**Circle No. 169 on Product Card**



**14** | Curava is a recycled glass surface available in Standard and Splendid collections in 20 colors. Each slab is made from at least 70% recycled glass. The manufacturing process allows for particulates to be spread throughout the product for a three-dimensional quality.  
**Circle No. 168 on Product Card**

## Product Trend Report



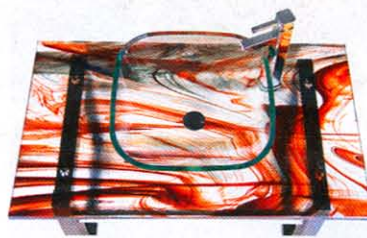
**16** | The Blended Walnut Dining/Conference Table from John Boos & Co. is crafted from solid Blended Black American Walnut. The 30"-tall table has a 1-3/4"-thick surface with a varnished finish and a Blended Walnut panel base.

**Circle No. 170 on Product Card**



**17** | Amore' and Vida laminate countertops from Hartson-Kennedy feature distinctive laminate patterns. The Vida profile, seen here with a profile endcap, offers the look of granite with the price and care of laminate, the company notes.

**Circle No. 171 on Product Card**



**18** | Hirsch Glass' Art Glass Vanity top series features distinctive colors and patterns embedded throughout the glass. Available in a variety of color depths and appearances, it is tempered and laminated, and comes 37"x22" with 3/4" thickness. Custom sizes are available.

**Circle No. 172 on Product Card**



**19** | A complement to traditional, crossover or rustic decors, J. Aaron's wood countertops are made from top-grade hardwoods, and offer durability as well as aesthetic appeal. Edge Grain Sapele, shown, has a permanent waterproof satin finish.

**Circle No. 173 on Product Card**



**20** | LG Hausys has added HI-MACS Galaxy to its HI-MACS Acrylic Solid Surface collection. The Galaxy line includes colors

inspired by celestial space, with each featuring a celestial base color mixed in with large transparent chips. Shown is Jupiter.

**Circle No. 174 on Product Card**

the face of an economic downturn, manufacturers don't believe consumers are trading style for value. "I think they are getting savvier about how they use their more precious materials. They're turning the higher priced materials into the focal point of their spaces," says Marquez. He asserts that consumers want to feel good about the purchase they made, perhaps by having an impact on the local economy or environment. However, "Beauty still trumps the feel-good value of investing in something that is recycled, so if it doesn't look good, most consumers and designers will pass on it," he adds.

Consumers are becoming more cautious about what they're buying, agrees Lisa Herreth, product designer/marketing specialist for Hanwha Surfaces, whose North American headquarters is in Atlanta, GA. "As in fashion, you might buy one quality item in a versatile color rather than several less expensive items in a variety of trendy colors. But a durable countertop, such as quartz, will last a lifetime, and that's valuable," she says.

In addition to choosing their products wisely, some homeowners are employing what Chmiel calls the "save and splurge" strategy, where they save on some aspects of the kitchen — such as painting or re-facing existing cabinets — while splurging on others, such as countertops.

Schmitt says, "I don't think you have to compromise the design of a space anymore in order to get a better value. With all of the new laminate looks paired with the new edge profiles, I think consumers can really get the look they want at an affordable price."

### CONTRASTING TRENDS

Two contrasting style trends are impacting the countertop market: the trend toward countertops being

used to add drama versus the trend toward quieter, more nature-inspired looks. "There is certainly a trend toward adding an accent piece in the kitchen," says Charest. "Seventy percent of our sales include LED for lighting the tops and to change the mood of the kitchen."

Warner agrees. "People are getting bolder, more personal with their spaces," she says. "With a slow economy, people are investing in their home with the expectation that they might be there for a while, so we're seeing more movement of our colored slabs in shades ranging from turquoise to red as much as neutrals."

On the other end of the spectrum, Pauwels sees clients "looking for a minimalist look, going back to a more simple and sustainable way of life."

Rebecca Hewing, national sales manager, kitchen countertop division for butcher block manufacturer John Boos & Co. in Effingham, IL, agrees: "Consumers will always have [the] desire for a true natural element in their kitchen," she says.

