



An Expert's Guide to Porcelain Tile

By Colleen DeHart

Porcelain tile can be much more than a flooring option. It can serve as an accent piece, wall covering, tabletop, shelving unit, fireplace, pool covering, or even a driveway. Want the look of wood without the upkeep? Tile. It can be manufactured to look like nearly any other floor or wall covering—even carpet—with significantly less maintenance. “It’s limitless,” says **Jana Manzella**, senior vice president of sales and marketing at **Florim USA**. “We can take any other flooring option like stone or hardwood and make it better. We can mimic the texture and take out the imperfections. The result is beautiful.”

Transforming spaces using tile is what the family-owned, Italy-based company has been doing for almost 60 years. That passion and expertise came to the US in 2000, later becoming the **Milestone** brand. Florim USA has since invested more than \$60 million to turn its Tennessee plant into a state-of-the-art facility to meet all design requirements for commercial and residential projects. It’s the first US tile manufacturer capable of producing fully-polished porcelain tile with an anti-stain surface.

The Florim USA facility is the largest single-site factory in the US helping to maintain uniformity among products. All sizes are produced in one location under one roof. “If you produce in different factories you end up with different results. The tile production process is not closed to humidity or other environmental factors that can impact end results. Having everything in one location helps to maintain consistency in the finished product,” Manzella says.



The Epic collection (seen on floors, side wall, and back wall) comes in four sizes and four colors in bullnose and mosaic options.

Where Can Porcelain Tile be Used?

Inside or out, porcelain tile can be used just about anywhere. The tile does not support the spread of flames, making it a suitable option for pizza ovens or fireplaces. It's impervious to water and doesn't need to be sealed when used on swimming pools or showers. It's chemical- and fade-resistant.

Tile is unaffected by salt and other environmental factors when used on a driveway or outdoor patio, and it holds up to freeze/thaw cycles. "It's considered to be the most durable flooring product for indoor and outdoor use," Manzella says. "Most outdoor products eventually pit, chip, or harbor mold and mildew growth. Tile doesn't. It really is the best long-term solution." It's scratch- and dent-resistant, making it ideal for use in high-traffic areas or places with pets. Milestone tiles were used at the **Tampa International Airport** to give the rugged look of natural stone while also being slip-resistant.

The tiles are easy to wipe clean with water alone—no chemicals needed—and don't trap dust and debris like carpet. **Capco Tile & Stone** in Denver used multicolored tile from Milestone's Charleston collection to cover both the walls and floors of its kids' playroom, assisting in cleanliness and long-term durability while offering a playful design.

How Can Porcelain Tile Complement Design?

Trying to achieve a rustic look? Milestone's Charleston collection gives the appearance of reclaimed wood. Looking for something sophisticated? The Luxury collection resembles sleek marble. Prefer the classic hardwood look? The Vintage collection is a por-



Here the Epic collection is seen in Dolomite in polished hexagon mosaic on the walls and in Apuano in matte hexagon mosaic on the floors.

celain interpretation of wooden floors.

Milestone has 34 core collections—mimicking cement, wood, marble, metal, stone, and fabric—with a vast array of sizes, thicknesses, and colors to choose from. And if you don't see what you want, Florim engineers will work with architects and designers to create a tile that suits your needs. "Designers can get creative. They can mix and match different designs and concepts. They can combine concrete with marble or fabric with a gentle stone. The options are endless. There are so many combinations that can create a truly unique installation," Manzella says. "We really want to spark creativity and inspire designers to put their own flair into projects."

Florim engineers can put words

and logos into the tiles to help with branding. They have even been known to honor employees—many who've been with the company for decades—with a personalized tile of their own. "There is nothing we can't do," Manzella says. Custom designs can be turned into tiles in just a few weeks.

How is Porcelain Tile Sustainable?

Sustainable practices have always been a top priority for Florim and Florim USA, which was recently awarded Tennessee Valley Authority's Carbon

Reduction Award. The company—a US industry leader in sustainable practices—recycles 99.9% of materials internally. Water used throughout production is collected through grates on the floor and reused in other processes. Powders, pastes, and residues are all recycled, and glass bottles are purchased from a local landfill. The company reused more than 60 million pounds of material in 2019. All equipment is regularly updated to ensure top energy efficiency.

Most Florim USA product lines contain 20 to 40% recycled, pre-consumer material. Florim products also contain 3% post-consumer recycled content from various recycling facilities. The company is the largest single industrial user of recycled glass in Tennessee due to participation in the Tennessee Materials Marketplace. All Milestone products are Greenguard-certified.

The tiles are also a safe choice for those concerned about indoor air quality. They contain no plastics and release no VOCs. At the end of their lifespan, they can be removed and recycled. "We want a clean environment to live in. We want our products to be sustainable long-term, for us now and for our children later. It's how we look at our business and the world around us," says **Don Haynes**, environmental/sustainability manager at Florim USA. The company is an active member of the USGBC and Tennessee Green Star Partnership.

How Does Tile Stand the Test of Time?

Porcelain tile generally lasts 60-plus years. "It's essentially a one-and-done type of product," Haynes says. Milestone tiles, unlike some of its counterparts, are fade- and stain-resistant. The tiles are polished with state-of-the-art anti-stain technology. The technology works by filling the pores of the tile so it's impenetrable to any staining agents. "It doesn't wear off like other tile products because it's down in the pores of the tile. It holds the polished finish for the life of the product," Manzella says. **gb&d**

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The Luxury collection comes in multiple sizes and trims and four modern colors, including Amani Grey, pictured here.

