



Northstar Surfaces

## Frequently Asked Questions (Who, What, How, & Why)

### Who

#### **Who is a fabricator?**

A fabricator is responsible for cutting & shaping your stone to your specifications and installing the finished product in your residence. Northstar Surfaces is a stone and sink supplier. We deliver your hand-picked slab(s) to your preferred fabricator.

### What

#### **What is natural stone?**

All stone comes from nature, but the term “natural” is used to differentiate stone which is quarried directly from the earth. The natural stone industry excavates granite from quarries all over the world. Synthetic (man-made) stone is manufactured. For example, quartz slabs are made by combining 93% quartz crystals with 7% resin, which holds the material together to form a slab. Granite, the most common natural stone in American homes, is an attractive and durable choice that needs no manufacturing. It is simply cut from huge blocks of stone and polished before becoming a valuable part of your home.

#### **What can granite be used for?**

Granite has many applications. Not only is it used for kitchen countertops and vanities, but pavers, swimming pools, driveways, monuments, flooring, fireplace hearths and more.

#### **What is granite, and what creates the different colors?**

Granite is a natural, igneous rock, formed under the earth’s crust from the cooling and solidification of magma (lava). It is composed mainly of quartz, feldspar, mica and other minerals. Quartz makes up a large part of granite by volume (20-60%). It is often colorless but reflects the colors of the other minerals in granite. Feldspar is another mineral, a major part of granite (up to 60%), and it can contribute a wide variety of colors: **blues, blacks, greys, pinks, yellows**, even pearly **white**. Mica and hornblende are other minerals that make up a smaller contribution to granite (up to 10%). Mica comes in different varieties: muscovite and biotite (**silver, black**); lepidolite (**violet, pink**). The distribution of all these minerals in granite is affected by what region of the earth it comes from (India, Brazil, etc.) and the climate to which the rock is exposed. This will affect its color and density. Absolute Black and Black Pearl are examples of commonly exported slabs from India. These are dark, dense stones that are some of the heaviest in the industry. Brazil generally exports lighter shades of granite, such as Oyster Pearl, Atlantis, Alpine White and White Fortaleza.



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### **What makes one granite different from another?**

Granite is the top choice for countertops because of its durability and beauty, but not all granite is the same. Nor are any two slabs the same. A granite sample may be similar to a slab, but it won't be identical to the granite you are purchasing. Although there are obvious patterns visible in the slab's surface, no portion of a slab of natural stone can be exactly duplicated. This is an example of nature's beauty and randomness.

### **What's the difference between marble and granite?**

Granite is formed in the earth's magma at high temperatures, which causes minerals to crystallize into a hard, durable stone. Marble was once a limestone but was subjected to the heat of metamorphism. Marble is chiefly calcite, and it is softer than granite, measuring 4 on the Mohs Scale of hardness. Granite's number averages 7.

### **What is quartzite?**

Quartzite is a hard, metamorphic rock that was originally quartz sandstone. Sandstone is changed to quartzite through heating and pressure related to compression from tectonic plates. Quartzite, like granite, has a Mohs Number of 7. Pure quartzite is usually **white** through **grey**, but because it contains varying amounts of iron oxide, it can be in shades of **pink** to **red**. Other minerals can produce shades of **yellow**, **green**, **blue** and **orange**. Examples of quartzite are Moscavo (Fantasy Brown) and Super White. Quartzite has many of the same applications as granite, but it can be prone to etching when exposed to acids.

### **What is soapstone?**

Soapstone, also known as steatite or soap rock, is a metamorphic rock composed mainly of the mineral talc and is high in magnesium. The amount of talc it contains can vary, but the soapstone used for architectural purposes has a talc content of 80%. Talc makes this stone much softer than granite or quartzite, putting the Mohs Number at 1 for soapstone. Its colors range from **grey**, **bluish grey**, **green** to **black**. Although soapstone is soft, it has a high heat tolerance. It can be easily scratched, but scratches can be sanded out easily.

### **What risk does granite pose regarding radon?**

There is no evidence that radon has ever been detected in granite surfaces in a quantity that would pose a threat to public health.

### **What kind of vulnerability does granite have for bacteria growth?**

Since the surface of granite is not very porous, it doesn't support the growth of bacteria or other organisms, especially when sealed. But any stone surface can have bacteria. Moisture and food particles left for a period on a granite surface will attract bacteria. There are simple ways to disinfect your countertop without damaging the surface or the sealer. Cleaning your granite is described in the **How** section.



