

Is Natural Stone For Me?

When selecting the right countertop for your project, there are some things that you should know if you are considering natural stone. Every product has its limitations. Understanding the limitations will determine if natural stone is for you.

Natural stone is not something new, it has been used well before our time in many applications, from floors, walls, to countertops. It is made to last a life time. Stone countertops are like having jewelry for your home.

Stone is a natural solid formation comprised of minerals. Thousands of stone types including granite, marble, limestone, sandstone, slate, onyx and travertine have been quarried for centuries from locations around the world. The majority of natural stone comes from Italy, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, United States, Mexico, China, India, France, Brazil and Canada.

Each stone has unique natural veining, pitting, fissures, micro-cracks and color variations including patterns, markings and darker or lighter spots that are all natural characteristics of stone. These characteristics are not meant to be deficiencies or faults, nor can they be avoided in fabrication.

The surface of granite is not as consistently smooth or shiny as glass is to the eye or touch. When choosing a stone it is best to take a good look and examine it. Also, make sure to touch the different elements that it has to offer so you are aware of their existence.

Appearance with the stone from the warehouse compared to your home, there are a few things to know. Lighting and the different angles viewed can affect the way your stone looks. Once the stone is cut and is lying flat on your cabinets may give it a different appearance, surrounding colors can also give different hues. It's important to understand this, as it is a possibility with any stone (natural or manmade).

Some stones especially exotic stones come from the quarry treated with epoxy to help strengthen the bond between parts of the stone you will notice fillers in existing slabs. Fillers are also part of the production process, during cutting and polishing it's not uncommon for minerals to separate. During the fabrication process we polish and fill any mineral gaps. These are not defects and do not compromise the integrity or use of your stone.

The three most appealing features of granite are its natural beauty, durability and low maintenance. It has an ability to not be compromised by water.

Granite is an excellent choice for busy kitchen countertops because they are capable of withstanding the harshest of domestic environments.

Natural stone surfaces can be scratched if abused and can crack if exposed to extreme and sudden temperature changes, however granite will withstand heat and UV rays better than quartz.

Each slab of natural stone can vary in thickness, coloration, and shading. You will not get the same slab twice, it is like a finger print each slab is unique.

For most natural stones you will need to seal them, some of the stones that you might not have to seal are denser, dark granite. How often to seal, depends on the type of stone and what type of sealer you use. Typically you would seal your countertops once a year, but can vary. (Sealing protects your countertops from absorbing things, it helps prevent stains).

Granite and marble can stain if not cleaned up immediately. In saying that, there are products on the market that can remove stains in natural stones.

Cleaning your countertop is easy, you simply use mild soap and warm water. Do not use harsh chemicals on your countertops.

Marble is a natural stone that is soft, things to consider is etching can happen if something acidic is left sitting on the surface for a prolonged period of time.

A common problem we face when working with natural stone is that we cannot control what it looks like. The characteristics of natural stone were created by Mother Nature. You cannot compare your stone to your neighbor's because every slab has a different finish, color tone, pattern, veining, each batch is unique and cut from a different part of the mountain.

Even though we try to educate our customers up front and give our customers as much time as they need to view their stone in person we occasionally still get clients that have different expectations.

Understanding and being realistic with this product, its limitations and what is considered common and acceptable in this industry is very important in determining if this product is a good selection for your project.

Natural Stone is not a regulated Industry. Natural stone is not man made each piece is created by Mother Earth. We are not geologists and do not know the mineral composition of each piece. As a result, Many stones have been marketed incorrectly. For decades some Marbles have been marketed as Quartzites. If **ETCHING** is something that concerns you, we recommend that you test your natural stone prior to purchasing, this will ensure it meets your expectations and life style needs.

Because natural stone is made up of many different minerals, some are hard and some are soft. As a result, these minerals polish differently all within the same stone, sometimes causing a slight rippling effect during polishing of edge profiles. It's important to understand that this exists in some natural stones not all.

Understanding fissures. VERY IMPORTANT, The Geological Institute describes it as "*an extensive crack, break, or fracture in the rock, which may contain mineral-bearing material.*" *The term 'fissure' is used commercially in the stone industry to describe a visible separation along intercrystalline boundaries this separation may start and stop within the field of the stone, or extend through an edge. A fissure differs from a crack, in that it is a naturally occurring feature in the stone.*" Fissures are very common in natural stone. Some stones contain more fissures than others. A fissure is a naturally occurring characteristic of stone, which *can* be weak points and *can* crack open, but usually do not."

The stone is still continuous along a fissure. In other words, there is no separation within a fissure. You may be able to feel the fissure and you can see them, there should not be any gap, depression or canal of any significant depth. Maybe a minute depression sometimes, but just barely perceptible to the touch.

So, fissures will not of themselves impair or affect the performance or integrity of the stone, and are not a worry regarding granite countertop hygiene.

Fissures are not a problem... unless they crack.

A crack represents a physical separation of the stone. It may be a hairline crack that may or may not be full thickness or it could visibly separate.

Hairline cracks do not tend to be a problem and do not get worse unless you have foundation movement and/or they have or form a "lip" at some point. You will be able to feel a hairline crack, but it may still be level. When it forms a lip is when it starts to collect dirt, etc.

Filler material on fissures is not commonly used unless the fissure is very large and has separated enough. It is recommended not to use filler material on fissures unless they are very large. Coatings can look plastic, and can be more of a hassle to maintain. The common wisdom is to do as little to stone as possible. The more variables you add to the equation, the more complicated the cleaning, maintenance and performance becomes.

Natural stone is very strong and if treated properly, will last a life time. Understanding and knowing the capabilities of natural stone is key to being happy with your investment.

If you believe you are a candidate for natural stone we ask that you sign this document acknowledging you have read and understand the pros and cons to natural stone.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE