ALTIMA
CABINET WORKS LTD.

MAINTENANCE & CARE GUIDE

for

COUNTER TOPS

- Granite
- Quartz
- Acrylic
- Laminate
- Wood

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GRANITE

Granite is an igneous rock which is formed through the cooling and solidification of magma or lava. It also contains light, delicate colored minerals. Correct care and cleaning for granite preserves the natural highly polished look and in general you do not want to clean it with anything that you would not use on your hands. If you always use appropriate granite countertop care then you should have a product that will last for many years.

SEALING

By nature, a stone surfaces are porous. Absorption may result in discoloring or staining, so the granite countertop should be sealed before fabrication or after installation. The sealer penetrates the stone, clogs the pores and creates a virtually impenetrable surface that resists absorbing alcohol, juice, soft drinks, coffee, food, oil, cosmetics and cleaners. With proper care and cleaners, it is easy to maintain the original finish for years.

Depending on the color of stone, sealing will need to be done once or twice a year. Typically, the darker granites are denser than and than lighter granites, so they would require less frequent sealing.

GENERAL USE

Don't place hot skillets or roasting pans directly onto the surface near a seam. Also be aware of the potential damage to the surface by heat generating appliances such as electric grills, crock pots, or toasters. We recommend the use of trivets and hot pads to prevent heating the top. Certain exposure to heat may cause seams to fail.

Avoid using knives directly on the granite surface. Granite countertops are scratch resistant, but they are not scratch-proof and can be damaged when forcefully hit with sharp objects. Use a cutting board placed on top of the countertop to avoid damage. Avoid sliding heavy pots and pans or other heavy items across the countertop as scratches and chips are difficult to repair and can void the manufacturer's warranty.

CLEANING

Clean the countertops daily with mild dish soap and a soft clean cloth like microfiber. Do not use anything abrasive like steel wool, scouring pads, or scouring powders. Do not use harsh chemicals or cleaners like Windex which has ammonia in it, vinegar, lemon or orange cleaners, or bathroom/tub and tile cleaners. They can scratch, pit, and etch the surface of the stone.

Cleaning Calcareous stone such as marble, limestone, travertine, soapstone and onyx should be cleaned using products specifically designed for natural stone. Always test the cleaner in an inconspicuous spot to see how it works prior to using.

STAINS

Because Granite is a porous product, it can absorb stains even if it has been properly sealed. For certain stains, try these methods:

Oil-Based Stains (grease, tar, cooking oil, cosmetics)—Will darken the stone and normally must be chemically dissolved so the stain's source can be rinsed away. Clean gently with a soft liquid cleanser, household detergent, ammonia, mineral spirits, or acetone

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STAINS (cont'd)

Organic Stains (coffee, tea, fruit, tobacco, paper, food)—May cause a pinkish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed. Outdoors, with the sources removed, normal sun and rain action will generally bleach out the stains. Indoors, clean with 12% hydrogen peroxide and a few drops of ammonia.

Inorganic Metal Stains (iron, rust, copper, bronze)— Iron or rust stains are orange to brown in color and leave the shape of the staining object, such as nails, bolts, screws, cans, flowerpots, or metal furniture. Copper and bronze stains appear as green or muddy brown and result from the action of moisture on nearby or embedded bronze, copper, or brass items. Metal stains must be removed with a poultice (see below). Deep-seated, rusty stains are extremely difficult to remove and the stone may be permanently stained.

Ink Stains (magic marker, pen, ink) —Clean light-colored stones with bleach or hydrogen peroxide. Use lacquer thinner or acetone for dark-colored stones.

Paint Stains—Small amounts can be removed with lacquer thinner or scraped off carefully with a razor blade. Heavy paint coverage should be removed with a commercial liquid paint stripper. DO NOT USE ACIDS OR FLAME TOOLS TO STRIP PAINT FROM STONE.

Etch Marks (calcareous stones)—Caused by acids (typically from milk, fruit juices, alcohol, etc.) left on the surface of the stone, some will etch the finish but not leave a stain; others will both etch and stain. Once the stain has been removed, wet the surface with clear water and sprinkle with marble polishing powder. Rub the powder into the stone with a damp cloth or by using a buffing pad with a low-speed power drill or polisher. Continue buffing until the etch mark disappears and the marble surface shines. Honing may be required for deep etching. This process may require the services of a stone maintenance professional.

