

Allied
Gallery



Care & Maintenance Guide
for Natural and Engineered Stone

Get to Know Your Stone

Congratulations, you now proudly own a piece of Mother Nature's best material in your home! It took a few hundred thousand years to make the stone. Each and every piece of stone has no match equal to it in the entire world. Along with its unmatched beauty, you also have to accept its physical limitations and understand the proper care and maintenance.

The first step in proper stone care and maintenance is to understand your stone's geological classification and composition. This information will help you to identify what cleaning products to use and how best to care for your natural stone.

Natural stone is categorized into three basic geological classifications by their respective formation process: Sedimentary, Metamorphic, and Igneous. Additionally, stones in each category can be either Calcareous or Siliceous.

Calcareous Stone

Calcareous stone is composed mainly of calcium carbonate, a chemical compound commonly found in natural stone, shells, and pearls. Calcium Carbonate is sensitive to acidic solutions so mild, non-acidic cleaners are recommended.

Siliceous Stone

Siliceous stone, as the term implies, is composed primarily of silicates, such as quartz, feldspar, mica, etc. As such, a siliceous stone is generally resistant to most acids found in kitchen settings, although acidic cleaners are still not recommended, as these stones may contain trace levels of minerals that are acid sensitive.

The following chart will be a helpful guide:

	Sedimentary	Metamorphic	Igneous
CALCAREOUS	Limestone Travertine Onyx	Marble Serpentine	
SILICEOUS	Sandstone	Slate Quartzite Soapstone	Granite

Stone Colors and Appearances

Natural stone is quarried throughout the world in a variety of colors and varying mineral compositions. In most cases, the type of natural stone can be identified by visible particles at the surface of the stone. The following tips may be helpful:



Marbles are traditionally prized for their aesthetic appeal. Some are accentuated by pronounced veining and bold colors. Often included in the marble family are serpentines and onyxes. Marbles are extremely sensitive to acidic substances.



Granites typically exhibit small flecks or grains of minerals uniformly distributed throughout the stone. Some “exotic granites” will have veining patterns similar to marbles.



Sandstones vary widely in color due to different minerals and clays found in the stone. Sandstone is typically light gray to yellow or red. Bluestone and brownstone are well known varieties of this quartz-based stone group.



Limestone and **Travertine** are widely used building stones with colors typically light gray, tan or buff. A distinguishing characteristic of many limestones is the presence of fossils that are frequently visible in the stone surface.



Soapstone may come in a wide range of colors and generally has a smooth feel to the touch. Due to its high resistance to chemicals and because of its ability to absorb and distribute heat, it is an ideal material for countertops. It’s important to know that this material ages and darkens over time.



Engineered stone is made from a combination of crushed quartz/ marble and resin, *generally* in a 90% to 10% ratio, roughly. Maestro Marble and Maestro Quartz, although both man-made, contain part or all of the same characteristics as natural stone since they are mostly made from natural stone components. In the event these tops are damaged, the resin makes this type of material extremely difficult to repair. *Maestro Marble will have very similar characteristics and reactions as pure marble, since it is primarily made of marble. Maestro marble will need to be sealed and treated as marble. Both materials can still be stained and be etched.* Engineered stone is manufactured under a controlled process, but color variance can still occur. Small specs of darker quartz can be found in lighter color selections sometimes. Lighter specs could be found in darker color.

There are several stone finishes (for example: polished, honed, and leathered) available for natural stone. The type of finish will not impact the type of cleaning product used.

Cleaning Natural Stones

All natural stone products are subject to damage if not cared for properly. For normal housekeeping, clean using warm water and/or a PH balanced neutral stone cleaner on a regular basis to remove residue from everyday spills such as food, hairspray, cosmetics and even sitting water.



Natural Stone Care DOs	Natural Stone Care DON'Ts
Clean stone surfaces with a neutral cleaner (soap designed for stone) with warm water.	Don't use vinegar, bleach, ammonia, tub and tile cleaners or general purpose bathroom cleaners.
Similar to any item in your home, an excessive concentration of cleaner or soap may leave a film and cause streaks. Follow manufacturer's recommendations.	Don't use abrasive cleaners such as dry cleaners (scouring powders and creams).
Use a soft cloth for best results.	Don't use alkaline cleaners not specifically formulated for stone.
Rinse the surface thoroughly after washing with soap solution and dry with a soft cloth.	Don't use commercially available rust removers (laundry rust stain removers, toilet bowl cleaners). They could contain trace levels of hydrofluoric acid (HF). This acid attacks silicates in addition to other minerals. All stones, including granite and quartzite, will be damaged if exposed to HF.
Change the rinse water frequently.	Don't mix ammonia and bleach. This combination creates a toxic and lethal gas.

