

Practical and Personal

Popular surfaces reflect consumers' desire for both individuality & function

THE MATERIALS THAT MAKE UP the backdrop of a kitchen or bath – namely the countertops, wallcoverings and floors – are more than just a way to contribute to an overall palette. Manufacturing innovations now allow for more choices than ever before, which encourages homeowners to look for character as well as quality. With new patterns, unlimited colors and unusual textures, surfaces are starting to serve as the starring pieces in a design.

“Consumers are searching for longevity in the material, as well as the design choices,” said Katie Michael-Battaglia, design director at Nemo Tile + Stone. “They are looking for materials that are functional and that will make a space pop and feel like their own.”

FUNCTIONAL FLOORS

When it comes to the surface beneath their feet, consumers are first concerned with durability and ease of maintenance. Jenne Ross, director of marketing for Kardean designflooring, said people look for a floor that can handle a busy lifestyle – one that’s filled with kids, pets and entertaining.

“Homeowners want a floor that will keep up with them, not one they have to babysit,” she added.

According to the 2019 Houzz Kitchen Trends Survey, only 24 percent of renovators are opting for natural hardwood. Instead, options like engineered hardwood and ceramic or porcelain planks are growing in popularity.

“An engineered wood board offers a better long-term fit, exceptional stability and is an easier alternative for kitchen remodel installations,” said Sophie-Zacha Lameret, New York showroom manager for Havwoods Intl. “On top of that, these products are durable and sustainable.”

Flooring with waterproof qualities is high in demand. Luxury vinyl tile – which can boast waterproof features – is trending because of its affordability, longevity and its ability to carry through to potentially wet spaces. For a mid-to-higher price point, wood-look or stone-look ceramic or porcelain tiles are popular for highly trafficked spaces.



ABOVE From The Guild Maker-lab Edition, Joist by **DUCHATEAU** is a high-variation floor with a range of tones from mid-brown to rich coffee. This variation of mid- and darker-brown tones combines with a 3-in. plank width for a bold look.

RIGHT Classic Hickory from the **KARDEAN DESIGN-FLOORING** Art Select range features large-format 56-in. by 9-in. planks. The stark color contrast between the heartwood and sapwood is the result of more than a century of growth. These logs were sawn with a wide circular blade, creating a new emboss that gives the planks a subtle cross-sawn appearance and texture.



WARMER, CHARACTERISTIC MATERIALS

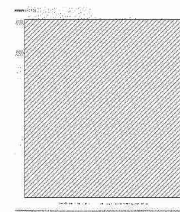
Whatever material homeowners prefer, the color and feel they are leaning toward tends to be lighter and warmer. While consumers are not giving up on gray tones, more blends of beige and gray have been appearing on design boards. Lighter colors – particularly blonde tones – have started replacing the demand for dark, rustic floors.

“Bringing the look and feel of the outdoors indoors continues to drive the demand for blonde hardwood planks,” said Lameret. “This light and airy flooring complements just about any decor.”

While lighter tones might be trending, consumers still want a more customized look in their spaces that reflects their own character and design sensibilities. This might mean including different widths – particularly narrow planks – and patterns like herringbone or chevron to make their floors stand apart.

“Two key trends in flooring right now are luxury and individuality,” said Patrick Bewley, vice president of marketing for DuChateau. “Customers want an upscale look and feel on their floors, regardless of material.”

By **ERINN LOUCKS**





CREATED FOR A LIFETIME

Flooring is not the only surface material that needs to outlast both trends and daily wear. According to the Houzz study, countertops continue to be the most popular replacement during a kitchen renovation. In the bathroom, new countertops can also be the key to transforming a space – but they must be durable in both situations.

“There is a call for premium surfacing material that is scratch and heat resistant – features that are vital to kitchen countertops – and that won’t suffer water damage in spaces such as the bathroom,” said Mar Esteve Corte, director of Neolith.

Engineered stone – particularly quartz – is projected to be the fastest-growing surface material, according to a recent study by the Freedonia Group. Because of its non-porous make, engineered stone is less susceptible to staining and general wear, and it resists bacteria. Made from a mix of glass, porcelain and quartz, ultracompact surfaces are also beginning to appear more in residential designs because of their near-indestructibility and durability in all spaces, including the outdoors. For a lower-to-mid-range price point, solid surface materials are chosen often for their durability and low porosity.

“The growth in these materials clearly comes as the result of their beauty and ability to perform in high-traffic interiors,” said Tammy Weadock, senior communications manager for Wilsonart. “The stain-resistant, non-porous and food-safe surfaces provide mission-critical interiors with durable finishes that also exhibit upscale aesthetics.”

INNOVATIONS CHANGING SURFACES

While engineered stone is growing in popularity, the appearance and feel of natural stone is still in demand. Fortunately, manufacturing innovations allow man-made quartz to better mimic the veins and patterns in

ABOVE DEKTON Grip+ is an innovative treatment that guarantees slip-resistance on the company’s ultra-compact flooring, including the most demanding of indoor and outdoor surfaces. Dekton Grip+ is currently offered in four colorways: Keon (shown), Orix, Soke and Vera and will be incorporated into additional Dekton colorways throughout 2019.

