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timeless beauty

It's true. In just about any room of a home, the lasting elegance of natural stone is beyond compare. Granite adds a graceful depth to finishing the heart of our homes, our kitchens. Once only available with a high price tag attached, technological improvements and consumer demand have made natural stone an affordable elegance. Our reflections can shine off the polished floors, it can add dimension and movement to an otherwise flat fireplace, make a bathroom into a natural retreat, add elegance to an office, and be the finishing touch in our kitchen. Two pieces of natural stone are never the same, and projects will never look identical.

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While there are many alternative materials out there, including laminates, stainless steel, concrete and quartz surfaces, none can beat natural stone for its uniqueness. Quartz materials are available in many different brands and are generally manufactured in a factory from stone granules mixed with resins, pigments, dyes and other material, including recycled glass, mirror and semi-precious stone. Our eyes cannot distinguish

one slab from the next and no one can ever truly have a unique piece as part of their home.

In the past, quarries were limited in size and location. Other potential quarries were identified, but the extraction cost was very prohibitive. With advances in technology being applied to extraction and cutting, new supplies were easier to develop. Now, natural stone is being mined in the United States, Italy, India, Brazil, China, Africa, Russia and other parts of the world.

Many people are drawn to stone. Whether it is in remembrance of our child-like fascination with stones, or an urge for something symbolically strong and lasting, we all feel the lure. In addition to beauty and uniqueness, natural stone is timeless, durable and versatile, and adds value to our homes. Many factors

affect the coloration and movement of the stone you see. Underground springs, mineral deposits, temperatures, earth movement and pressure create natural beauty that cannot be replicated in a factory environment. Every block extracted from the earth is different from the next. Color can change over the quarry, depending on the mineral contents.



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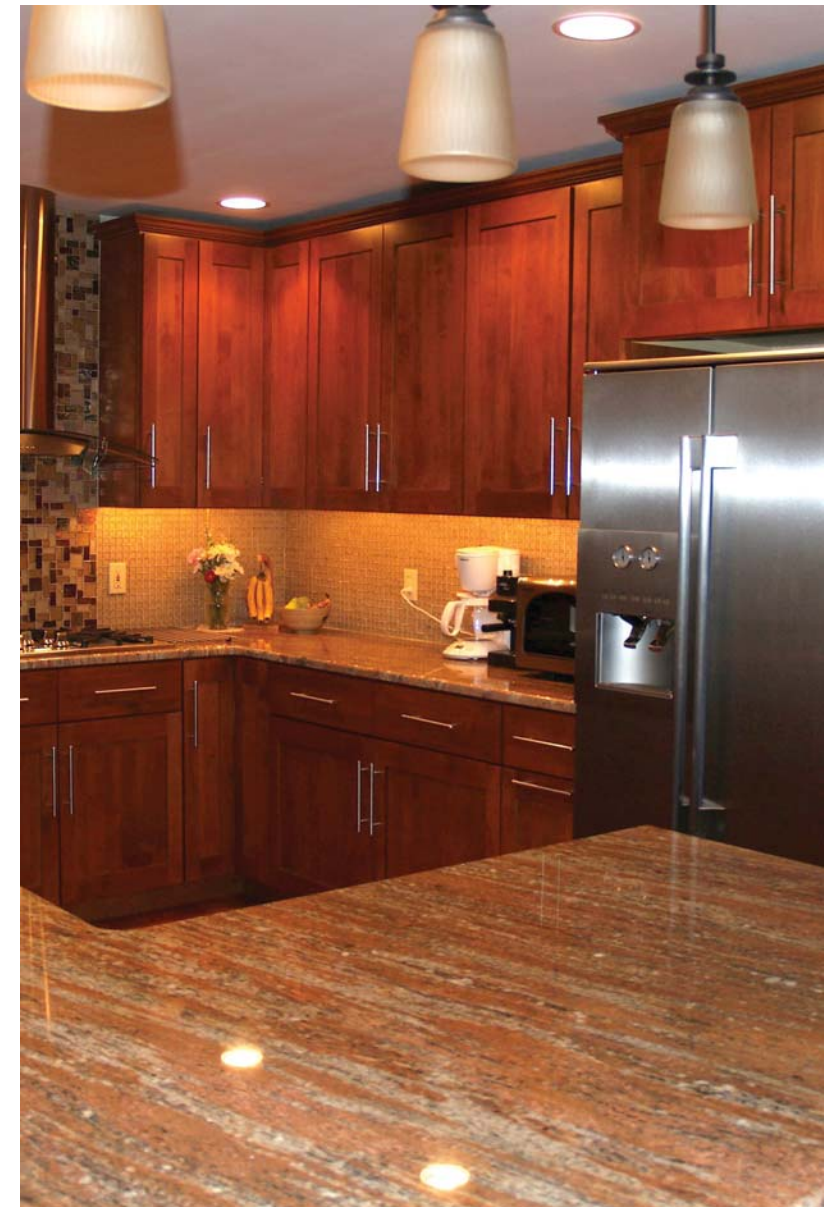
ILKEM Marble and Granite is a growing company, that services areas such as VA, DC, MD, DE, WV, PA and NC. We have over 25 years of experience in the marble and granite industry—fabricating and installing kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities, showers, tub surrounds, as well as fireplaces.

We specialize in both commercial and residential projects, we offer competitive pricing and supply one-stop shopping to our customers, as well as a very rapid turnaround time for installation. We pride ourselves in unparalleled service and quality from our order processing, delivery and quality control. We offer a one-year warranty on all of our installations, and the material has a limited lifetime warranty. Our materials are imported from all over the world. We have over 1500 slabs stocked at our location and over 150 colors to choose from. Not only do we provide granite and marble but we also deal with silestone, caesarstone, and zodiac. You are also able to obtain a variety of samples, sinks and faucets that are located at our showroom. We are licensed and insured.

