

# Home Countertop Choices

Type	Cost	Pros	Cons	Tips	Care/Maintenance
Laminate — plastic glued over wood product base, it comes in a variety of colors and patterns.	S — SS	Easy to install. Simple maintenance. Edge treatments upgrade its look. Resists moisture and some stains.	Burns, scratches, chips, some stains impossible to repair. Requires top-mount sink. Visible seams, joints. May delaminate or warp if exposed to moisture.	Seams less visible on patterned, dark-colored laminate. Save \$ by bypassing fancy edge treatments.	Use damp cotton cloth and mild liquid detergent. Dry with cotton cloth. Avoid abrasive cleansers and pads. Do not flood countertop (will loosen laminate)
Ceramic Tile	S — SSS	Extremely durable and versatile. Wide variety of colors, textures, prices. Custom look. Impervious to moisture, stains, heat.	Grout stains and must be resealed periodically. May break if something heavy drops on it. Corner chipping common.	Use inexpensive field tiles studded with more expensive tiles to reduce cost. Use colored grout to reduce staining.	Wipe up any spills immediately. Use warm water and mild liquid detergent. Seal grout regularly as needed to avoid stains. Use 50/50 mix of water and hydrogen peroxide on white grout to remove stains. Use club soda, shaving cream or special-made cleanser on colored grout.
Butcher block — thin cuts of wood are glued together under high pressure to create a durable, classic-looking wood counter.	SS	Makes a great cutting surface. Resilient, so dropped dishes don't break as easily. Warm, classic look melds well with most designs. Can refinish worn counters. Stubborn stains can be sanded away.	Must treat periodically with food-grade mineral oil. Can split or warp when too dry or wet. Stains. Should not cut meat on it due to bacteria contamination.	Choose a thick top (1-1/4 inches). Choose hardwoods such as maple or oak. Do not install next to sink without treating with marine-grade sealer, refrain from cutting on it.	Don't cut meat on butcher block as bacteria may hide in porous wood. Wash with mild liquid detergent, rinse and dry. Treat periodically with mineral oil (non-toxic) NOT Furniture oil (toxic).
Concrete	SS — SSS	Extremely durable and versatile. Integral sink possible. May be poured and colored to look like stone. Wide variety of natural colors available.	Must be poured by experienced concrete contractor (can be hard to find). Must be sealed and resealed periodically to maintain durability.	Personalize it with add-ins like stone chips or colors. Make sure floor can bear the load.	Use mild detergent and water for daily cleaning. Be aware keeping concrete pristine is nearly impossible. Instead enjoy the patina that develops over time.
Stainless Steel	SS — SSS	Durable. Easily maintained. High-tech look with clean lines and metallic color. First choice of most restaurants.	Can be a cold look. Noisy. Can be easily scratched or dented. Easily watermarked. Labor intensive installation, especially for a seamless look.	Check out restaurant suppliers. Prefab designs are cheaper than custom.	Clean with non-abrasive cleaner made especially for stainless steel (eg, Bar Keeper's Friend) or Windex with or without ammonia. Loosen hardened food with boiling water.
Solid Surface — made from molded manmade materials.	SSS	Very versatile and durable. Get the look of stone without the headaches. Edges can be finished any way consumer desires. Integral backsplashes, sink and/or drain board possible. Cuts, scratches and stains easily buffed out. Seamless look.	Dark colors show wear. Cannot put a hot pan on it. Do not chop on it. Expensive. Must be installed by professional.	To save money, look at solid surface laminates (a thinner layer of solid surface laminated to a plywood base). Integral sink means no cracks to catch food or form mildew. Accessories can be coordinated with countertop.	Clean with mild detergent and warm water. Use non-abrasive cleansers (eg Bar Keeper's Friend) or Windex type cleaner with or without ammonia. Use soft scrub cleaner with bleach for stains.
Marble	SSS	Classic look. Wonderful for making pastry, rolling dough. Adds luxurious feel to bath or kitchen.	Must be sealed periodically to maintain surface. Stains from chemicals, alcohol & acids may etch surface. Must be installed by professional. Special edges can add to cost.	Marble tiles give similar look for less money. Use sparingly to create baking center.	Clean with lint-free damp cloth or cleaner made especially for marble.
Granite	SSS	Classic look melds well with almost any design. Variety of natural colors, patterns.	Expensive to buy and install. Cold & noisy. Unforgiving to dropped dishes. Glare from highly-polished slabs can be annoying.	May need to reinforce cabinets and subfloor to hold its substantial weight. Elaborate edges can prove very costly.	Clean with cleaner made especially for granite.

S = Low Cost   SS = Moderate Cost   SSS = High Cost