

Granite Countertops – Care & Maintenance

Granite countertops can add style, beauty and value to your home, but with them come some responsibility.

Formed deep down in the earth from *magma* that has been cooled, granite is most commonly mined or *quarried* from Brazil, the United States, Italy, India and China. Other than slicing it into slabs and polishing, it is a natural stone that has been unaltered, leaving it a very **porous** surface. For sanitary reasons, this can be of concern when considering granite for your home. Here are some tips on keeping your granite countertop free of stains and bacteria.

1. **Apply a sealer annually.** Sealing granite is something you, the homeowner, can do. It usually involves applying a sealer, waiting 20 minutes or so, and then wiping it off...much like waxing a car. There are many products on the market. *Rock Doctor* carries a line of products some of our customers have found effective for cleaning, polishing and sealing granite. See www.rockdoctor.net.
2. **Clean spills immediately.** Liquids that sit too long can still penetrate the seal and stain or even etch your granite. Common kitchen items such as lemon juice, lime juice, tomato juice, red wine, soda, vinegar, salad dressings, marinades, and raw meat juice should be wiped-up immediately to prevent stains and bacteria from entering your countertop. If you tend to keep a tidy kitchen, you'll probably be fine.
3. **Use of coasters, trivets and hot mats.** To avoid common stains, get into the habit of using coasters under drinks. If you leave a bottle of cooking oil on your countertop, the use of a coaster can help prevent a permanent oil ring. Although your granite can probably handle the heat of sitting hot pots directly on the surface, the sealant you use probably can't handle the heat and you'll want to re-seal that area more often than just annually....or, use a trivet or hot mat.
4. **Use of cutting boards.** Even though granite does not scratch as easily as laminate (Formica) or acrylic solid surface (Corian), repeated cutting and chopping can dull the appearance, it will wear away at your seal, and will probably dull your knives. Cutting boards are simple and safe.
5. **Clean with mild soap & water.** Unless you are using a product specifically labeled for cleaning granite (such as *Rock Doctor* listed above), mild dish soap and water work best. Be aware that too much soap can cause a buildup of residue and can dull the finish. Be sure to rinse your countertops thoroughly. **Avoid using products containing ammonia, bleach, lemon juice, vinegar or other cleaners containing acid. Avoid using abrasive cleaners such as dry cleansers or soft cleansers. Acidic products and chemicals can permanently damage your granite.**

With proper care, granite countertops can last a lifetime. For some people, the look and feel of natural stone out-weighs the maintenance issues. Others might prefer lower-maintenance, non-porous options such as laminates, acrylic solid surface, or quartz countertops. More information on the care & maintenance of granite and other natural stones can be found at www.marble-institute.com.