Episode 38: Kitchen Design Essentials

Benchtop Criteria and Materials – Part 2

https://www.whitepebbleinteriors.com.au/bechtop-criteria-and-materials-part-2/

Frances Cosway: Hello everyone and welcome to My Forever Home the podcast, the Kitchen Design Essentials Season. We're at episode 38 of the Forever Home podcast. It's incredible that only in a couple of months, since I launched this podcast that we're getting such amazing feedback and so I'm excited today to bring, the 6th episode in this particular season, which is the Kitchen Design Essentials.

And today I'm going to be talking about benchtop criteria and materials. Now last, episode, that we did the kitchen designer center was episode 36. And that's how we talked about, three key benchtop materials. When I had guests, Laura from Cosentino and we talked about Dekton which is an incredible product reconstituted stone which is very popular and natural stone, which is also really popular.

So Laura and I chatted through, those three materials and today I'm going to be covering many other bench top materials that are also a consideration. Some of them you'll be familiar with. Some of them may be not. And so, you'll learn some new things today about benchtop materials for kitchens and other wet areas.

I'm going to be talking about recycled glass, porcelain paper, rock timber, solid acrylic, surface, concrete, stainless steel, and laminate. So as you can see, we talked about three last weeks, and this week there are many more for me to chat through to you. I also want to talk to you about key criteria in choosing your bench top.

We went through some of that last week and I just want to touch on that again and add a few other things into. Things that you need to consider. And then I'm going to launch into all these other different materials and some of them are really exciting for me personally, because I am a super sustainable.

And for those who follow me regularly, you know, that I am a sustainable buff and, I love it. When new products come out that are awesome. Look

great. Perform well, but are also sustainable. So let's just chat through firstly, key criteria for choosing your benchtop. A budget was when we talked about, last week.

And, that is definitely a consideration. And, you know, you can want the most amazing product you like, but if your budget doesn't allow for it, then, it's not going to be a consideration. Durability is a really important one. The type of cook you are is really important. And how are you going to use your kitchen?

Frances Cosway: And I sort of put those two together because it's not just how you cook what you cook, how often you cook. But it's also how you use your kitchen in terms of the type of entertaining you do, for example, you know, do you do lot of, and big family gatherings. And I don't mean just for Christmas, but on a regular basis, whereby using your Island bench as I, buffet, area where people can, you know, help themselves and so forth is important.

Whether there's a lot of homework that gets done at the bench, whether there's a lot of casual eating, whether there's lots of arts and crafts going on. So they're all going to be big considerations for the actual bench top material material that you're going to use aesthetic is obviously a huge one, how it fits into your home and also how that aesthetic is going to reflect the sort of kitchen that you have.

Other details that may be important to, you know, joins may be really important. We've got a client at the moment and that is an absolute core criteria for him. No joins. So there's no point us going to him with reconstituted stone options and, you know, other, in Dekton options because we know that the slab size that he needs for his Island bench is three and a half meters.

And so, those standard slab sizes which I'll talk about in a moment are not going to be suitable. So if no joins is really important for you in your Island bench, you need to find out the slab sizes first, the thickness of your bench top. You know, theme is, is very in at the moment at time of recording, in, July, 2020.

However, if you want a really thick beach, you might be restricted by materials as well. 40 mil is quite standard. 60 mil can be quite standard. In the eighties and nineties, particularly the nineties, we saw bench tops 150 mil. You're going to be restricted by the types of materials that can actually go to that sort of thickness maintenance.

What sort of maintenance and ease of cleaning, requirements for you? If you want something that is, just wiped down and you're done, then that is going to be a core consideration for the benchtop that you choose. And also durability if you've got something that's a little bit more sensitive, for example, some natural stones she talked about last week can be quite porous.

If you don't want to be sealing your bench top all the time and worried about, it cracking or chipping, then the type of material that you use will be

important as well. Now, as I just mentioned, material size, Standard slab sizes we talked about this last week are anywhere between 2.8 and 3.2 meters long, and they're generally a meter to 1.2 meters wide.

