

Counter Intelligence

Kopta residence design collaboration
with Bowman Design Studios

Photo by Northlight Photography, Inc., courtesy of Absolute Concrete Works, LLC



Concrete, Marble & Granite Countertops

Out of the Stone Age

Concrete

A material consisting of a hard, chemically inert particulate substance known as aggregate (usually made from different types of gravel), which is bonded together by cement and water.

Although the word 'concrete' often conjures up mental images of the gravelly composition that makes up our roads and highways, it is actually a versatile and earth-friendly medium in its own right, and is rapidly gaining popularity in the Pacific Northwest as a natural, durable and artistic choice for countertops.

Surprisingly, a concrete countertop can be relatively thin and light, weighing only a couple pounds more than granite, and even lighter and stronger with some mix designs. A warm, natural looking material, it is pigmented, and the finished surface is usually polished to a luxuriant low sheen for a beautiful old world look.



Photo by Northlight Photography, Inc., courtesy of Absolute Concrete Works, LLC

"Each year, billions of tons of concrete are transformed from fundamental matter to our world's most enduring artwork and decorative architectural creations." – Absolute Concrete Works

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Photo by Northlight Photography, Inc., courtesy of Absolute Concrete Works, LLC

Concrete countertops are light and versatile enough to be customized for almost any pre-existing cabinetry, and are available in an unlimited variety of colors and finishes including honed, polished, matte and edge profile.

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Unlike plastic laminates or other materials that are mass produced by several large companies, concrete countertops are produced by numerous smaller fabricators around the country, many of whom are artists and designers applying their vision to practical and functional form because of concrete's amazing plasticity. We have heard from several artisans in the industry that no two fabricators make concrete countertops in the same way. Aside from the mixing and molding considerations, a concrete countertop can be anything from a polished single-color surface to a very individualized work of art, sometimes with the homeowner or builder directly involved in the creative process.

However, there are some facts about concrete countertops that apply to all of them, and which will help you determine if a concrete countertop is right for you and your lifestyle.



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Durability

Concrete countertops are as durable as any concrete structure we would see in our environment. With proper care and maintenance, a concrete countertop can be expected to last as long—and longer—than the life of the home it is in.

Installation

It is important that whoever installs your concrete countertop know exactly what is involved in the process. According to our own local concrete countertop designers, Tommy Cook and Steve Silberman of Absolute Concrete Works, anyone who has marble or granite installation experience should be competent to install concrete countertops.

Care & Cleaning

Like natural stone, concrete can stain if spills are not cleaned within a relatively short period of time. Most concrete countertops are sealed with several coats of sealer and as many layers of topcoat wax to ensure long wear and beauty. For daily cleaning, most fabricators suggest a mild, non-abrasive soap. Wax must be reapplied about every six months. If wax is maintained on a regular basis, resealing may be unnecessary.



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Millennium One Homes

Color options, inlays, shaping, custom edging and innovative design possibilities all contribute to the creation of one-of-kind countertops, providing years of satisfaction.

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Hot Pads

Hot pans placed directly on a concrete countertop can cause scorching to the wax and sealer. It is advisable to use a hot pad or trivet. Better yet, ask your concrete countertop fabricator about placing built-in trivets next to the stove. Trivets may be made of brass, copper or stainless steel, providing an elegant and useful touch.

Cutting Boards

Always use a cutting board on concrete countertops. Knife marks can leave scratches in the wax sealer, and cutting directly on the countertop can dull your knives.

Acidic Foods & Liquids

Acidic foods such as mustard, vinegar and lemon juice will often leave a patina if not cleaned up promptly. Likewise, cooking oil bottles that are left on the counter will invariably leave a ring on the surface of the concrete, and must be put away after use. Using small rubber pads or felt on the bottom of items kept on the countertop will also help prevent staining.

Hairline Cracks

Over time, like marble or granite, a concrete countertop may develop tiny hairline cracks. These cracks will not effect the structural integrity of the countertop, and many people consider them to add character and old world charm to the natural beauty of concrete.

Pricing

Raw ingredients for concrete are relatively inexpensive but creating a countertop with it is a labor-intensive project. While concrete countertops are generally more expensive than solid surface materials like Corian™, the average price is comparable to granite and marble unless extensive artistic considerations are going to play a large part in your countertop fabrication.



Trivets of Brass, Copper and Stainless Steel may be built in to a concrete countertop.



Drain Boards can be molded directly into the countertop.



How far can you go with a Concrete Countertop?

As far as your imagination will take you.

Fusing Art With Function

Absolute Concrete Works



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On the Leading Edge

Steve Silberman and Tommy Cook, the owners of Absolute Concrete Works, LLC, (ACW) are on the leading edge of decorative and architectural concrete technology, having made a substantial investment over the past few years in research and development of Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC) under the SoundCrete t.m. brand name, which they incorporate into their product line. What makes GFRC different from typical concrete is that glass fibers replace traditional aggregate (gravel), and a polymer binder is used, achieving a tensile strength more than twice that of standard concrete while at the same time creating a lighter structure, enabling ACW to create larger pieces with less, and often times, no seams.

ACW utilizes GFRC to make countertops and tables as thin as 3/4-inch thick or as substantial as desired, but requiring minimal support.

Functional Art

Remaining true to their maxim "Fusing Art with Function," Steve and Tommy make it clear by their work that art and concrete no longer have to be two separate entities. Through a merger of creative and constructive backgrounds, they have formed a company that brings boundless design possibilities to architects, interior designers, homeowners and builders on

the Olympic Peninsula and throughout Washington.

Steve Silberman brings more than 30 years of business and marketing experience to the company, along with his own brand of creative talent. From 1970 to 1981 he was the largest manufacturer of skateboards. He owned California Free Former with a business partner and held several licenses from Walt Disney.

Tommy Cook's background includes journey-man level finish carpentry and pre-cast concrete, in addition to his formal training in kitchen and bath design. These combined skills are furthered by Tommy Cook's true artistic gifts.

Clients who come to this 10,000 sq. ft. facility (with another 30,000 sq. ft. outside to display their sculpture gardens) may be pleasantly surprised at the level of personalized detail that may be incorporated into a finished product. Tommy and Steve welcome and encourage clients to be involved in the entire process from start to finish. Design and color possibilities are limitless, and many clients enjoy bringing sentimental and/or beautiful objects to have inlaid into the surface of their countertop, transforming the customer's vision into a concrete work of art.

Environmentally Safe

ACW has an environmental statement that it lives by. When concrete is poured, nothing goes to waste. Leftovers are used for smaller jobs such as garden art. They strive to use materials that are safe for the environment, choosing sustainable forest products and reclaimed or recycled products whenever applicable. They abstain from tropically harvested rainforest timber, and their finished products are environmentally friendly and water based. In their mix design, they utilize up to 35% fly ash (a reclaimed product), reducing the amount of Portland cement used, and a vanilla bean based additive for better workability of the concrete.

ACW is licensed, bonded and insured, and they are proud members of: AIA Seattle, NKBA (National Kitchen & Bath Assoc.), Home Builder's Association of America, Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce.

You can visit the showroom and gardens (appointments appreciated) of Absolute Concrete Works, LLC at 5795 NE Minder Rd. in Poulsbo, Wash.

For more information visit their Web site: www.absoluteconcreteworks.com or call (360) 297-5055.

By the way be sure to read the impressive client testimonials, and recently published Feature Articles in their press section.



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