

BRITISH STANDARD

BY PLAIN ENGLISH

WHICH WORKTOP — SOME THOUGHTS

Guide No. 2



I am often asked about which kitchen worktop I would recommend and I always have the same answer. The choice of which material to choose is infinite and personal. I have heard customers say they would never have such and such material because of this, that or the other, and then the very next person into the showroom announces they would only ever have that very same material for the opposite reason!

With this in mind, I have learnt to sit back, listen, and gently steer and advise according to each individual client's needs and wants.

Katie Fontana, Creative Director



So what are the choices?

They are indeed infinite but here are a few to get you thinking...

**BEECH • CONCRETE • COPPER • GRANITE
IROKO • LIMESTONE • MAPLE
MARBLE • OAK • RECLAIMED WOOD
SLATE • STAINLESS STEEL • SYCAMORE
TEAK • ZINC**

At this point, I feel it is best to offer some big, broad pointers on the most popular materials, which can be adhered to or ignored, depending on whether you are driven by the look and feel rather than the practicality of any given material.

Many consider a wooden worktop, but one of the first things to consider is how wet your worktop will get! The constant wetting and wiping down quickly removes the oil finish and leaves the wood exposed. If you like the lived in look or are happy to oil the area relatively often (say every 3 months) and you don't leave crockery constantly sitting there draining then wood may be the answer. Of course, if you choose a sink with an integral drainer, you will alleviate the problem as the drainer will take all the punishment.

If you are in an area that has very hard water and you are thinking about a dark coloured wood or stone for around the sink, it's worth being aware that there's a tendency for the worktop to acquire a 'milky film' or sometimes even rings, on the draining board where cups have been left drying for a little while.

For those with an Aga or similar type range cooker which is on all the time belting out heat, stone or a composite stone are often recommended as wood shrinks. You can specify wood, with what is known as a 'cleated end', which is where one piece of wood runs the opposite way across the end of the worktop adjacent to the range, old chopping boards were often made like this but it only marginally helps and would involve having a custom made worktop.

If your preference is for stone, this can have a colder perceived look than wood, which is often just down to the choice of colour and finish. I prefer a 'honed' finish. This is where the shine is taken off and gives the stone a softer 'suedey' look and feel. Most stone merchants have a supply of this finish now and are happy to offer it.

In terms of durability of stone, the softer varieties can get chipped along the front edge or around the sink so we would recommend granite as the most durable worktop. If you're not able to give any time to maintenance, you are probably better to choose this over and above wood or one of the softer stones.





Stainless steel when it's new has a lovely evenly brushed finish but starts to mark immediately with use and shows every little mark and scratch. This can be rather alarming but you have to persist and go through the pain barrier. Soon the whole surface will be covered with a multitude of little random marks, which become the new surface pattern and further marks no longer stand out and show.

Similarly zinc, when new, has an evenly grey finish but everything leaves a mark from the second you start to use it. Zinc will mark very quickly and in not time you will end up with a mottled and marked work surface, full of character and showing all its battle scars – we have even seen expensive tables for sale that come with pre-marked zinc tops already covered with a selection of rings as a feature to pre-empt this problem.

So the choices really are endless with pros and cons for virtually every material option. Do contact our team of designers if you would like to discuss the options for your kitchen worktop in more detail.



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