

# Decorator's Notebook



## Affordable Ways To Give Your Kitchen A Face-Lift

(NAPSA)—Experts say the kitchen is quickly becoming the most popular room in the home. So it comes as no surprise that nearly 6 million homeowners embarked on a kitchen remodeling project last year. And, according to Remodeling Magazine, the average cost for a mid-range kitchen remodel is \$43,804, with an upscale remodel ringing in at \$68,962.

With such a large investment on the line, homeowners should be sure that the materials they select go beyond what is “trendy” to what truly meets their needs. Countertops are one area in particular that offers many different options, with great variation in price, style and maintenance. And for homeowners that aren’t planning a complete kitchen overhaul, replacing the countertop is one way to give the kitchen an instant face-lift.

“The countertop is one of the first things you notice when you walk into the kitchen,” said Renée Hytry, senior vice president of global design for Formica Corporation. “With so many different colors and patterns available, you can truly express your personal style. But you also need to make sure that the material you select matches your lifestyle and your budget.”

The most popular materials for kitchen countertops are granite, engineered stone, solid surfacing and laminate. Each offers different benefits in terms of cost, durability and maintenance. Formica Corporation is one manufacturer that



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makes selecting a countertop easy, as it offers a complete range of surfacing materials. To view the different styles, patterns and materials available, and to find a dealer in your area, visit [www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com).

**Granite**—In the past decade, granite has become the most desired surfacing material for many homeowners for not only its durability, but also its prestige. Granite is nearly heat- and scratch-resistant, but is porous and therefore requires that it be resealed at least once a year to resist bacteria. Because it is natural stone, no two slabs are identical, and colors range from cool blacks and greens to warm yellows and browns.

**Investment:** High

**Engineered Stone**—Engineered stone is a natural quartz surface composed of approximately 93 percent quartz and 7 percent high-performance polymers. It offers the aesthetics and durability

of granite without the maintenance. Unlike natural granite, engineered stone is nonporous—reducing the potential for bacterial growth—and doesn’t require sealing, buffing or polishing. Another benefit is that it maintains a consistent color and texture throughout the slab. For these reasons, engineered stone is often more expensive than granite.

**Investment:** High

**Solid Surfacing**—Solid-surface countertops are a man-made material of acrylic and polyester resins, resulting in a highly durable surface that is resistant to water, burns, bacteria and stains. Scratches can be removed using a mild household abrasive or fine-grade sandpaper. Solid-surfacing countertops are available in a breadth of colors and patterns, ranging from solid colors to patterns with small particulates or larger aggregate for the look of stone and granite.

**Investment:** Medium to High

**Laminate**—Laminate is the most commonly used surfacing material as it is relatively easy to install and maintain, and is budget-conscious. While laminate is resistant to stains and bacteria, it can scratch and cannot handle high temperatures. Laminate designs have also come a long way in recent years, with patterns that mimic the look and feel of granite, stone, concrete and metal. And, at prices ranging from \$10 – \$20 per square foot, you can refresh the look every five to seven years if desired.

**Investment:** Low to Medium