

kitchen countertops

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Hi Maurizio, We are building a traditional home and are deciding between absolute black honed and honed marble countertops. After perusing your sight, however, I am afraid to use either! I have always disliked granite (due to its high shine) but I want to make the best decision possible. I am an avid cook and have three little boys, so I don't want something that will be too high maintenance. I live in Los Angeles - is there a particular granite you could recommend that would mimic the appearance of the black honed? Also, are there any or vendors you would recommend? Thank you so very much for your assistance. Robin Mirvis Eatman

Dear Robin:

When it comes to certain stones like honed marble, the definition of high-maintenance is simply a state of individual mind. Do you really think that at the pizza parlor down the street from you they feel that the marble slab they prepare their pizza on is a high-maintenance surface?...

Of course, they got the "right" marble to begin with (only class A or B should be considered) and, more importantly than anything else, they never expected for a split second that it will keep looking as when it was first installed all the time.

That is part of the predominant "Mediterranean basin" culture.

So, regardless of your geographical area, you have to ask to yourself the way you feel about the inevitable "changes" that your hone-finished marble countertop will go through as it ages. I can't give you an answer to that, can I?... :-)

Hone-finished black "granite" is as different animal altogether. For light to medium use there are ways to "tame the beast", but if you plan to use your countertop intensively, that stone is not for you.

If you like the rustic look, you may want to consider soapstone. That is as maintenance-easy as they come.

All that being told, I hope you will understand the true meaning of what I'm about to say. It appears to me that like most other inquirers at this stage you seem mostly interested in the type of stone and/or its physical characteristics. It's human nature at work, I reckon! :-)

How about if I tell you that a certain stone is a good choice and then you get a low-grade slab? Trust me: the human factor is far more important than the stone itself and should be the only true deciding factor!

In an industry that's virtually unregulated, how good and reputable the fabricator who's is going to process the stone you'll end up choosing is far more important than the stone itself. None of the horror stories that get posted in this very site stem from the stone itself: they all stem from the fabricator. That is why I seldom make final statements about any one particular stone. There may be differences within the same stone (and I'm not talking about looks, here!) from one bundle of slabs and the next. The slabs may have also been either "doctored" (which is bad), or "resined" (which overall is good) by the factory, which would make a big difference. Even more important, what's a good stone in the hands of some "Michelangelo"?! And again: a reputable fabricator will only carry high-grade slabs, not some "special"!

We have available a very comprehensive article on "How to Shop for a Granite Kitchen Countertop" that will give you all the intelligence you need to venture yourself with confidence in the stone industry jungle, and it includes the world renowned "Lemon juice (and oil) test"! It does carry a small price tag, and you can order it by logging on the Educational Literature section at: <http://www.marblecleaning.org/literature.htm>. It's available in pay-per-download format and I consider it a cheap "insurance premium" to pay when there are thousands of \$ involved! Not to mention the little and much needed support you'd be giving to the cause, **your** cause, since every single penny of the cost of the article will be used to support it.

Also, will you please read and e-sign our Statement of Purpose at: <http://www.marblecleaning.org/purpose.htm>? By spreading the word about this valuable site among your friends & family and the stone trades' people you've been dealing with you will be rendering everybody a valuable service!

Also, do take advantage of the plethora of FREE Helpful Hints available at:
<http://www.marblecleaning.org/helpful-hints.htm>. They're on the house!

Thank you.

Ciao and good luck,

Maurizio Bertoli

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