BELOW ISLAND STONE’s Spindrift Marble is now available in new colorways, Tempest (shown here) Carrara and Nebula. As part of the Spindrift Marble Tile Collection, the new colorways capture the aesthetic of marble slabs in a playful shape reminiscent of pebbles. Additional features include a clean grout line, uniform edges and a smooth flat surface.

stones like marble and granite without the high cost or maintenance. More veining and drama are trending for these surfaces, as homeowners are interested in adding more character to their spaces.

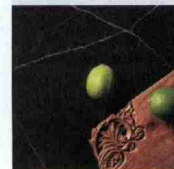
Along with mimicking stone, there is also a rise in looks that echo other natural materials, as well as industrial surfaces like iron and cement. Textured surfaces – another innovation now influencing engineered countertops – make it possible to have a durable work surface that also boasts a honed, polished or even leathery look and feel.

These unique choices are paving the way for even more characteristic countertops. Recycled options – like terrazzo or glass – are more colorful choices with eco-friendly and affordable features. Reclaimed wood creates an authentic and individual look that some homeowners are craving, while dark countertops provide a modern and moody feel that contrasts the typical white kitchen.

“Consumers are taking more risks with color in their homes overall and are opting for bolder hues,” said Massimo Ballucchi, Cosentino Americas executive director of marketing.



New York - New York from **NEOLITH** is influenced by the Big Apple’s iconic avenues and majestic skyscrapers, as well as the latest interest in using concrete for interior applications. With distinctive gray tones, it offers an urban style and full-body edge for a realistic concrete look.



Shown here in Enchanted Rock, the **WILSONART** 2019 Quartz Collection is inspired by the Earth’s ancient mineral compositions. It is manufactured with up to 93 percent high-quality natural quartz crystals, polyester binder and proprietary coloring agents that are homogeneous – with uniform color throughout their thickness.



From the ReSalvage Collection, Twine by **ARTALC** is a tile mosaic inspired by an arrangement of tangled rope. Shown in ½-in. sintered glass, Twine is customizable with any size or color.

TRENDS



Maison from NEMO TILE + STONE is an 8-in. by 8-in. ceramic tile offered in a variety of colors, including Glacier, shown here. This collection, suitable for wall applications, is available in 10 colorways, including whites, neutrals and jewel tones, each featuring a glazed finish.



ANN SACKS has introduced Banana Leaf to its new Flash Collection. The clay for Banana Leaf – an 8-in. by 8-in. tile – is hand-pressed into the mold, then hand-trimmed before firing. When completed, the tile is hand-sprayed with the company’s signature artisan glazes and fired a second time to allow the glazes to mature and seal.



The Venture Plank range from HAWOODS INTL. consists of high-quality, European-produced planks. The Amazon plank (shown here) is available in light brown in a one-strip pattern and a width of 260mm.



LEFT Inspired by stones and woodgrains around the globe, the 2019 Living Impressions Collection features 12 new FORMICA Laminate patterns, two new finishes and two new edge selections. New patterns include Neapolitan Stone, Istanbul Marble and Nero Marquina (shown here).

BELOW LUNADA BAY TILE takes inspiration from streamlined vessels in its newest tile collection, Ka-nū. Japanese for canoe, the ceramic tile collection offers three architecturally dimensional surfaces: Keel, a canoe-shaped tile with a raised center; Plank, a rectangular field tile (shown here); and Buoy Mosaic, a round tile with a single dimple.

THE NEW FOCUS: WALLCOVERINGS

Backsplashes are coming out as the boldest and most colorful element in a remodel. Those and other wallcoverings are amplifying the personality of a space, whether it’s a spa-like bathroom or a busy kitchen made for entertaining. Ceramic and porcelain tile – the most popular backsplash material according to a Statista 2019 report – is easily accessible and comes in many colors, patterns and sizes. This makes it possible to have a one-of-a-kind appearance and color palette.

“Saturated colors are trending for wallcoverings, including emerald greens and deep blues,” said DeeDee Gundberg, director, product development and design, for Ann Sacks. “Pink is still the color of the moment, and we’ve seen that morph into shades of coral and persimmon as well.”

Along with selecting bolder colors, homeowners are also considering more exotic shapes like arabesque or the handmade look of encaustic tiles. Three-dimensional tile – another recent trend – offers an updated take on traditional shapes like subway tile. Blends of concrete, metal, ceramic and glass are also trending in mosaic backsplashes.

“There is a lot of innovation in materials, and much of this is also coming from the mix of [various choices],” said Feras Irikat, director of design and marketing for Lunada Bay Tile.

Traditional materials like marble are getting a makeover with new shapes and finishes. Unexpected inspirations – like textiles or worn metal – are showing up on backsplashes for an unusual appeal. A mix of complex geometric shapes and blended colors is coming into play, making it possible for a backsplash to feel like a work of art.

“Consumers want to know they are purchasing a quality, durable product that will transform an ordinary space into a memorable retreat,” said Jeff Nibler, COO and president of sales for Island Stone. “They’re looking to create their own personal vision, and when it comes to tile and cladding for walls and backsplashes, it’s all about combining the practical with the magical.”

