

Care and Maintenance Guidelines

Natural Stone Countertops

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT: The timeless beauty and inherent durability of natural stone countertops makes them a favorite surfacing material for designers, architects and homeowners. Because of geological composition, all stones are susceptible to varying degrees of staining and surface wear. To preserve the beauty and durability of natural stone with the proper sealers, cleaners and other products, the following care and maintenance guidelines are recommended:

GENERAL STONE CARE INFORMATION

Daily Care

Natural stone cleansers are best for everyday cleaning. Charles Luck Stone Center recommends and inventories the Aqua Mix® line of stone cleansers, which is available at all Stone Center locations. Additional household cleaning products which are designed specifically for natural stone may also be used. We advise that you read and follow the manufacturers' directions and consult with your project manager if you have any questions or concerns.

If a stone cleanser is not used, a mild, pH-neutral dish detergent, such as Ivory® Dish Liquid, and water is recommended for daily cleaning. As with all countertop surfaces, stone should be wiped down with a clean, smooth cloth after contact with food or other substances to prevent staining and bacteria growth. Paper towels and other disposable cloths are considered ideal since they will not harbor and spread bacteria from previous uses.

Wiping spills immediately, especially those substances that are acidic (citrus juices, vinegar, wine) or oil-based (cooking oils, cooking grease, butter, margarine) is a must to keep your countertops in the best possible condition. If left to sit on stone, these substances could have the effect of either staining your countertops or compromising the finish. Do not use caustic or harsh chemicals on your countertops, including tile cleansers, window cleansers, degreasers, anything abrasive or anything containing ammonia. Plumber's putty is also particularly damaging to stone countertops and should not be allowed to come in contact with the surface. Be sure to let your plumber know about this potential hazard. Cosmetics such as shaving cream, lotion, makeup and perfumes can also damage the surface and stain countertops.

To preserve the structural integrity of your countertops, do not stand or place excessive weight on the surface, especially on, or near, overhangs.

Aqua Mix Technical Assistance:

- » Call 877.278.2311 Monday - Friday, 6:00 am to 4:30 pm or Saturday, 7:00 am to 12:00 pm Pacific time.
- » Visit website at www.aquamix.com
- » E-mail technical questions to tech@aquamix.net

When to Apply a Penetrating Sealer

All natural stone countertops from Charles Luck Stone Center are sealed with a penetrating stone sealer or impregnator. Consult with your project manager to determine whether a sealer will be applied to your countertop before or at the time of installation. This substance is absorbed into the surface of the stone and assists in preventing other substances from doing the same and thus causing stains on your countertop. Stone countertops should be periodically re-sealed. The frequency of use, the staining tendency of the particular stone and the time lapsed between sealing will determine when your countertop should be re-sealed.

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GRANITE

Scratching: Different granites will have different levels of resistance toward staining and scratching. Ask your designer or sales associate about the characteristics of your particular materials. While cutting directly on granite surfaces will not affect the large majority of granites, cutting boards are recommended to avoid quickly dulling knives. Repeated use of a knife in the same place on a granite countertop can eventually wear down the polish.

Staining: Lighter-colored granites will be more prone to staining than darker ones. Wiping up spills immediately will help avoid most potential staining. To help repel stains, granite is sealed with a penetrating sealer (stone impregnator) before installation. We recommend periodically re-sealing granite according to the sealer's instructions. Products such as coffee, red wine, cooking oils, butter, lemon juice, tomatoes and anything else acidic or oil-based should be wiped off the countertop as soon as possible. Take care to use the proper cleansing agents—those that are ammonia-based can etch the granite and dull its polish.

Burning: Hot pots may be set directly on granite with no potential for the stone to show burn marks. Take caution after removing a hot pot from a stone surface, as the stone will absorb heat from the pot and may be hot to the touch.

MARBLE

Scratching: Marble is a delicate material that has care guidelines similar to that of a fine piece of wood. It is not recommended for use in kitchens or in high-traffic areas. Cutting directly on marble will produce scratches. Trivets and placemats should be used under all ceramic, china and other vessels to reduce the possibility of scratching.

Staining: Coasters and placemats should be used to prevent staining for all drinking glasses or dishes, including water glasses, as marble is susceptible to all types of stains including water rings. Avoid leaving any spilled substances (including juices, alcoholic beverages, oils, greases, cosmetics and standing water) on marble for any period of time to reduce staining. Marble is sealed with a penetrating sealer to help prevent the absorption of stains into the stone. It is recommended that marble be re-sealed periodically with a penetrating stone sealer on all horizontal surfaces. Sealing is not necessary for vertical surfaces such as fireplace surrounds.

Etching: Marble is a calcareous stone and is acid sensitive. Calcareous stones are readily dissolved in acid; therefore acidic products such as lemon or tomato juice should not be used on marbles. These will cause the stone to etch—the surface finish will dull and change texture. Wiping spills immediately and taking caution to use only cleansers specified for stone will help avoid etching of your marble.