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### How

#### **How can I clean my granite surface?**

For normal cleaning, use a cloth rag and a mild dish soap mixed with water. Glass cleaner and other disinfectant wipes can be used occasionally to clean your granite countertop, but repeated use can cause pitting and dull the shine.

#### **How do I determine whether to seal my countertop?**

Do a water test to see how much sealant you may need (use ¼ cup of water):

- If it is immediately absorbed, apply a couple layers of sealer annually and wipe spills quickly;
- If absorbed in 4-5 min, use multiple layers of sealer and redo only every 3-5 years (use the water test again before reapplying);
- If absorbed in 10 min, apply a single layer of sealer. It may be many years before reapplication is needed;
- If absorbed in 30 min or it doesn't absorb at all, no sealer is needed.

#### **How do I remove a stain from my granite?**

- a. Blot the stain to remove as much of the substance as possible.
- b. Spray it with water.
- c. Cover it with a paste made from baking soda and water (with the thickness of sour cream).
- d. Leave covered for 24hrs. The paste will dry and draw up much of the stain.

\*\*You may notice that even water can change the surface color of the granite. Liquid water and even steam may cause granite to darken or lighten. This is just temporary, however, and after the water evaporates, the color will return to its original state.

#### **How thick are granite slabs?**

Most granite countertops (and most granite slabs) are 3cm (1.18in) thick.

#### **How do I purchase slabs?**

Although we do not sell slabs to the public, we can put "on hold" whichever slabs you have selected. Your slabs will be held up to 14 days. We will ship them to your fabricator when they set up a delivery date. You can talk to your fabricator about pricing, installation, and scheduling for your project. Your purchase will be made through your fabricator.



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### **How much do your slabs cost, and can you give me a price list?**

We sell our slabs directly to fabricators. Your fabricator will be able to provide prices on the slabs. The cost of a slab is affected by the availability of the stone and production quantities. Generally, the higher the production, the less expensive the slab. But the quality of a stone cannot be measured solely by its price.

### **How do I get remnants or partial slabs?**

We sell full slabs only, but your fabricator will most likely only charge you for the square footage that they use for your project. Check with your fabricator to be sure – policies may vary.

### **How do I determine which granite is better?**

When you are looking for a color, this process is very subjective. You will be evaluating what color will look best with your cabinetry, wall colors, etc. No color is better than another. Darker stones like Black Pearl, Absolute Black, and Tan Brown have rich concentrations of mica or feldspar and are denser and heavier than lighter colors, such as Alpine White or White Fortaleza.

### **How can my granite countertop be scratched, chipped or cracked?**

Even the world's hardest stones (diamonds) can be scratched. Granite's surface is highly durable, and it will not scratch under normal use. It is not recommended to drop any heavy objects onto the granite's surface. However, with sufficient force, granite can be damaged. Granite's durability can be shown by its Mohs Number, which is 7. The Mohs Scale is a measure of the hardness of a stone. Diamond's number is 10, which is the hardest.

### **How much heat-resistance does granite have?**

Granite countertops can withstand the heat from hot pots and pans without damage. Most cooking pans are at 350-400 F. It takes about 1200 F over an extended period to cause damage - it could soften the granite surface and cause discoloration. It is always best to use heat coasters to protect the countertop. Any sealant could be damaged by intense heat and make a countertop vulnerable to future stains. Granite draws heat from hot surfaces like pans, and it is possible that a pan may become warped from being placed directly onto granite.



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### **Why**

#### **Why is marble not ideal for a kitchen countertop?**

Due to its higher porosity, it isn't recommended to use marble for a countertop. It is also much softer than granite, so the possibility of scratches & chips is higher. Although marble is denser than other stones, its surface can be stained more easily than granite, and certain liquids can cause surface etching.

#### **Why is one color of granite expensive than another?**

The cost of granite is affected by its rarity. When there is an abundant supply of a color, its cost will decrease. The hard-to-find colors are usually more expensive.

#### **Why should I use natural stone for my home?**

Granite is aesthetically pleasing and greatly improves a home's resale value. The investment will change the look and feel of the room in which it's installed.

#### **Why are the seams visible in my granite countertop?**

Most slabs are 10 to 11 feet long. If your project requires a longer stretch of granite, seams are a necessity. Your fabricator can discuss this matter in detail with you, but there is a standard in the industry of 1/16in for seams.