

# On the SURFACE

Kitchen surfaces need to be tough to do the job while looking good in one of the busiest rooms of the house. Sharon Newey looks at the options.

**T**he kitchen is one of the most used and abused rooms in a home, so all of the surface treatments used in this room need to be at least easily scrubbable and heat-resistant if not necessarily totally bullet-proof. Kitchen benchtops and other surfaces are subjected to a lot of constant wear and tear – they are splattered, sprayed, clattered, battered and exposed to high temperatures and moisture. And when we spend so much money on our kitchens in the first place, we don't want them looking trashed after a short few months.

## Walls

Every good kitchen needs a great canvas and that's the walls. There may be a bit of a resurgence in selecting wallpaper in some areas of the house, but it is not really suitable for kitchens, where a good-quality, washable paint is the most practical choice.

**Paint** gives you a huge range of colour choices and flexibility for future design changes – your plain white cabinets can be given a whole new look simply by changing the wall colour.

**Paint** also has all sorts of special qualities these days. For example, Resene has various paint additives that will make the painted surface look better for longer and cut down on maintenance. One such paint is Resene Fly Deterrent, which discourages flies from landing on the painted surface and so reduces fly spots. Another is Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen Kitchen & Bathroom paint range, which combines anti-bacterial silver protection and MoulDefender mould inhibitor.



A collection of quirky kitchenware graces an otherwise simple white kitchen. The walls and splashback are Resene Periglacial Blue, while the extra thick stainless steel benchtop echoes the shelf profiles.

Resene Periglacial Blue



Resene Pursuit gives vibrancy and life to this kitchen by Kitchen Elements in Wellington. The other cabinetry is Resene Quarter Spanish White.

## Floors

Obviously you're not going to lay carpet in a kitchen, but the hard flooring choices are quite wide.

**Tiles** are popular and come in a huge range of sizes, styles and colours. They can be quite unforgiving of dropped plates and also chilly, so you may like to install underfloor heating. Tiles are easily cleaned but make sure the grout is of good quality so that it doesn't deteriorate or stain. You also need to make sure they have good slip resistance.

**Timber** floors give a lovely inviting look, feel warmer underfoot than tiles and come in various types of timber, from oak to hardwoods. You may already have an existing timber floor that can be sanded and polyurethaned, or lay a new one. Timber flooring ranges from solid tongue-and-groove timbers that are professionally laid then sanded and polyurethaned, through to pre-finished laminate timber lookalikes that you buy in packs from the hardware store and lay yourself. In between are timber veneers, most of which are laid using the floating flooring system (ie, they are not glued down).

Solid timber floors are the most expensive and the laminates are the cheapest option. All are quite hardy, the difference being that when the floor suffers wear, tear and scratches, a solid timber surface can be sanded and polished whereas the laminates can't. There's also a new Resene product called Resene Colorwood Whitewash for a whitewash effect on floors that doesn't then need to be finished with polyurethane.

**Vinyl:** Modern vinyl flooring designs and styles are vast. Some are designed to replicate wood flooring, ceramic tiles, natural stones and slate and even old-fashioned linoleum. With many it is difficult, at first glance, to tell the difference from the real thing. Vinyl has a softer feel than other hard flooring materials, is easy to clean, is quiet underfoot and can be very cost-effective. It can be laid in wide width lengths (like carpet) or, for DIYers, you can buy vinyl tile packs from hardware stores.

**Cork tiles** are a good alternative to timber in that they have a warm look and are relatively soft with good sound absorption. They can come in 'natural' colours or be stained with Resene Colorwood in your choice of colour.



Resene Bison Hide

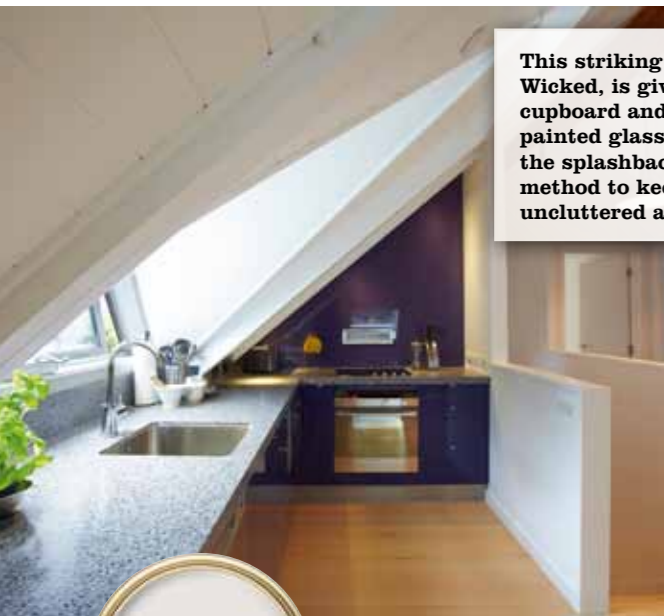
This award-winning kitchen by Leonie von Sturmer centres on a stunning island bench made of aged and waxed Baltic pine. Resene Bison Hide is used in varying strengths for the cabinets and walls, as well as the aged, hand-painted floor and range hood.