While natural looks remain in demand, even those sometimes get a more dramatic overhaul. For instance, Herreth sees patterns moving away from "safe" looks to those with a more exotic, heavy-vein appearance. "The shift to unique patterns has brought customers back to earth tones and neutral colors," she comments.

Schmitt adds, "Texture continues to be a big trend. I think people like the idea of natural products and, in nature, you often see texture."

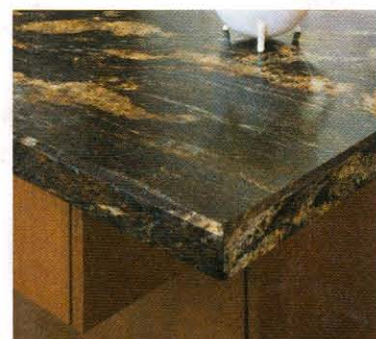
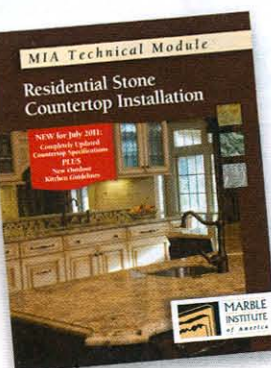
### BOLD EFFICIENCY

The trend toward smaller, more efficient kitchens has also had an impact on the countertop market. Mandell says this trend has increased interest in higher-end

**21** | *The Convenient Guidelines for Stone Countertops* technical guide from the Marble Institute of America provides standards, guidelines and recommendations for residential natural stone countertop

installations. Several specification sections have been updated and include clarification on the differences in lippage on countertops vs. islands and peninsulas.

**Circle No. 175 on Product Card**



**22** | Kuehn Bevel's decorative edge products add a striking touch to laminate countertops such as the Formica 180fx shown. All laminate moldings are made with moisture-resistant MDF and all countertop moldings are individually wrapped for protection.

**Circle No. 176 on Product Card**



**23** | Eye-catching patterns in Lamitech's Saw Cut woodgrains create rough, almost cracked, wood structures in a back-to-nature trend with a pattern that runs across the grain. All Lamitech laminates offer low-VOC emissions and are Greenguard certified.

**Circle No. 177 on Product Card**



**24** | Hanwha Surfaces natural quartz product line, HanStone Quartz, provides rich colors and patterns. Sabbia, shown, is a marbled surface featuring warm beige and cream tones. Equipped with Breton Technology, it offers the look and design of natural quartz.

**Circle No. 178 on Product Card**



**25** | RecycleTop from Klip BioTechnologies is comprised of a 100% post-consumer recycled paper fiber and a new 50% rapidly renewable corn- and cashew-based resin formula. RecycleTop is user friendly and scratch-, stain- and impact-resistant.

**Circle No. 179 on Product Card**

## Product Trend Report



**26** | Wilsonart's 2011 Premium Laminate Series includes large-scale designs inspired by granite and marble. The Madura series carries aged stone mason characteristics. Classic marble is the inspiration for new interpretations of time-honored black and white.  
**Circle No. 180 on Product Card**

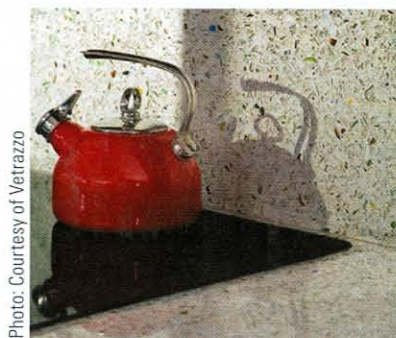


Photo: Courtesy of Vetrazzo

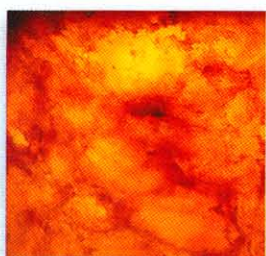
**27** | Vetrazzo's Glass House surfaces incorporate glass from bottles and jars that once contained food found in the kitchen. Bits of labels and logos are proof that the material comes direct from curbside recycling.  
**Circle No. 181 on Product Card**



**28** | 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. 182 on Product Card**



**29** | Three new colors have been added to Tempest, Samsung Staron's high-end solid surfaces line. Tempest Peak, Tempest Adamantine and Tempest Colluvium provide an increased depth of color saturation, and are also Greenguard certified.  
**Circle No. 183 on Product Card**



**30** | Inspired by natural onyx, Okite Pietre Preziose from Seieffe offers a deep, luminous color that brings design projects depth and the

allure of precious stones. It is highly heat-, stain- and scratch-resistant, is durable and non-porous and never needs sealing, according to the company.  
**Circle No. 184 on Product Card**

materials, such as quartz, as well as acrylic solid-surface countertops that emulate quartz.

