

GLASS



Three Eco-Friendly Choices for Green Kitchen Countertops

BY JANET THOMSON

WOOD



PAPER



In a recent report conducted by the National Association of REALTORS®, green homes are popular among recent home buyers. What does this have to do with green kitchen countertops? Plenty, if you're a homeowner in the process of upgrading your kitchen design in the hopes of selling your property in the near future. According to the report, Millennials comprised the largest share of home buyers at 32 percent, larger than baby boomers combined – and 68 percent of them were first-time home buyers. Whether you're in the planning stages of building a new home - or just giving an existing one a new facelift, here are three eco-friendly choices you should consider for your kitchen design.

Recycled Paper

It might seem strange to consider using paper for a kitchen countertop. Greenamerica.org states that using recycled paper is better for the environment because it reduces solid waste; it preserves forests and reduces demand for wood, and it conserves resources and generates less pollution during manufacturing. When the fiber from paper is bound with resin, it makes a surface that is durable and easy to care for. PaperStone® is a Forest Steward-

of natural resources are saved for every ton of glass recycled. Because recycled glass can be substituted for up to 95 percent of raw materials, it's an ideal green choice for designing or remodeling kitchen countertops. The brand Vetrazzo® makes countertops that are 85 percent recycled glass, and composed of a proprietary formula that combines recycled glass with a binder of cement, additives, pigments and other recycled materials. The great benefit of using recycled glass is that it's equal in durability, strength, thermal resistance, scratch resistance, and care and maintenance to granite or other natural stone surfaces used, making it one of the most environmentally- friendly materials on the market.

Reclaimed Wood

For homeowners seeking a more rustic, historical or traditional character for their kitchen, reclaimed wood is a popular design choice. It's lumber with a past life used for a new purpose. Reclaimed wood can be purchased through a local salvage supplier or through a manufacturer that uses reclaimed materials. It's not uncommon to learn that your new kitchen countertop was once an old barn, factory, warehouse, commercial building, or even a storage crate. Unfortunately, many dealers make false claims about how their products are sourced, which is why you should purchase from dealers who are certified through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) or the Rainforest Alliance. Endurawood is one product that meets this standard. In fact, their wood countertops are made from reclaimed fir trees belonging to the pine family and oak, in addition to old wine vats (containers). If you decide to use fashion wood for a kitchen countertop, keep in mind that it's prone to water damage, will need occasional re-sealing, and probably shouldn't be installed directly next to a sink or dishwasher. If you're going for an aged-looking kitchen design, using reclaimed wood is a better eco-friendly choice.

Remodeling your kitchen countertops can be a worthwhile undertaking, and going green is the smarter option. Nowadays, sustainable green materials are just as durable and attractive as traditional countertops like quartz or granite. Frankly, with the emerging demand for green and energy efficient homes, choosing eco-friendly materials when remodeling or building your new home is one way to make sure that you're contributing to sustaining resources, and protecting the environment ■

ship Council (FSC®) certified brand made from 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper and non-petroleum resin. This material has the strength of steel and is produced in a socially responsible manner. One major benefit of using recycled paper is that it reduces the number of trees cut down to make paper, thereby decreasing the overall demand for wood. Because of its durability, using recycled paper provides peace of mind for the environmentally conscious homeowner.

Recycled Glass

According to the Glass Packaging Institute (GPI), glass is 100 percent recyclable and can be recycled endlessly without any loss in purity or quality. In addition, GPI claims that over a ton

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