



GRANITE & QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS IN THE NEWS...

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A CLOSER LOOK

Stain-free product safe for kitchens

By LESA ROSATO
For the Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Granite and other stone countertops' durability and beauty still make a hot item when you're pushing the extras in a home for sale, but there's another product that claims even greater durability than granite. While granite is made up of about 40 percent to 50 percent quartz, Cambria, a natural stone surface, is made from 93 percent quartz. And quartz is what gives granite its strength.

"Cambria has three times the strength of granite, and it's nonporous," said Bill Boulineau, Southeast regional manager of Cambria. "We take mineral quartz and, through a patented process, we create slabs."

The process may not seem important when you're gathering around a cooking island with friends, sharing in the prep work as you put together a good meal, but it does have a bearing on food safety.

Because it's so solid and the surface so smooth, Cambria does not need to be sealed or coated like granite or stone countertops. Resisting stains from juices, wine and other things that can plague granite countertops, Cambria is maintenance-free. It's also rated by NSF International — a nonprofit organization that develops standards for product safety — as safe for food-zone and splash-zone areas. That makes it comparable to stainless steel in its resistance to harboring bacteria.

"The FDA won't allow you to put granite



Cambria countertops, composed of 93 percent quartz, resists stains from juices, wine and other things that can mean trouble for granite countertops. In terms of price, Cambria is in the same neighborhood as midrange granite.

in the food prep areas of commercial establishments because of the risk of bacteria," said Sonny Hires, co-owner of Atlanta Kitchen. As a result, he says, he's seeing more homeowners select quartz countertops, such as Cambria.

In terms of price, Cambria is in the same neighborhood as midrange granite. While granite can cost \$40 to \$100 per square foot, depending upon color and grade, Cambria retails for about \$68 per square foot, according to Boulineau.

Kitchens, of course, go through trends, according to Hires, who has been installing them for years in metro Atlanta. "Countertops have gone through a real transi-

tion," he said. "Just a few years ago, they were still putting laminate countertops in kitchens — even in homes that cost \$300,000 to \$400,000. As houses have gotten more expensive, now they're going into more Corian and solid surfaces."

He said the popularity of granite has soared and that, because supply is catching up with demand, it's gotten more affordable to install granite. "You see it everywhere now — even in some homes in the \$170,000 range, and it's going into nearly all houses from \$300,000 and up. Everything has sort of shifted down."

Of course, there's the demand from higher-end buyers to install something

a little above the ordinary. "People who are building million-dollar houses don't want the same product that a lower-priced home has, and they're looking to use something different," said Hires. "That's where quartz products are really gaining ground. Quartz is making a push to be superior to granite."

For more information, visit www.cambriausa.com.

If you have a question or topic that you would like to see answered or discussed in A Closer Look, send it to Homefinder, A Closer Look, A.J.C., Eighth Floor, 72 Marietta St., Atlanta, GA 30303, or send e-mail to homefinder@ajc.com.



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