There are various cleaning products out there to choose from. Many of them claim to be designed for stone. Do your homework and read the ingredients carefully. Some of these products may cause more harm than good and degrade your sealer over time.

Easy Care Tips

To get the longest life and preserve the beauty of your natural stone, follow these simple tips:

SEALING	Your countertops are purchased sealed. Sealing is a common step taken on some stones as an extra precaution against staining. In fact, the sealing products used in the stone industry are “impregnators” which do not actually seal the stone, but more correctly act as a repellent rather than a sealer. Sealing does not make stone stain proof; rather it makes the stone more stain resistant. Sealers should be reapplied periodically (usually every six months to once a year depending on how porous the material is - the lighter the color - the more porous it is.) Use only sealer made for natural stone.
COASTERS	Use coasters under glasses, particularly those containing alcohol, soda, and citrus juices. Acidic drinks IN the glass or cup that are simply “sweating” can etch the stone and leave a ring mark. The drink’s residue from the acidic liquid collects on the outside of the glass and then condensation mixes with it and carries it down to the countertop surface where the etching begins. It happens in mere seconds and cannot be prevented, except by not allowing contact by using coasters.
TRIVETS	While many stones can withstand heat, the use of trivets or mats is recommended.
SPILLS	Blot the spill with a paper towel immediately. Don’t wipe the area, it will spread the spill. Flush the area with water and mild soap and rinse several times. Dry the area thoroughly with a soft cloth. Repeat and be sure to rinse off soap so that it doesn’t become a thin layer of film/residue.

Stain Identification Tips

Identifying the type of stain on the stone surface is the key to removing it. Stains can be oil based, organic, metallic, biological, ink based, paint based, and acid based. Sometimes they can even be caused by water. A white powder that may appear on the surface, efflorescence, is caused by the deposition of mineral salts carried by water. If you don’t know what caused the stain, consider likely staining agents that may have been present (for example: plants, food, cosmetics). Check the color, shape, and pattern of the stain.

Stain Removal Steps

Surface stains can be removed by cleaning with an appropriate cleaning product or household chemical. Industry professionals also use poultice to absorb stains. Go to www.marble-institute.com/poultice for more information, or call Allied Gallery at 855-861-6388 (recommended).

Taking Care of Maestro Quartz

One of the great things about engineered quartz is an easy care surface perfect for modern life. The high quality mix of quartz and resin allow the material to have a minimal maintenance routine. Taking care of your countertops doesn't take long and will enhance your enjoyment of the stone.

For everyday care, we recommend simple warm water and a cloth. For larger messes, use an all-purpose kitchen spray found at most grocery or discount stores. Clean up all spills promptly! No surface is impervious to prolonged exposure to harsh chemicals or dyes. A Maestro Quartz surface is tough, but only if treated well. Avoid leaving spilled red wine, tomato products, lemons and soda on surfaces for prolonged periods. These can cause stains and etching if left untreated.



DO NOT USE abrasive cleaners!

Dry abrasive cleaners can damage the finish when used to scour the surface. This includes cleaners like Comet, Soft Scrub, and Ajax. Also, avoid using Scotch Brite or scouring pads that contain Aluminum Oxide. Using these damages the countertop and makes it susceptible to damage.

Be sure to use trivets and pot holders when placing hot pots and pans on Maestro Quartz. If subjected to intense temperature changes, there is a risk of thermal expansion and cracking.

Although Quartz is one of the hardest substances, you should never use your countertop as a cutting board. Depending on your knives, you risk scratching the surface or dulling your blades!

Maestro Quartz never has to be sealed after fabrication. With proper cleaning, you can enjoy a lifetime of use from your countertop.

Taking Care of Maestro Marble

Engineered marble requires daily maintenance and care. These procedures will ensure that your engineered marble maintains its unique beauty and elegance. Engineered marble has a great percentage of natural marble, therefore in part they will need similar care as to its natural stone composition.

Cleaning detergents should be carefully selected, non-abrasive and with neutral Ph is recommended. **The Ph is very important;** if you use cleaners with high acid index it will ruin your polish and damage the surface. Marble is made up of calcium carbonate which reacts with acids almost immediately. Potentially, even water with a high acid index could etch the surface if left unwiped for too long.

Drink spills, tooth paste, hairsprays, facewashes, soaps, shampoos, and etc. could have oils and sometimes even natural ingredients that are acidic. You will need to be on alert with your daily routine to make sure the tops are not exposed to these products for a long extended period of time and wiped after use.

The porosity of the engineered marble is much lower than most natural marble, however it does absorb, after spills make sure you clean up or you may stain your engineered marble permanently.