Frances Cosway: So that is something to think about in terms of, you know, particularly your Island bench. If you've got a three meter Island bench and your slab size is only 2.8, you're either going to have a join or maybe, it's, you know, no. Big issue to then have your, our bench top at 2.8 meters the overhang so it's important on, you know, and benches that if you really want a bigger overhang for your stools to sit under 300 tends to be, or anywhere between three and 400 is quite standard, but not all materials will allow their warranty. To go beyond 300 so again, you need to think about, what material and the warranty.

So for example, Dekton, it's a 300 millimeter overhang. It, they will not warranty it if it's going to be more than that. So check waterfall edges. Really good for durability I find that when we're using a stone on, on waterfall, edges is where I should say that. Sorry. So you've got the top and then the stone actually then go all the way down the sides of your Island bench, but also down the sides of your other benches too.

It's, it's great for durability when you've got kids seeds and they're knocking into, the bench top all the time or the sides of the bench top. Sometimes it's better than to have that, that, durable top then also going down and running down the sides as well. You know, how thick you want your bench top?

I touched on just before, but, you know, you may like it thinner and have shadow lines so that you've got, it's really highlighting. you know, I have Then that bench top is, how thick you want it, which has I was talking about before, when you're using a solid acrylic surface or a concrete.

You've got no limit in terms of how thick it is, because it uses a mold and then reconstituted stone. It may be that it's, you know, the standard size is 20 or 30 millimeters. And if you want it any thicker than that, then that's going to be joined together, mitered at the edges, and you've got a piece that's, you know, fixed to the face.

Alright, so there are things that you might want to talk about it. They'll obviously be summarized in the show notes. Also, I wanted to talk now about the different benchtop materials. That's what we're talking about criteria and materials. So I'm going to pick up, from where we left off from episode 36, which was part one of benchtop materials.

Frances Cosway: Now there's a new it product that's available now, which is a hundred percent recycled glass. I love this product. Its heat treated it's compacted and it looks like stone, but its recycled glass. Obviously, that’s a great, sustainable story. It's only available in limited colors at the moment they're quite neutral, and, and very palatable.

But it really does look like a stone, but it's made out of recycled glass. It is more expensive, considerably, more expensive than say a recycled, stone or

sorry, a reconstituted stone. So that's something to be mindful of. Again, it'll come back to your objectives with your home. If you've got sustainability core criteria, this is definitely going to be something for you.

There's another product available, which is 85% recycled glass. And that is then binded with a bio resin. So the glass particles are visible. Unlike the other one where it's a hundred percent recycled glass, the, the glass particles you can actually see. So you might have smaller chunks of glass, bigger chunks of glass.

It almost looks like a Tarrant, so it can be mixed colors. You might have one color and, you know, you can make that a really big feature. They can actually, customize the colored glass that you'd like in there as well. So that's another product that's available, porcelain, which is been around now for quite a while is super thin.

6 Millimeters thick really I mean, it can also be thicker than that. It's very, very, very durable. It's resistant to wear and tear it's stronger than granite. And it's sort of an often is compared to a product like Dekton, which we talked about last week. But it's not made of minerals. It's actually a porcelain product.

So they come in big slabs as well, and they can be tricky, on site. But again, it's a very durable material. There's another product available code paper, rock. That's actually the branded name as well. And that's layer upon layer of innumerable paper, renewable. I should say paper sources and it's bonded with a resin and its heat pressure cured.

So it's remarkably strong composite material and it's suitable for wet areas. It's also sustainable and it's more cost effective than stone. So it's quite incredible when you touch paper rock, it's hard to believe that it's paper. And there's actually two ways that you can get it. You can get paper, rock ply.

Frances Cosway: Which has actually got ply underneath and then the paper rock composite product is, is on top, almost like a veneer so that you've got two types of products that you can use. And you've actually got the ply visible on the side. So that's obviously a different aesthetic. But there are two types of products available in the paper range, timber, the bench tops, as sort of making a renascence.

Now, obviously they look amazing. They're sustainable. They're a natural product. What you do need to be mindful of is they often there is quite a lot of maintenance with a timber benchtop, generally speaking, it needs to be sanded. It needs to be sealed. However, we have actually found a product with eco timber, where they apply a special sealer that does make it suitable for wet areas.

