

# Refresh Your Kitchen...

## Tips For Selecting Stone Countertops That Best Fit Your Lifestyle

(NAPSA)—When you're thinking kitchen remodel, countertops rank right up there with the cabinetry as far as importance. Evaluating your lifestyle is important when it comes to this selection. Are you empty nesters that take care when prepping food and cooking? Then your options have just expanded exponentially. However, if you are a busy family with children that tend to make messes, you may want to opt for a combination of durability and good looks.

A granite slab is the pinnacle of countertop alternatives when it comes to form and function. Prices range from the very expensive to the affordable. More often than not, this little gem will make its way onto your "wants list." Do your homework and you might be surprised to find out that you can afford granite. It may not be that exotic massive slab you have been drooling over, but it might be close. By choosing a more common variety, a thinner cut, a simple edge profile and limiting cutouts, you will likely spend less than you would on most man-made quartz or solid-surface materials. Remember, despite the fact that your type of granite may be more common, each piece of natural stone is a totally unique piece of art directly from Mother Nature.

If slabs are too costly for your budget, consider granite tiles. Sev-



### Form and Function: A triple waterfall edge adds form to this functional Suman granite countertop.

eral options exist that vary moderately in price. The highest-end option is a tile that comes pre-assembled with a substantial decorative edge profile. This eliminates any unfinished or awkward-looking exposed edges at the sink rail. The midrange option is a large-format tile (16", 18" or 24" square) with a strip of granite tile incorporated as the sink rail. The most affordable option is the smaller 12"x12" tile finished with a wood strip to finish off the countertop edge. When choosing tiles, use the larger format in a solid shade with a minimal grout joint and a matching grout color to help give the illusion of a slab.

If your tastes lean more toward a rustic matte-finished countertop material, consider limestone,

travertine, slate or honed marble tiles for your surface. Keep in mind that these materials come with some inherent drawbacks when used for countertops, so research each one carefully prior to committing to it.

Marble slab countertops, especially white, are gaining in popularity and add a sophisticated, modern look to any kitchen. Some marble, however, is more porous than granite and may etch and stain if it comes into prolonged contact with certain foods. Be sure to ask your stone fabricator for information on marble stone care and upkeep before selecting this material.

While a kitchen remodel on a tight budget might seem like an oxymoron to some, it can become a reality. Remember, inexpensive does not equal cheap, ugly or boring—it can be incredibly beautiful when well executed. Treating the kitchen like any other room of the house by adding features such as unique architectural finds, over-scale accessories, framed art, lamps, plants, fabrics and furniture will help exude luxury. Focus on the focal points (countertops and cabinets) and the rest will fall into place. Keep an open mind, compromise and tap your inner creativity. You can do it!

For a stone fabricator near you, visit [www.marble-institute.com/directory](http://www.marble-institute.com/directory).