

Sealing Honed Granite countertops

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Hi Maurizio, What is the best way (or product to use) to seal our Absolute Black Honed Granite Countertops that will leave them with a little shine? The sealer that was used at the time of installation left our granite looking chalky and not very pretty. Nothing like the shiny, honed slab that arrived at our house. Can you recommend a good sealer and caulking that my handy husband and I can use or are we better off calling in a professional? Thank you, Lory

Dear Lory:

I'm afraid that by now you're going to have to call a professional stone restoration contractor.

1. Black granite (polished or honed) should never be sealed with an impregnator (a.k.a. sealer): the stone is just too dense to take any sealer in (more on this later on);
2. Obviously you don't have any idea what a sealer for stone is and what it does. Let me tell what it does not do: it does not affect the original finish produced by the factory; it does not protect the surface of the stone one bit; it does not fill any nicks or fissure or what-have-you. In other words, it is not a sealer that you apply to the top of the stone, like a sealer that you would apply to, say, wood. You probably did something wrong, such as leaving the impregnator to dry on the surface of the stone (and this is where the real problem is);
3. So then, what does a sealer for stone do? In the case of black "granite" absolutely nothing, this side of helping the bottom line of the company that makes it! A sealer for stone is supposed to go **below the surface** of the stone and clog its pores, thus reducing its natural absorbency rate. To do this it must be absorbed by the stone. Black "granite" does not absorb a darn thing: it is just too dense;
3. The only safe and sure way to completely strip the useless sealer that you applied to your countertop, you need to re-hone the surface of the stone with a good-quality honing powder and special equipment. Only a professional stone restoration contractor could do that for you. And after that!

While there are indeed different opinions on the issue of sealing black hone granite, but there is a unanimous consensus about the fact that it presents maintenance issues.

The problem with honed black granite is that it is not, well "black" any more! Most black stones are but an optical illusion: they become black only when highly polished, or when wet. (See the back of your slab to see the *real* color of your stone!) As you take gloss off the stone surface (and honing does just that) you lose depth of color and the stone turns gray; but when you wet it ... here it is black again! As you spill oily liquids, or you simply touch the stone surface with your fingers (perspiration), you're going to have all sorts of dark surface stains that are a terrible eyesore. Please notice that I said, **surface** stains, not **imbedded** stains. In fact, you can clean those stains off (though with lots of labor), while if they were imbedded you would have to poultice them out. If you apply an impregnator/sealer to the stone you will not solve your problem one bit: in fact the sealer will only prevent liquids from being absorbed by the stone (which in the case of black honed granite is an unlikely event to begin with), not the staining of its surface.

Any solution?

Well, yes: you have to give up the gray!

If you apply a good-quality stone color enhancer to your countertop **instead of** an impregnating sealer (a good-quality stone color-enhancer like MB-6 is also an impregnator/sealer) it will turn it permanently black, while preserving the hone finish. In that way, the surface-staining problem would be minimized.

Let's just hope that your fabricator, in their "infinite wisdom," did not apply an impregnator/sealer to your stone: this would have to be stripped (not an easy feat!), or else the color/enhancer wouldn't stand a chance to work properly.

And don't you forget that in order to upkeep your stone *and* the color enhancer, your best bet is to use good-quality specialty products for stone. (<http://www.mbstonecare.com>)

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Thank you.

Ciao and good luck,

Maurizio Bertoli

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