And it doesn't need the amount of maintenance that is normally required with a timber benchtop. So we've had a lot of inquiries about timber bench tops and, I absolutely love the look and if that's okay to be the feature, they

are really quite stunning. Sometimes you can just have it on the Island bench and then have a stone or other.

Now another material on your back benches, So that your Island bench really has that a team feature, but again, there are ways, and there are materials now available that enable it to be a little bit less maintenance than what it was traditionally many years ago. Solid acrylic surface is a fabulous product.

Now that's commonly known as Corian and solid acrylic surface is the actual generic name and Corian is a brand name. The other brand available as a solid acrylic surface it's quite popular is called Himax. Now that's made with a mold, so it can be any shape or thickness. It's great for curves.

You can have it back lit. So it's illuminated if you're choosing it in a lighter color, the advantage with. Solid acrylic surface is that there are no joints. So when you are after something that is completely basically made to your specifications, because it is made with the mold, then it's fantastic for, for that.

You, you can have it curved. You can have it with no joins. I can make it as long. I can make it as thick as you like, as thin as you, like, I will not talking 6mil, but they can, they can actually get it quite thin. And has the technology to be able to have a charger in built into the bench top. You see basically just lay your mobile phone on that particular part of the bench top, and it'll automatically charge it.

Frances Cosway: It's repairable, it's non porous and it's hygienic. So there are a lot of advantages with solid acrylic surface, each huge in Europe and in England, it's not as popular here. I think it's getting a little bit more traction and really the difference between the different brands available is the colors.

That they have available and you'll see that there's quite a different color range across the different brands a great product. The fact that it is repairable and you can basically buff out any scratches and so forth with, you know, a product like Gamson, the lighter colors are more susceptible to, Well, well, I'll flip that the darker colors, a more susceptible to the scratches being visible, using a lighter color, really the scratches are, not really visible at all.

So, and when I say scratches, I'm talking about surface scratches, like you would just have in a normal reconstituted stone. It's just that when it's a darker material, those scratches seem to be more visible. Just those, those surface scratches but as I was saying, it is repairable little bit more expensive than, A reconstituted stone, depending on what level of reconstituted stone you're looking at.

Because it is, you know, it's basically custom made concrete falls into a similar category in terms of the fact that it is custom made a freeform; concrete is often made on site. Again, it's made with a mold. it can be any color or shape. I've seen incredible concrete, our bench tops in a pale pink.

Absolutely stunning it's not, again, a super cost effective option, but if you're after a product that doesn't have any joints, again, it's a great one. It will chip or crack. But it can actually be fixed. It's very durable. It's not completely stain resistant. So a solid acrylic surface is a little bit more stain resistant.

It's not poorest where concrete, you know, 80 sealed can look amazing and it is, you know, more of that industrial look, it's a little bit more pared back and I love the fact that you can have your basins are shaped out of it and made out of it as you can with solid acrylic surface. In my own home, I actually had a, an oval shaped sink, almost like a, it was wider at one end than the other, almost like a footprint.

And I actually had that. You know, made and, and, as a, under mounted sink, Oh, and incorporated and integrated into the bench top. So those two materials are laid to do that, and it is a beautiful, seamless finish. Stainless steel is, is still very popular and for great reasons, it's antibacterial. It's stain resistance.

Frances Cosway: Hence why it's always in, you know, commercial use it's heat and fire resistance. So you never have issues with pans or saucepans going onto that surface, just like Dekton. It's very easy to clean for those of you who, you know, don't like smears. It may not be the product for you because unless you're using like a glass cleaner and you're actually cleaning it down, it will actually look like it's smearing.

It can scratch again, their surface scratches. Some people view that as being part of the nature of the product. Other people don't like seeing any visible scratches. I mean, they're sort of surface scratches again. And that, you know, will obviously then determine whether that's. The product for you.

It's definitely not a cost effective option, but it's timeless. You know stainless steel. Was really big in the nineties as a, as a, as a finish and also as a Splash back. But it's sort of making resurgence again. And I think because it is just such a classic product and it has so many advantages as well, laminate is a more cost effective option.

You know, we think about the sixties and us, you know, bright orange and bright yellow, Bench tops, but it has come a long way. In those instances, you know, they didn't have a preformed on top, so they weren't all joined. And [00:16:00] that meant that the water could get in, into those very little side areas.