Chmiel says that while smaller kitchens may mean less countertop space, the primary effect is on the kitchen layout rather than the countertop material. "Layouts are smarter, using techniques such as 'CounterScaping' to create zones using various vertical heights and materials to maximize usable space. In non-work areas, part of the countertop may deviate from standard height to provide storage underneath."

Herreth feels that smaller kitchens offer a great opportunity to turn the countertops into an eye catching focal point, and she notes, "I think that in a small kitchen, you should add a pop of color or a bold pattern on a countertop and keep the rest more reserved."

Of course not everyone is seeing a trend toward smaller kitchens. Marquez says Cosentino is seeing an increase in the average stone square footage used in most projects. He adds, "Layering different materials, finishes or colors in the kitchen can add an entirely new depth," and he notes, "some consumers are starting to use a two-tone countertop design, selecting a product with more movement for the island and a solid hue around the perimeter."

Hewing says that John Boos is seeing the trend toward multiple materials as well, where butcher block is integrated with stone/granite and other surfaces.

that kitchen countertops function as everything from food prep areas to homework hubs, we continually look for ways to create hardworking yet beautiful laminate finishes that maintain their original beauty over time."

Interestingly, geography plays a role in the importance of durability, according to some manufacturers. As Warner explains, "People want a durable work surface in their kitchens. However, the demand for durability over beauty remains higher in the Midwest. On the East and West coasts, people seem more willing to sacrifice durability for [aesthetics]."

### THE GREEN SCENE

Eco awareness also remains a key trend in kitchen design, and this is particularly true with countertops.

"Manufacturers and designers alike are paying more attention to producing and using more environmentally responsible products. I think it is not only important for the raw materials to be green, but also for the manufacturing processes to be environmentally friendly," says Schmitt.

Pauwels concurs that green is on the rise, with consumers looking more closely into the impact of materials on the environment. "Most manufacturers tend to present a super green product but the reality is no manufactured material is completely green," he says. "However, efforts are made to lessen [the impact of the manufacturing process] by working on the chain of production from raw material to delivery."

Herreth concludes, "I think, in the near future, people will move away from countertops made exclusively from finite sources and look at ones that incorporate recycled components and practices."  
**KBDN**



Photo: Courtesy of Cynthia Bennett & Associates

**31** | Sonoma Cast Stone has introduced genuine metal finishes bonded to its EarthCrete concrete products. The finishes mimic solid copper, brass, bronze or nickel. Applications include sinks, tubs and countertops (shown).  
**Circle No. 185 on Product Card**

### DURABILITY & MAINTENANCE

While the look of a countertop certainly impacts product choices, durability and ease of maintenance are just as important. "Due to the economy, we expect that the average life span of a kitchen may increase from seven years to nine or 10 years," says Chmiel. "Understanding



**32** | This Farmer Style custom design by Specialtystainless.com incorporates two stainless steel radius corner sinks seamlessly into the stainless steel countertop, complemented by an integral full front stainless steel apron.  
**Circle No. 186 on Product Card**



**33** | Tere-Stone from Taylor Industries is a cast-filled polyester material consisting of natural stone Dolomite with Terephthalic Resin and an NPG Isophthalic Polyester Gel Coat system. This provides a standard high-luster finish or an optional matte finish.  
**Circle No. 187 on Product Card**



**34** | ThinkGlass Artistic glass countertops are custom designed and manufactured using 100% recyclable glass. The countertops are painted to suit client specifications to create a surface that is also a work of art.  
**Circle No. 188 on Product Card**



**35** | Artisan Group has launched a line of modestly priced granite in three versatile colors. The shades – Sorrento, Rustico and Mendola – are neutral shades that are designed to blend well with most rooms.  
**Circle No. 189 on Product Card**