



36 | Nanotech, a slim tile from Tile of Spain branded manufacturer Apavisa, has the same technical characteristics of porcelain tiles – such as abrasion, chemical and stain resistance – yet weighs half the weight of traditional tiles. Nanotech is available in the full range of Apavisa collections.
Circle No. 188 on Product Card



37 | Mystera's solid surface material provides the look of natural stone and wood in a solid surface. Veining and coloration run throughout the depth of the product. Shown is the company's Cognac color from its Designer Woods collection.
Circle No. 189 on Product Card



38 | Everlife, the anti-stain natural stone countertop from Innovative Stone, is protected by the company's PermaShield technology. The granite, marble, quartzite and soapstone colors never need sealing, the firm notes.
Circle No. 190 on Product Card



39 | Wilsonart's new Girona Series of laminate countertops reflects the polished marble and travertine stone found in European spas and retreats. The designs are provided in a shimmering, durable gloss finish.
Circle No.191 on Product Card

"Thanks to new technology and design from major laminate manufacturers like Formica and Wilsonart, laminates now come with embossing and gloss finishes that really mimic natural stone," states Rick Liddell, senior v.p. for Fine Laminate Countertop Division, VT Industries, in Holstein, IA. These laminates, which are postformed by VT Industries on countertops with ogee edges, provide the finishing touch to appear like stone, but without the maintenance and at a fraction of the cost, he adds.

MONEY MATTERS

In a struggling economy, budget countertop options have gained ground among some consumers. This has created new opportunities for the laminate industry. In response, laminate manufacturers are getting more creative with their designs, according to Rousch.

"The 180fx with the Radiance finish is causing a buzz in the marketplace [because] it has an exotic granite look, without the high costs. 180fx veining runs deep and throughout the countertop and options of an ogee, beveled or rounded edge add to the realism."

Liddell agrees that both consumers and builders are looking for value and are returning to laminate countertops, but with premium edges and laminates. "The talk at the cocktail

party is no longer, 'Look what I spent on my countertops,' but rather, 'Look what I saved on these beautiful countertops,'" he says.

Of course in many markets, high-end products continue to flourish. Additionally, high-end products may be incorporated into mix-and-match applications to cut costs.

While McGeehan says that DuPont is still experiencing demand for all of its products, she has noticed a few trends that reflect the state of the economy. "We've seen consumers take on smaller projects," she says. "Instead of redoing an entire kitchen in the highest-end countertop material, consumers will instead reserve that material for just the island."

Additionally, she notes, "Countertop replacement is a way consumers can get the feeling of a full remodel, but for less of an investment."

Dunevich agrees, noting, "If consumers really want to make an impact by changing their kitchen without doing a complete remodel, changing countertops will do the trick!"

BRIGHT FUTURE

While the past few years have been challenging all around, most manufacturers expressed optimism about the future, citing pent up demand for new kitchens and a changing

consumer mindset that values products that promote eco-friendly living.

Dunevich anticipates consistent growth in the usage and desire for quartz, along with continued growth and development in the sustainable products arena.

"The economic situation we're in is painful, but it has sparked a revolution of sorts," adds Williams. "It requires designers and manufacturers to really evaluate and pay attention to consumer needs and to think way out of the box."

Williams sees more innovation in affordable, sustainable and recyclable materials in the future, as well as a lot of interesting new designs as the styles and tastes of the younger generations influence the industry.

"There will be a thinning of the herd, but the herd will come out of this much stronger," she concludes.

Righthand anticipates that products made in the U.S.A. will become "a big thing going forward," noting, "Going green and made domestically should go hand in hand. We need to recycle local materials. Do we really need to go to Africa and recycle their content? What about here at home? We need to rebuild our economy, so I expect 'Made in America' to be an emerging trend."
KBDN

Housing Rebound Projected to Boost U.S. Countertop Demand

Cleveland, OH — U.S. demand for countertops is forecast to increase 2.4% annually, to a total of 760 million sq. ft., by 2013, with growth prompted by an anticipated rebound in housing construction from its depressed level over the past two years (see related stories, Page 10).

That's the projection of The Freedonia Group, a Cleveland, OH-based industry research firm which predicts that, while the residential remodeling sector will post below-average advances in demand through 2013, gains will be promoted "by the large stock of homes requiring countertop replacement, as well as the desire of consumers to renovate their kitchens and bathrooms by installing larger-sized countertops."

According to The Freedonia Group, countertops made from engineered and natural stone will experience the strongest gains through 2013 – growing at annual rates of 9.6% and 8.0%, to 49 million sq. ft. and 66 million sq. ft., respectively.

"Consumers view these materials as durable, aesthetically pleasing surfaces that are highly resistant to scratches and extreme temperatures,"

the research firm said. "Engineered stone will benefit from its resistance to biological contaminants and its resemblance to natural stone, while remaining impervious to moisture. Natural stone will benefit from consumer interest in the luxury and style that granite and others types of stones offer."

Demand for laminate countertops is forecast to grow at 1.3% annually through 2013, while solid surface will post a 1.6% annual growth rate (to 91 million sq. ft. by 2013) and cast polymers, tile and other surfaces will grow at a rate of 2.4% annually (to 99 million sq. ft.).

The Freedonia Group also forecast that laminate countertops will continue to account for the largest share of countertop sales (455 million sq. ft. by 2013), and that the residential market – which accounts for some three-quarters of overall countertop demand – will continue to drive demand through 2013.

In contrast, the non-residential market is forecast to contract through 2013, as decreases in non-residential construction spending will limit overall countertop demand, the research firm noted.