And then once water gets in and underneath the surface, it will actually then makes that product expand. Oh, the particle board will actually expand. You can't actually have under mounted sinks with a laminate. So if that's a real core criteria for you, then laminate will not be the option. It does come in a lot of finishes.

Now, things like stone looking finishes, concrete looking finishes, and some of these can look amazing and it's a really good product to use when, budget is a consideration you may have, for example, a stone or something in the

kitchen, and then you may use Almaty in, in your walking pantry or in your laundry, and those sorts of areas.

So it can be used in combination with other surfaces throughout the home. It's not heat resistant and it can actually stain. And it's definitely not water proof when it does actually get into the edges. However, that, unless you're really, really, I, it is very durable. And unless you're really a rough there are areas that it can actually get in, then that shouldn't be a problem.

And as I was saying, you can't have an on demand, sink with it. So I think there are just so many choices for your bench tops. If I'm just counting them up now talked about 10 today and we talked about another three on the podcast last week. So that's. 13 different surfaces and bench tops that you can look into.

Frances Cosway: And I and I really would encourage you to do your research online. You know, it's not, I think the fail safe option is people just look at reconstituted Stein, but if you're looking at your objectives, you're looking at what you are important to you. You're looking at what sort of sustainable measures you may want to introduce into your home.

There are so many other choices than just reconstituted stone or natural stone, which is almost like just the standard go to. So again, this is where an interior designer can help you assess what's going to be important for you and other consumers. I mean, that is what we're there for to put things in front of you that you wouldn't normally gravitate to yourself, but, you know, by all means you can go and research these sorts of materials yourself.

Always new things coming out and I think that's one of the joys of my profession is learning about new materials and putting them in front of the clients names going, wow, I didn't even know that existed. That's all we're here for. So, you know, have a look at these sorts of materials and, and, you know, explore.

What you can actually use because there are so many different things available and so back to the aesthetic, go back to durability, go back to your budget. Of course, the type of cook you are, how much of a feature do you want your Island bench to be? It may be that you have one material on the Island and then you have something else on there.

That's definitely doable you know, we do that quite a lot. Yeah because we're on the topic of kitchens I certainly do not want to leave today without letting you know that, Thursday. And that is tomorrow. if you're listening to this, when this is released on Wednesday, the 29th, so tomorrow on the 30th of July, 2020 at 7:00 PM, Australian Eastern standard time, I am running the Forever home kitchen design master class. And this is where I share loads of information about kitchen design, as much as I can heavily pack into, one hour. And, there's lots and lots of information that I share on that. So by all means, join up. It's free. I normally charge for this event as we're in COVID lockdown, I can't run live events at the moment.

It's normally a live event. That I hold at the Cosentino, our showroom. This is now free as a webinar. So please join me on Thursday, the 30th, you can register for this event at whitepebbleinteriors.com.au/ events. And that's where you'll see, the registration page. So I certainly hope to have you on that, on Thursday.

Frances Cosway: Yeah. We've had an awesome response and that's certainly an opportunity for you to learn even more. And obviously I can show visuals because we're in a visual environment rather than just me talking about it on a podcast. I also just wanted to let you know that, there are a lot of blogs available on the website as well, that we often have in the show notes.

So have a look at the show notes, but if you just go to resources on the website and you'll go to blogs, there are lots and lots of, Logs on there around kitchens, but lots and lots of other things as well. So if you ask after specific information, definitely head over to our resources page, on the website.

There's lots of information there too. It's interesting. I actually had an architect contact us, this week. She wanted us to review her kitchen design. She said, I know it's not quite right. I need an expert. I need them an interior design expert to come or to basically have a look at my kitchen design.

So even as an architect, she could see the value, obviously in an interior designer, being able to review her kitchen design. So you can definitely use us for that service as well. Not to mention the entire kitchen design and kitchen materials. Everything is available at whitepebbleinteriors.com.au. Alright, well, if I'm not going to see you tomorrow on Thursday, if you aren't listening to this on Wednesday, I will.

He see, not see, but I will definitely be back here next week for the next episode of kitchen design essentials. And next week, we're going to be talking about cabinetry and materials. And again, there are so many different materials to consider. There are so many different materials that have really moved on over the years.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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