Here is a small list of some common products you may use to protect and beautify your engineered marble:

ENGINEERED MARBLE SEALER	You will find several types of stone sealers on the market. Make sure you find one appropriate for engineered marble, which means products with low porosity. The sealer has to be specific as it needs to infiltrate a product with relatively low porosity; most natural marble has great porosity, so the common sealers used are not advised.
NEUTRAL CLEANING DETERGENT	As mentioned before, the recommended cleaning detergent should be non-abrasive and with a <i>neutral Ph</i> .

Frequently Asked Questions

I have heard that granite has small cracks and pits in it. What are these?

Fissures occur naturally in many stone types. The term “fissure” is used commercially in the stone industry to describe a visible separation along inter-crystalline boundaries. This separation may start and stop within the face of the stone or extend through an edge. A fissure differs from a crack in that it is a naturally occurring feature of the stone. **ALL** granites contain some degree of fissure. Some contain more than others. Since fissures occur naturally in all granites they are not considered a flaw. Countertops will not be replaced due to the presence of fissures. Pitting of the countertop surface, particularly in granite, is a commonly seen characteristic of natural stone. Granites are made up of several different minerals, each mineral having a different hardness. Granites contain Quartz, Feldspar, Biotite, Amphibole, ferrous titanium oxides, and other mineral combinations. On the Mohs scale, diamonds are the hardest mineral with a rating of 10. Quartz and Feldspar have a hardness of 6.5 - 7 and are very durable. Biotite (small, black minerals found through the slab) on the other hand are very soft (2.5) and can flake easily. All true granites have Biotite in their composition. Because Biotite is relatively soft and flaky, the first few layers can be removed during the polishing process. The pits do not make the granite less durable or otherwise inferior, and do not in themselves qualify a slab for replacement. Pits are common in all granites and should be expected when dealing with Natural Stone. Countertops will not be replaced due to pitting in the surface of any granite countertop.

My granite has very small chips along the seam. Is this normal?

Chipping will occur, particularly in the igneous stone varieties, as a result of sawing operations. The exiting portion of the diamond blade used to cut granite will create many small chips. Larger chips may be repaired with epoxy or polyester resin if the completed repair is consistent in color and texture with the surrounding area.

I have seen some seams which are not perfectly smooth, why is this?

The term “lippage” as used in the stone industry, is the planar offset of the finished surfaces of two adjacent stone pieces. Due to the relatively tight seams used in countertop installations, even minor amounts of *lippage* are noticeable. Maximum *lippage* at the center of the countertop is 1/32” or 0.8mm. Countertops will not be replaced due to *lippage* within acceptable industry standards.

Why do my countertops look a little different from the sample I was shown?

All natural stone products are produced in nature, which can lead to fluctuation in color, pattern, veining and fissures. Expect color to vary from slab to slab and even within one slab. Color samples shown are to give an idea of a color range only and not to represent the complete shading, patterns, color variation, and texture that appear in the natural granite stone. For this reason exact duplication cannot be guaranteed.

Why is there a seam in my countertop and why was it placed where it is?

Stones with wavy characteristics, streaks, movement or “veins” can be difficult to match or blend between corners and seams. During the natural stone slab planning and fabrication process, great care is taken to blend the patterns and match colors. At the discretion of Allied Gallery seams will be placed in the best location for structural integrity and visual aesthetics (***within the limitation of the slab size***). Note, the properties and characteristics that give granite such beauty also make it impossible to guarantee a match in pattern or color from one piece of countertop to the next. No replacement will be made for natural color variations within the countertop.

Warranty Information

For Residential Natural Stone Countertops

Congratulations, you have purchased one of Mother Nature's most beautiful products for your home. Our company's natural stone products grace many public and private spaces where our customers have realized their vision of elegance. Now, you own a piece of stone that has no other match in the entire world! Along with natural stone's beauty and durability, we recommend following some easy maintenance processes to keep your stone beautiful.