Resene Mondo

This soothing palette of colours and materials features Resene Tea on the walls and tall inset cabinets, with Resene Mondo on the under-bench doors. The benchtops are CaesarStone. The kitchen design is by Toni Roberts of Kitchen Architecture.





This striking purple kitchen, in Resene Wicked, is given extra luminosity with cupboard and drawer fronts made of back-painted glass. Designed by Sian Gillanders, the splashback was finished in the same method to keep the tricky space as visually uncluttered as possible.



### Cabinets

**Melamine** is the cheapest and most versatile material for your cupboard doors and drawers. There are several suppliers of melamine board on the market and many colours and designs. It's very robust and easy to clean.

**Thermo-moulded** doors are made by moulding a sheet of vinyl over usually an MDF substrate. These doors are tough, relatively cheap and come in various profiles but there is a limited colour choice. If they get damaged, the whole door needs to be replaced and, if that colour or style is no longer produced, you're in trouble.

**Lacquered finishes** are the most versatile in terms of colour choice and gloss level. You can choose any colour you like, match tones with your walls, or choose colours to complement any other interior features and colours. Products such as Resene ArmourCat are robust, easy to clean and available in a wide range of colours, metallics and clear finishes. If it does get damaged, it's also easy to repair.

**Back-painted glass** is most often seen on splashbacks behind the hob, but lately some clever designers are using it on cabinetry. It has all of the advantages of lacquer in terms of colour choice but the glass is tough, easy to clean and the cabinets have an extra luminosity. Back-painted glass can be finished in your favourite Resene colour tinted into Resene Imperite.

**Timber** comes in two forms – solid or veneer. Timber is a particular look which polarises people, who either love it or hate it. Although it doesn't have a lot of flexibility of look, different types of timber will give variation, or you can paint or colour-wash the timber. Solid timber isn't as stable as some of the other products.



This kitchen, designed by Wanda Szychowska of DeCe Design, features textured glass splashbacks over Resene Silver Chalice paint. The granite benchtops have a marble-vein look that contrasts with the glossy Resene Wan White cabinetry.

### Benchtops

One of the most used surfaces in the kitchen, benchtops have to endure a lot of wear and tear, which is why the materials used for benchtops are tough. One of the most cost-effective are **high-pressure laminates**, which come in a myriad of colours and patterns. The laminates used for benches are different (ie, hardwearing, high-pressure) to those used for cabinetry. This type of material has sometimes been seen as a bit common and have been eclipsed in the fashion stakes by other materials. But they are worth considering as there are an amazing variety available.

One of the current favourites is **engineered stone**, made of a quartz and resin compound. There are a range of colours and looks, mostly mimicking stone or granite. Engineered stone is tough (although watch the curry sauces and red wine on lighter versions) and has a "softer" feel than granite, which can be unforgiving of crockery.

**Granite** is a traditional surface and is super-tough and heat resistant. Marble is an alternative to granite and looks, as you would imagine, very luxurious. It's not quite as forgiving as granite and because its natural colourings are lighter, it often carries the risk of staining.

**Stainless steel** comes in either a plain brushed finish or various textures (linen, basketweave etc). It is tough and easy to clean but make sure you don't use it next to a north- or west-facing window because the glare of the sun may be reflected off the bench.

**Timber** always looks warm and inviting but is less popular because of wear and tear issues. Timber benchtops used today are normally finished to a high standard, although the fashion for matt finishes in a kitchen can make that tricky. High-gloss polyurethanes are more durable.



### Splashbacks

Splashbacks need to be easy to clean. Their whole purpose is to take the splatters and grease of hob-top cooking, which can then be easily wiped clean.

**Tiles** have been a popular choice but back-painted **glass** is the most popular material currently. This gives a huge range of colour choice and means the splashback can be easily matched, or contrasted, with other interior elements. It can also be taken off at a future date and replaced with a different colour. Glass can be etched from behind to display patterns, words and even pictures.

**Stainless steel** is another option and some appliance manufacturers provide to match the cooker or hob.

This kitchen, designed by Natalie Du Bois, uses cabinetry in Resene Robins Egg Blue with a ceiling in Resene Half Rice Cake. The stunning extractor is by Smeg, while the front of the island is finished in 5mm mosaics. The slim-line benchtop is polished taupe from Stone Italiana. The flooring is White Ash timber and the shelves have been whitewashed to match.