

# Your guide to practical, stylish kitchen worktops

Often referred to as the most hard-working part of any kitchen, worktops need to provide both style and substance.

Thanks to exciting technological advances in the kitchen industry, we now have a vast range of high performing and beautiful materials to choose from, making 'wow' worktops a possibility for any household, whatever the budget.

The knowledgeable team at AK Fitted Interiors has produced this quick consumer guide to their most popular products.

**Quartz:** A combination of quartz stone and resin and our most popular solid surface by far. We have seen a shift in popularity from granite to quartz in recent years, partly due to kitchen trends increasingly pointing to a broader range of light tones. With more than 200 colours to choose from, you're guaranteed to find a look that you love, though it might not be a speedy process! Quartz won't chip or crack easily, and, unlike other hard surface materials, is non-porous. Whilst tough and durable, it is not as heat resistant as granite and therefore we always recommend using heat mats as a precaution.

**Granite:** A true classic that works equally well in both modern and traditional settings. This natural stone is guaranteed to stand the test of time and its appeal is often in the fact that each slab is unique in appearance. Granite has the added benefit of being very hard-wearing and best in terms of heat resistance. It does require polishing and, although sealed, is still porous to a degree, which means it's potentially prone to staining from foods such as turmeric and red wine.

**Wood:** Achieve a warm, homely feel with the natural beauty of wooden worktops. Wood is occasionally used throughout the whole kitchen but is more often selected by our clients as an accent, perhaps as part of an island or breakfast bar. It's ideal for adding texture to a kitchen and provides a beautiful contrast with both stone and man-made materials. Wood will last a lifetime, provided it is treated carefully: a relatively high level of maintenance is required such as sanding and oiling periodically.

**Laminate:** Choose laminate styles for the most budget friendly option. These surfaces are hygienic and easy to clean, with minimal maintenance, but will not stand the test of time like stone. However, recent technological advances have enabled laminates to convey a significantly more premium finish and the material can now be shaped to your bespoke design. Even for our design team, it's sometimes challenging to spot the difference between an excellent wood or concrete effect laminate and the real thing!

**Acrylic-based:** The well-known Corian and Staron brands fall into this category. Totally stain resistant and incredibly hygienic (no bacteria or water is absorbed), these non-porous surfaces are ideal for moulded sinks and creating unique finishing touches in contemporary rooms. Easily formed into unusual shapes and with invisible seams, acrylic based surfaces are perfect for awkward spaces. Many manufacturers are now also researching ways to make this work surface more environmentally friendly through carefully considered compositions. Potential buyers should take note that these surfaces do scratch easily and are more susceptible to heat damage.



**Ceramic:** The new kid on the block! Currently a more expensive option, these porcelain surfaces have originated from tile suppliers and appeal to the modern, minimalist aesthetic. They are also grabbing attention for being almost indestructible and withstanding most scratches, stains and heat damage. In addition, ceramic is maintenance-free so ideal for the busy cook. We expect demand to grow considerably for this material in the coming years.

Still undecided? All the worktops mentioned in this feature can be viewed at AK Fitted Interiors' showrooms in Bromsgrove and Studley.

Please feel free to pop in for an informal chat with one of their friendly design team about your own kitchen project. Visit [www.akfittedinteriors.co.uk](http://www.akfittedinteriors.co.uk) for more details.