Efflorescence—A white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone, it is caused by water carrying mineral salts from below the surface of the stone to the surface and evaporating. When the water evaporates, it leaves the powdery salt residue. If the installation is new, dust mop or vacuum the powder. Repeat as necessary as the stone dries out. Do not use water to remove the powder (adding water will only add to the problem). If the problem persists, contact the stone contractor to identify and remove the cause of the moisture.

Water Spots and Rings (surface accumulation of hard water) —Buff with dry 0000 steel wool.

If you have a stain that will not come out, try what's called a "Poultice" which is a method of combining together baking soda and water, just enough water until the solution becomes thick (about the same consistency as paste). Simply put this solution right over the stain. Cover the area with a plastic wrap. Leave it overnight. You can then scrape the mixture away gently, preferably using a wooden utensil. Rinse. The stain should be gone. Repeat if necessary. There are other premixed poultice mixtures available. Contact your local granite supplier for more options.

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QUARTZ

Quartz is an engineered stone whose primary ingredient is ground quartz (about 94 percent), combined with polyester resins to bind it, and pigments to give it color. For some designs, small amounts of recycled glass or metallic flecks are added to the mix. The resins also help make these counters stain and scratch resistant—and nonporous.

SEALING

Do not apply any sealers, penetrants or topical treatments to quartz surfaces, such products will wear off and cause the gloss to appear dull or inconsistent.

GENERAL USE

Don't place hot skillets or roasting pans directly onto the surface. Also be aware of the potential damage to the surface by heat generating appliances such as electric grills, crock pots, or toasters. We recommend the use of trivets and hot pads to prevent heating the top. Certain exposure to heat may cause cracks due to thermal shock.

Avoid using knives directly on the quartz surface. Quartz countertops are scratch resistant, but they are not scratch-proof and can be damaged when forcefully hit with sharp objects. Use a cutting board placed on top of the countertop to avoid damage. Avoid sliding heavy pots and pans or other heavy items across the countertop as scratches and chips are difficult to repair and can void the manufacturer's warranty.

CLEANING

In most cases, soap and water or a mild detergent is all that is required to maintain its luster. If necessary, apply common, non-abrasive, household cleaners on a cloth or sponge and wipe the surface, rinsing thoroughly after cleaning.

Materials that harden as they dry, such as gum, grease, nail polish or paint should be removed by gently scraping away the residue material with a blunt plastic scraper. Then the quartz surface should be cleaned with a household vinegar/water solution (always follow the manufacturer's dilution instructions) or with a non-abrasive cleaning pad (such as a white 3M Scotch-Brite) together with a non-bleach, non-abrasive liquid cleaner and rinse thoroughly with clean water. Surface should be dried with a clean white paper towel or white cloth.

Do not expose quartz surfaces to abrasives, strong alkaline, acetone, acid, free radicals, oxidizers or similar products (whether high, neutral or low pH) cleaners. Don't expose quartz surfaces to such products as bleach, oven cleaners, Comet, Soft Scrub, SOS, Pumice products, batteries, paint removers, acetone, nail polish remover, furniture strippers, oil soaps, tarnish, or silver cleaners.

STAINS

Quartz countertops are non-porous, so spills and stains are not absorbed into the surface, making it stain-resistant. Permanent markers/inks and some chemicals, solvents (e.g. acetone, paint thinner, nail polish remover) or dyes may, however, cause permanent discoloration to the surface and should be avoided. Should these agents come into contact with the surface, wipe up immediately and rinse with plenty of water.

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ACRYLIC

Acrylic materials are formed with Acrylic Polymers and alumina trihydrate into various sheet thicknesses and sizes. The color is throughout the core to allow unique fabrication techniques and repairability after installation. Solid surface is NSF approved for the absorption of chemicals and bacteria making it an excellent non-porous solution.

SEALING

Do not apply any sealers, penetrants or topical treatments to acrylic surfaces, such products will wear off and cause the gloss to appear dull or inconsistent.

GENERAL USE

Don't place hot skillets or roasting pans directly onto the surface. Also be aware of the potential damage to the surface by heat generating appliances such as electric grills, crock pots, or toasters. We recommend the use of trivets and hot pads to prevent heating the top. Certain exposure to heat may cause cracks at the seams and melting beyond 100°C.

Avoid using knives directly on the acrylic surface. Acrylic countertops are not scratch resistant, and can be easily scratched with knives or other common kitchen utensils. Use a cutting board placed on top of the countertop to avoid damage. Avoid sliding heavy pots and pans or other heavy items across the countertop.

CLEANING

In most cases, soap and water or a mild detergent is all that is required to maintain its finish. If necessary, apply common, mildly abrasive, household cleaners such as VIM on a cloth or sponge and wipe the surface, rinsing thoroughly after cleaning.

