

Stone counter tops -- making your own

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You may have seen pebble stone-like floor decorations in some commercial entrance ways. It is made by collecting various textured and coloured, pebble-size stones, from quarries throughout the US and Canada, mixing them with an epoxy binder and laying them out in a continuous or an artistic mosaic fashion, making a thin but durable wearing surface. This same technique can be used to create kitchen counter tops as well as floors or wall panels. Owen Mashinter from Sierra Stone in Toronto, Ontario, walked us through the process of making your own kitchen counter top. First he built a barrier all around the counter top, to allow him to pour in his mixture and control the sides. Usually the edging is not temporary, but rather a nice looking wooden trim that will remain the permanent edge of the kitchen counter. The surface is primed with a thin coat of the epoxy resin to assure good adhesion. Then you make up a mix of stone and epoxy and pour it onto the counter. The stones are spread out to the edges and to an even depth with a relatively small two inch trowel, allowing you to fill in all the corners and dips. And here I discovered one of those great trade secrets: Owen constantly wiped his trowel off on a bit of carpet soaked in Orange Glo furniture stripper. That kept his small trowel clean and did not allow it to become sticky as the epoxy began to set-up. After it is well laid out, pass back over with a full sized trowel at a very low angle to smooth off the surface and pack the entire granular mixture tight. Generally you want to sculpture it perfectly flat, but because, at this stage it is still spreadable, you could actually create, on purpose, a slight dip towards the centre of the counter to keep both liquids and round things, like eggs, from spilling off over the edge of the counter, something that you can't do with many other types of counter tops. Because the stones are porous, you need to let the counter set, completely, for a couple of days and then put on one more layer of epoxy to seal and waterproof the stones themselves. You end up with a flat but textured counter top that is extremely durable. If you do not want any texture, you can add other layers of epoxy, which will fill in the low spots and give you a totally glossy finish. As it wears with the years, you can easily put on another coat of epoxy finish as the stones themselves will not wear down. Sierra Stone will make the counter for you or sell you the materials you need and provide detailed instruction as well.

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