



Quartz vs. Granite: Which One Comes Out on Top?

So maybe you're at that point in your renovation where you're considering materials for the all-important countertop. You're browsing places like Pinterest and Houzz and asking friends on Facebook and Twitter. You keep hearing about two popular surfacing materials: natural stone (which people typically refer to as granite) and quartz. Problem is, you're not sure what the difference is.

Don't worry: We are here to clear things up.

Before getting started, however, it's important to say this: when it comes to countertop materials, don't get hung up on which one is the so-called "best." Figure out which countertop material is best for you—your lifestyle, your overall design vision, your budget.

After all, at Atlantic Kitchen & Bath, we feature both quartz and natural stone (in addition to other solid surfaces). So it's not an "either/or" scenario for us either.

Natural Stone vs. Engineered Stone: Understanding the Difference

Natural stone—granite—is indeed 100% natural since it is quarried directly from the earth in large blocks. These blocks are then sliced into slabs and polished on one side at the quarry before being shipped to the broker or fabricator. Fabricators cut shapes from the slabs according to your countertop specifications. They then profile and polish the edges.

Quartz, on the other hand, is an "engineered" stone, meaning a manufacturing plant uses various grades and sizes of quartz crystals and mixes them with resin and pigment (for color) in a ratio of 93% quartz to 7% resin (yes, we'll still refer to quartz as natural stone, but it's not as natural as granite). Fabricators create quartz countertops in much the same way as they do granite countertops: by cutting the shapes from the slab and then profiling and polishing the edges.

Quartz: Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Quartz is one of the strongest materials on the planet. Quartz countertops are stronger and more flexible than granite. This makes them easier to work with during the fabrication and installation process.
- **Quartz's inherent strength makes it extremely durable.** That said, don't confuse "durable" with "indestructible"—there's no material like that.
- Quartz surfacing is non-porous and **doesn't require any sealing.** A non-porous material is a huge benefit because that means you don't need to worry about bacteria and other germs growing in any nooks and crannies. Bottom line: quartz is incredibly easy to clean and maintain.
- Quartz countertops are stain-resistant, so dropping a glass of wine on them simply requires a damp cloth to clean (NOT that you'll be spilling any wine, right?).
- Quartz colors are uniform. What you see in the showroom or from a sample is what you can expect to see in your home.

Cons:

- Quartz countertops can discolor over a long period of time when exposed to direct sunlight (like for outdoor kitchens). For this reason, we don't recommend quartz surfacing for use outdoors, since you'll see the difference in color over time.
- You can expect to see seams with a quartz counter, but they will be less visible if you choose a slab that has more patterns. Seams tend to stand out on solid colors while patterns help conceal them.

Granite: Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Mother Nature made this material. It's 100% natural, which is why it's such a popular choice with homeowners, designers, and architects.
- **Granite isn't as strong as quartz, but that doesn't mean it's a wimpy choice, either.** It's still a strong stone and extremely durable. But, just like quartz, it's not indestructible (it can break, chip and

even crack if abused). And if you happen to spill red wine on a lighter color of granite (oh, the horror!), it will stain.

- Granite is one-of-a-kind. We use the word unique, because each granite slab is exactly that. For many people, this is a pro. For others, it is con so we are going to include it in both lists. So why consider this a pro? Well, many people like the concept of exclusivity—they like the idea that no one else will have the exact same countertop as they have. The slabs are each unique and not manufactured

Cons:

- **Granite doesn't offer color consistency.** Remember we said “one of kind” is a pro and a con? Well, on the con side, this means the appearance isn't uniform. No two stones are alike. Even the sample you see probably won't look like what you end up installing in your home. It's a beautiful stone, for sure, but it might not be the beautiful stone you were imagining. All granite slabs come with varied striations. Meaning you can have similar looking granite in 2 sections of your counters and the 3rd panel may have different colored areas.
- Granite countertops need to be sealed. You need to seal them when they're installed and every 6 months to 1 year afterwards. Why? Because granite is a porous material, which means it can harbor bacteria, germs, mold, and other unhealthy things in its nooks and crannies. Sealing takes care of this issue. While some people seal their granite countertops every three years, we recommend doing it at least once per year. If you cook/clean a lot you may want to reseal every 4-6 months. If for any reason the sealant on the counter becomes compromised, your countertop can harbor germs and easily stain.
- **It's impossible to hide the seams in a** granite counter, especially if your stone has veins or directional movement in the pattern. Expect the seams to show up once the fabricator installs your countertop.

So what do truly “objective” sources have to say in the debate between granite and quartz? Every year, Consumer Reports puts out an issue that ranks kitchen countertop materials. Quartz and granite are always neck-and-neck (quartz was the number one material in 2013 and 2014, edging out granite by just a couple of points).

But as we said in the beginning, the debate comes down to this: what's the right countertop material for your specific needs, your lifestyle, your design? Do your homework, answer those questions, and then decide.