

Which granite to pick???

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Maurizio, I like your no-nonsense style, which is why I'm writing. (I also signed your initiative, by the way) I have read much of your Q&A, advise, etc. and I'm still at a loss. I, like thousands of other people out there, am building my "forever" home and want a "forever" countertop. However, after researching and studying and reading just about every answer you've written on the subject, just can't determine how to pick a stone countertop. We are building with one of America's largest home builders (whom you would think would be reputable...maybe?). We actually picked what we were told is "Absolute Black" but after reading your comments I'm not so sure. I actually think I may pull out all my hair before this process is over! I have no idea if it's honed or polished (are those the two options or am I confused?) or where it comes from. The lady told us it would need to be sealed, but what does she really know? She's a designer, not a stone expert! She said they've had no complaints and that it just wipes clean, smudges come off with water and a cloth, etc. but is she being honest? Of course I don't have a sample to do the lemon test to make sure it's the "good stuff". Soooooo, here's my question: They only give us about a dozen samples to choose from. They include things like the typical Absolute Black, Black Galaxy, Tropical Brown (which be picked for our bathrooms), Uba tuba, some gold ones, tan ones, who the heck knows... If YOU were to pick a countertop for your own home (keeping in mind that I LOVE the look of the shiny black) what would you pick? I know it's hard to account for what the manufacturer does to the stone, if I'll have to strip off the mistakenly applied sealer, etc. but what would you honestly do? Also, something I wanted to ask is what happens if you get the absolute black and it's all shiny and you find out it has a sealer on it because it mars or something then you have to strip it, etc. like you suggest in all your responses, can you ever get it back to that glorious showroom shine? I am almost afraid of granite after reading everything. No one ever tells you that it stains, etc. when you buy it! I'm so very glad I found you! We have to make our final decision in two weeks so any help you can give me is greatly appreciated.

Dear Laurie:

You wanted to know what I would do and you appreciate my nonsense approach to life?

Then I will tell what I would do:

First of all I would tell the builder what he can do with his samples of granite. Second, I would also tell him, in no uncertain terms, that I will take care of my countertop on my own â€" thank you very much for their offer to help. Of course, you expect (demand, rather) to have an appropriate discount should it turn out that the countertop is included in the price. They must oblige: it's the law!

Remember: with a few precious exceptions, when there's a GC involved, you don't get what you pay for, but what **they** pay for!! Are you gettin' my drift?... To your GC it is just another piece of the entire puzzle, but to you is **your** forever countertop, remember?! So be tough and stand your ground: you are the customer, for crying out loud!

Good, once you get rid of the chains that keep you shackled to the builder and his â€œstone knowledgeableâ€• Interior Designer, and you're a free citizen in a free country, it is time to shop for your forever countertop! And to do that, since you already read my previous answers, you know the drill! (But I will repeat it for you by copying and pasting it for the 11 gazillion time! J)

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! J

How about if I tell you that a certain stone is a good choice and then you get a low-grade slab or a doctored one? 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: 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", which will enable you to determine on your own the suitability of any stone you will consider! It does carry a small price tag, and you can order it by logging on the Educational Literature section at: <http://www.mbstone.com/literature/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! (I know, you already did that, but, like I said, it's copy and paste stuff! Plus other people will read this answer. J)

Also, do take advantage of the plethora of FREE Helpful Hints available at: http://www.mbstone.com/HH_promo/helpful_hints.htm. They're on the house!

Thank you.

Ciao and good luck,

Maurizio Bertoli

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