

Honed absolute black countertops

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I am in the process of building a new home and love the look and feel of honed granite! However, I am reading horror stories of installing and maintaining honed black counter tops. I do not mind some maintenance like sealing every six months and or carefully cleaning my counter tops. However, I cook all the time and my kitchen is huge. This is huge investment and want these countertops to look beautiful for many year. I have thought about looking at a quartz counter top because of so many horror stories!

Dear Carolyn:

Hone-finished quartz countertop have exactly the same maintenance issues as the natural stone.

That duly said, there are indeed different opinions on the practicality of hone-finished black "granite", but there seems to be a unanimous consensus about the fact that it presents maintenance issues. And rightly so, I must add.

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.

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