Burning: Marble does have the potential to burn, so hot pots and pans should not be set directly on marble countertops. Use trivets, potholders and placemats to protect marble surfaces

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LIMESTONE

Scratching: Limestone is a relatively soft stone that is susceptible to scratching and should be protected by using cutting boards for knives. Trivets and placemats should be used under all ceramic, china and other vessels to reduce the possibility of scratching.

Staining: Limestone is more porous than many natural stone countertop materials and is extremely susceptible to staining. Charles Luck Stone Center treats all limestone countertops with a penetrating stone sealer before installation, a process that helps protect the stone from staining. Coasters and placemats should be used for all drinking glasses or dishes, including water glasses. Avoid leaving any spilled substances (including juices, alcoholic beverages, oils, greases, cosmetics and standing water) on limestone for even a short period of time. It is recommended that limestone be periodically re-sealed with a penetrating stone sealer to help reduce staining.

Etching: Limestones, like marble and other calcareous stones, are referred to as acid sensitive. Calcareous stones are readily dissolved in acid; therefore acidic products such as lemon or tomato juice should not be used on limestones and marbles. These will cause limestone to etch—the surface finish will dull and change texture.

Burning: Limestone does have the potential to burn, so hot pots and pans should not be set directly on countertops. Use trivets, potholders and placemats to protect limestone surfaces.

TRAVERTINE

Scratching: Travertine is a type of limestone, making it a relatively soft stone that will be susceptible to scratching. Travertine should be protected from scratching by using cutting boards for knives, and using trivets and placemats under all ceramic, china and other vessels to reduce the possibility of scratching.

Staining: Travertine is more porous than many natural stone countertop materials and is extremely susceptible to staining. Charles Luck Stone Center treats all travertine countertops with a penetrating stone sealer before installation, a process that helps protect the stone from staining. Coasters and placemats should be used for all drinking glasses or dishes, including water glasses. Avoid leaving any spilled substances (including juices, alcoholic beverages, oils, greases, cosmetics and standing water) on travertine for any period of time. It is recommended that travertine be resealed periodically with a penetrating stone sealer to help reduce staining.

Etching: Travertine, like marble and other calcareous stones, is referred to as acid sensitive. Calcareous stones are readily dissolved in acid; therefore acidic products such as lemon or tomato juice should not be used on travertines. These will cause it to etch—the surface finish will dull and change texture.

Burning: Travertine does have the potential to burn, so hot pots and pans should not be set directly on countertops. Use trivets, potholders and placemats to protect travertine surfaces.

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SOAPSTONE

Scratching: Soapstone is a relatively soft stone that is susceptible to scratching. By using cutting boards with knives and avoiding abrasive cleansers and scraping heavy pots and pans along the surface, you can help reduce scratching. Soapstone has a unique characteristic—scratches that do occur may be buffed out with a fine grit (400 to 300) sandpaper, and then touched-up with some mineral oil. Deeper scratches may require the use of heavier grit sandpaper. If so, start with the heavier paper, and gradually work up to the finest grit to create a finish consistent with the rest of the countertop. Because soapstone is softer than many other natural stone countertops, it may have a tendency to chip or crack more easily. Standing on soapstone countertops or placing excessive weight on them is highly discouraged to preserve the stone's structural integrity.

Staining: Soapstone is one of the only natural materials that can be considered nearly impenetrable, and will not absorb stains in the same way as other natural stone surfaces. Soapstone will discolor when a liquid makes contact with its surface; however, liquids will evaporate out of the stone, leaving no stain behind. Soapstone requires regular oiling to maintain its maximum beauty and to help keep a consistent color throughout.

Soapstone's natural color is a grayish-blue tone. However, it can be treated with mineral oil to create the darker, richer color that many owners prefer and to help ward against showing scratches. If you choose not to oil your countertop, its color will darken over time, taking on a natural patina, especially in areas of high use. While it is up to the homeowner to determine how often they would like to oil their countertops, we suggest the following schedule for applying mineral oil:

- » week 1: two applications
- » week 2 through 4: one application per week
- » week 5 through 9: one application per two weeks
- » Apply monthly up to 18 months. As time goes on, you will need to oil the countertops less and less frequently, noticing that the deep color will last longer between applications. Oiling the countertop at least twice per year is recommended after the initial 18-month period of care.

To apply mineral oil, simply wipe the oil over the entire countertop and then wipe off with a clean cotton cloth. The cloth may be stored in a plastic bag to be used for future applications or for touch-ups when buffing out scratches. Mineral oil can be found at many drug and hardware stores.

Burning: Hot pots may be set directly on soapstone with no potential for the stone to show burn marks. Take caution after removing a hot pot from a surface, as the stone will absorb heat from the pot and may be hot to the touch.