<p>WE PROVIDE A ONE (1) YEAR WARRANTY FROM THE DATE YOUR HOME CLOSES ON WORKMANSHIP ONLY</p>	<p>There is no warranty against shade variation, staining, scratching or wear on natural stone surfaces. All merchandise is sold "AS IS" condition and there are no warranties of any kind for natural stone. Normal housekeeping is the best way to maintain your granite. Clean your stone after each meal or countertop use. If a person cleans after each meal, there is very little possibility of ever staining the granite countertop. Clear warm water or a stone cleaner can be used to remove surface scum, food and/or any other deposits left on the surface. No other soaps, detergents, or cleaners should be used on the stone.</p>
<p>GREASE IS THE ENEMY</p>	<p>Of particular hazard to stone are oils, fats, grease, and products containing these types of items. Extra care should be taken to avoid products with grease residues being exposed to your natural stone for prolonged periods of time. Please avoid water and other liquids to puddle on the countertop surfaces, which could leave rings or other marks. (i.e. moisture from sweating glasses, and flower pots, etc.)</p>
<p>YOUR COUNTERTOPS ARE SEALED WHEN YOU PURCHASE THEM</p>	<p>The purpose of a sealer is to increase stain resistance so that the natural stone repels dirt and water. The sealer penetrates the stone, thereby, reducing absorption of dirt and staining agents. Sealing will not eliminate all staining. Spills should be wiped off immediately to prevent stains from settling into the stone. It is recommended to apply sealers periodically. A sealer must be used made specifically for marble and granite. Use a type of sealer that is penetrating (invisible) and does not leave a film on the surface.</p>
<p>HEAVY WEIGHT CAN STRESS COUNTERTOPS</p>	<p>Natural stone is not a structural support product. Avoid placing heavy weight on the countertops and especially placing stress on the thin strips in front of the cook top and sink.</p>

Checklist

For Residential Countertops

- _____ The sample shown to you at the time of your selection serves only to indicate in a general way the color, pattern, and texture are found in this color of stone and may vary from the slab countertops installed in your home. Color, tone, and pattern can vary **SIGNIFICANTLY** from samples. There is no standard variation and the difference may be noticeable! **Your countertops will not be replaced due to variation from the samples.**
- _____ Natural Stone has many features to be aware of. You will probably notice small hairline veins, which are called “fissures”. There will also be irregular mineral concentrations of color that vary in size. These are called “inclusions”. Inclusions might be fairly circular in nature or they might appear to run through a portion of the countertop in somewhat of a straight line. Some stone slabs contain extremely tiny holes called “pits” which are too minute to be able to be filled by resin at the factory. In addition, some slabs contain “fill”. Fill is essentially the combination of material and resin a polishing factory uses to fill a hole in the slab that is larger than a pit. Please be aware that fissures, inclusions, pits, and fill are all considered part of the distinctive and unique beauty of natural stone. Marble and travertine are especially likely to have pits, significant veining and fill. Also, honed finishes will not feel as smooth as that of a polished granite countertop. **Your countertops will not be replaced due to any of these features.**
- _____ Maestro Marble and Maestro Quartz may contain part or all of these same characteristics as they are made from natural stone components. These are man-made products using natural quartz and marbles. Color tones and veins vary slightly between lots. More than 90% of these products are natural quartz or marble, so there may also be small foreign bodies in the slabs that are unavoidable. Small foreign bodies includes specks or chips that may not be the majority of the color. These are most noticeable on uniform colors such as white, gray, and cream. Maestro products should not be used outdoors in direct sunlight.
- _____ No two pieces of stone, such as the pieces that make up a kitchen countertop, will be identical. The countertops or pieces within the countertop will not be replaced due to color, pattern or texture variation. Please note, for “high movement” stones, significant pattern variation may occur where pieces are seamed together. Maestro Marble and Maestro Quartz may contain these same characteristics as they are made from natural stone components. Natural stone tiles and may not match slabs of the same color since they were processed at a different time period.
- _____ All slabs for countertops comes in various sizes. Slab sizes of the same color vary from shipment to shipment. Hence, for large islands, in some cases a seam is required and in others a seam is not required. The largest granite slab is typically 108” x 58.” Marble slabs are usually smaller. The largest Maestro Quartz slab is typically 118” x 55.” **If your island is larger than these standard sizes, expect a seam.** All countertop thickness can vary up to 1/8” due to the manufacturing process.
- _____ All countertop seams and lamination lines are visible and can be felt. Seams will be placed where necessary based on countertop layout and material size constraints. Even for the same plan, seam locations may vary due to slab size. Seams may vary in width and height from 1/16” to 1/8” depending upon installation requirements. There may also be minor “flakes” at seam joints due to the crystal composition of the material.
- _____ Your new Natural Stone and Maestro countertops have been treated with an impregnating sealer, which helps reduce the risk of the countertops from staining. Be aware that sealing will not eliminate staining. Any spills should be wiped off immediately to prevent stains from settling into the stone. It is recommended that an impregnating sealer be reapplied once a year for the countertops to resist stains and maintain its repellent characteristics. Highly acidic substances such as orange juice, coffee, vinegar, wine, mustard and many soft drinks can “etch” marble, limestone, travertine, Maestro Marble and even some granite which will leave a dull mark. General cleaners not specifically designed for natural stone are not recommended. These may etch away the polish, discolor the surface, scratch the stone or degrade the sealer. **There is no warranty against stains or etch marks.** Request a copy of Natural Stone Maintenance Guide for more information on how to care for your countertops.

By signing below, Purchaser acknowledges that they have read and understand the above information.

Purchaser

Date

Designer

Date