

HOW TO

How to Design the Perfect Kitchen

AN EXPERT'S GUIDE TO METAL KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS

By Sarah Treleven



With 30 years experience in the metal fabrication industry, precision metal work has long been a passion for the Lambropoulos family. The newest incarnation of the family business, **Custom Metal Home**, has rapidly developed a reputation for creating sleek, high-quality countertops in a range of appealing metals for both residential and commercial applications. Custom Metal Home are now the go-to for designers, contractors, builders, businesses, and homeowners looking for a special touch.

While kitchen countertops have long been dominated by marble and quartz, metal is making a comeback. "Our business has changed a lot since we started, and builders and designers now know who we are," says **Bill Lambropoulos**, cofounder of Custom Metal Home. "Our products are put directly onto plans. People have seen our products in the homes of their friends and family, and this business is a lot of word of mouth."

Custom Metal Home's reputation has been driven by a commitment to customization, competitive quotes, and their work with three premium countertop materials: stainless steel, zinc, and copper—all of which have unique qualities and advantages. Plus, each product is manufactured in the U.S. through premium, expert handcraft.





STAINLESS STEEL

Clean, durable stainless steel tends to be the top choice for, as Lambropoulos puts it, people who actually use their kitchens. “Stainless steel isn’t just for show,” he says. “You can throw hot pans and dishes on there without having to be careful. It’s a very hard, strong, hygienic, rust-resistant material, and that’s why restaurants typically use it.”

Unlike stone or marble, stainless steel requires very little upkeep; it doesn’t need to be polished and is subject to only minimal wear and tear. “It will get some weather marks and it’s not always going to look like it did on day one, but it ages very well.”

Stainless steel is typically finished in a matte or brushed finish, but special requests are welcome.

Another major benefit of the stainless steel countertop is that customers can add a fully integrated stainless steel sink—meaning the sink is welded into the top to create one seamless piece, eliminating seams. Custom cutouts can accommodate sinks, ranges, and more, and built-in backsplashes typically rise four to six inches off the counter and have a three-quarters-inch thick profile.

KEEP IN MIND: Simple, straight edges contribute to the sleek look of stainless steel tops, but rounded, or “bullnose,” edges can be accommodated.

BOTTOM LINE: Strong, hygienic, and rust-resistant, stainless steel is great for indoor or outdoor countertops that get heavy use.



COPPER

When it comes to kitchen countertops, copper is—in one word—a showstopper. “It’s for people who want someone to come into their kitchen and say, ‘Wow, what’s that?’” Lambropoulos says. “It’s very elegant, and it’s certainly a more expensive material.”

Copper is best used for less high-traffic areas like an island rather than next to a range. Finished with a brushed or matte appearance, copper will also develop its own unique patina over time, creating a brown penny-like depth. “The more you use it and touch it, it will age, but I’ve never seen two that look the same years later,” Lambropoulos says. He adds that he’s seeing more and more copper being used in basement bars, likely due to its flashy appearance.

Copper is a relatively soft and malleable material, so premium 16-gauge sheets are bonded to particleboard substrates before installation. Experienced welders and finishers will ensure beautifully welded seams.

KEEP IN MIND: Copper is a softer, less robust material that can be easily marked by busy kitchen traffic.

BOTTOM LINE: Copper is a perfect top or accent for those looking for an elevated, interesting and luxurious vibe.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CUSTOM METAL HOME



ZINC

While zinc has many of the same benefits of stainless steel—it’s an antibacterial, hospital-grade material that was dominant before the emergence of stainless steel—Lambropoulos refers to it as more of “an acquired taste” because of its distinctive appearance. But zinc’s aged or weathered look is starting to gain traction with customers looking for something a little more unique.

“If you put a wet glass down and leave it there, you’re going to see a ring—some people love it and some hate it,” Lambropoulos says. “When we get an order for a zinc top, we always make sure they know.”

But zinc’s wear and tear is precisely the point, and a distinctive natural patina will inevitably emerge over time; the aging process (or darkening) can also be sped up through the application of an acid wash. “Some people just love the look of it,” Lambropoulos says. “It’s a very cool, aged metal look, and it’s a bit of a throwback. You see it a lot now in farmhouse style kitchens, with a zinc island and zinc hood against white cabinets.”

KEEP IN MIND: Zinc is a softer metal and will show signs of wear and tear, deepening its individual character.

BOTTOM LINE: Zinc countertops have a warm, elegant appearance and are perfect for anyone looking for a distinctive element in their overall design.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CUSTOM METAL HOME