All natural stones are unique. Some have pits, fissures, cracks, corrosive minerals, or other features that you may find objectionable, and some may become more or less noticeable depending on lighting and position. Your fabricator should plan the layout of your kitchen to best utilize and enhance the natural beauty of your stone. In stones with large movements, heavy inclusions and/or color variations, you should review the available slabs to determine the best one to accent your project. As most fabricators charge based on the square footage size of your project, pricing may change if you decide to have the stone cut in a certain way that causes unnecessary waste.

Granite. One of the world's hardest materials, granite is the most popular choice for kitchen countertops and other heavily used surfaces and granite tile makes a lovely floor or bath surround. It is durable, easy to maintain and available in a wide range of colors and patterns. Available statistics indicate that 2/3 of the granite used worldwide is quarried from China, India and Brazil. There are granite quarries in operation in dozens of countries.

Marble. Nothing matches the sophisticated elegance of marble's veining patterns and colors. It is highly resistant to moisture when sealed, and is one of the most popular choices for bathroom walls, showers and floors. Marble is a metamorphic rock found in the mountainous regions of most countries of the world, and the majority that is used worldwide is quarried in India, China, Italy and Spain. Marble is primarily composed of the calcite crystal, which can be damaged by mild acids commonly found in kitchen and bar settings.



Natural Stone

debunking the myths

It is hard to care for natural stone. False!

Natural stone is easily cleaned with warm water, mild dishwashing liquid and a soft cloth. Wiping it dry with a clean cloth can prevent water spots from appearing. Most granite will not fade in sunlight, which can be a problem with other surfaces. This also makes it ideal for outdoor kitchens.

You have to frequently reseal natural stone. False!

With the improvements in finishing products, sealing is easier than ever. For most normal day-to-day usage, light colored stones will have to be resealed in 4-6 years. Darker stones will have to be resealed in 8-10 years. With the sealers available today, it is easy and economical to do the process yourself. In actuality, most granite countertops do not need to be sealed, although most are sealed for peace of mind, a higher shine and an added layer of protection.

Granite weighs more than my laminate tops, and someone told me my cabinets wouldn't support the weight. False!

Although natural stone weighs more than laminate and Corian tops, the weight is distributed equally along the edges of the cabinets and onto the floor support. Natural stone is safe to install in homes of all ages. It is most important that your counters are flat and level (within 1/8") when measured across a distance of 10 feet, and walls should be plumb and within 1/8" of a true plane when measured over 10 feet. Installing counters outside of these tolerances will require excessive shim spaces and wide regions of filler material. Any necessary improvements to conceal this condition will be your responsibility.

Hot pots and pans can be placed on granite. True!

Granite is highly resistant to bacteria, heat, scratching and staining. It is very hard to damage a granite surface by accidentally placing a hot pot on it. Quartz surfaces will reportedly burn at just over 330 degrees, and other surfaces can warp, crack and/or discolor. However, it is always recommended that you use trivets or pads between hot pots and natural stone products to minimize thermal shock that could stress the stone and eventually cause cracks. Granite is typically heat resistant up to temperatures of 450 degrees, but many of today's pans have a thermacore that hold temperatures at 400+ degrees.

Granite counters are always smooth. False!

Part of the shine and reflection in natural stone is from the presence of mica minerals, which are flaky and softer than most of the surrounding material. Mica can be removed from the stone when it is cut, and leave a natural divot or pit in the stone which is not considered an imperfection in the stone. The stone is still suitable for countertop applications and is safe for cleaning.

Scratches and chips cannot be repaired. False!

In most natural stone, surface scratches can easily be buffed out, and deeper scratches and chips can be filled with a colored resin.



Other natural stone like slate, sandstone, soapstone, limestone and travertine can add unique elements in interior and exterior design. Serpentine is often mistaken for marble, but it has a magnesium-silicate base. As a result, it exhibits greater acid and abrasion resistance than marble. Onyx is a sedimentary rock, formed as stalactites and stalagmites in cave interiors. Although soapstone and slate are softer materials, they have a high chemical resistance and are traditionally used in laboratories and chemistry labs. Soapstone is highly heat resistant. Although sometimes referred to as a marble, travertine is a type of limestone.

Exotic Stones. The average U.S. consumer typically has a selection of 100-150 granite and marble varieties from which they can select their kitchen and bath stones. Each marketplace usually has higher priced, unique stones that are more dramatic, unusual, not well-known, and/or one-of-a-kind. Sometimes these stones are common in the country where they are quarried, but have not yet made much of an appearance in other markets. Some can be subtle and elegant, like basalt, and others can be extravagant, like onyx and agates. Sometimes a stone is exotic because it is harder to quarry and there may only be a limited quantity of that type of stone in the quarry. The quarry may be difficult to reach, way up on a mountain. Stones can also become exotic if they become less abundant. Exotic stones can easily cost hundreds of dollars per square foot.

With all the stone selections available today, it is important that you find someone compatible to work with in the design and installation of your new pieces. The quality of work and service of Ilkem is second to none. In addition to a wide selection of granite, we stock many exotic stones and offer manufactured stone. Call us today to schedule your free estimate. You can visit our website at www.ilkemgranite.com to see some of our stone selections. While you are there, please try our 3-D kitchen simulator which allows you to select granite, wall, floor and cabinet colors. Our website also has an online estimator program that will allow us to provide you with a basic estimate. Please let us know how we can help you today.

R&A



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