Do not expose acrylic surfaces to strong alkaline, acetone, acid, free radicals, oxidizers or similar products (whether high, neutral or low pH) cleaners. Don't expose acrylic surfaces to such products as bleach, oven cleaners, batteries, paint removers, acetone, nail polish remover, furniture strippers, oil soaps, tarnish, or silver cleaners.

STAINS

Acrylic countertops are non-porous, so spills and stains are not absorbed into the surface, making it stain-resistant. Permanent markers/inks and some chemicals, solvents (e.g. acetone, paint thinner, nail polish remover) or dyes may, however, cause permanent discoloration to the surface and should be avoided. Should these agents come into contact with the surface, wipe up immediately and rinse with plenty of water. If the stain persists use an abrasive cleanser to remove the stain, or a mild 3M Scotch-Brite pad with water.

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LAMINATE

Laminate is a decorative paper pressed between melamine resin and phenolic sheets at high pressure. Laminate is then shop applied to a particle board or plywood substrate. Laminate is a widely used material due to its' cost advantage and wide range of colors. However, laminate is virtually unrepairable when damaged.

Laminate will shrink and expand with environmental changes in temperature and humidity. If seams open up from time to time, this is considered normal. To avoid damaging the core during exposure, fill the seam with a clear silicone.

SEALING

The surface of laminate does not require sealers typical to granite, however, any cut-outs for sinks or cooktops should be sealed with silicone to prevent moisture migration into the core. Installation seams should be assembled with a waterproof adhesive such as Titebond II Premium Wood Glue.

GENERAL USE

Don't place hot skillets or roasting pans directly onto the surface, as heating will cause delamination of the laminate from the core. Also be aware of the potential damage to the surface by heat generating appliances such as electric grills, crock pots, or toasters. We recommend the use of trivets and hot pads to prevent heating the top.

Keep moisture away from seams, sink openings and counter top edges, as droplets of water can cause cores to swell, compromising the counter top.

Avoid using knives directly on the laminate surface. Laminate countertops are scratch resistant, but can be easily scratched with knives or other common kitchen utensils. Use a cutting board placed on top of the countertop to avoid damage. Avoid sliding heavy pots and pans or other heavy items across the countertop to avoid scratches.

Over time scratches will appear from normal use. To help hide scratches, buff with a non-oily furniture polish. WD4® will also help in hiding scratches and marks.

CLEANING

In most cases, soap and water or a mild detergent is all that is required to maintain a laminate finish. It's very important that laminate counter be thoroughly dried after cleaning. For difficult spills, use a more aggressive cleaner such as Windex® or Fantastic®. Do not use abrasives as they will permanently scratch the surface.

STAINS

Laminate countertops are non-porous, so spills and stains are not absorbed into the surface, making it stain-resistant. Permanent markers/inks and some chemicals such as hair, textile and food dyes, acidic or abrasive cleansers, drain cleaners, oven cleaners, rust cleaners and toilet bowl cleaners can permanently stain the surface. If spilled accidentally, be sure to clean immediately with a damp cloth several times. Some marks or spills may require a more aggressive cleaner such as acetone, nail polish remover, lacquer thinner or mineral spirits. After the mark or stain has been removed, clean the chemical residue thoroughly with soap and water.

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WOOD

Wood counters are available in a wide variety of species, cores and finishes, and are often used on low use areas such as furniture tops. Solid wood butcher block tops are commonly used on islands and similar work surfaces.

Solid wood tops will shrink and expand with environmental changes in temperature and humidity, resulting in warping and splitting. Joints will open up from time to time, this is considered normal.

SEALING

Veneer tops with lacquer finish do not require sealing, however, unfinished solid wood tops that will be used for food prep such as chopping, do require sealing with products specifically formulated for this purpose. Follow the instructions that come with the sealer for proper application. Some products that we suggest are Mineral oil, Walnut Oil or Waterlox®

GENERAL USE

Don't place anything on a veneer top with a lacquer finish that is cold or hot, as this will permanently damage the finish. The use of doilies or coasters will prevent items from damaging the surface. If a solid butcher block is not being used for food prep, it should be treated the same as a veneer top with lacquer.

Avoid using knives directly on the lacquer surface as they are not scratch resistant. Use a cutting board placed on top of the countertop to avoid damage. Avoid sliding heavy pots and pans or other heavy items across the countertop to avoid scratches.

For all wood tops avoid leaving standing water on the surface as this will damage the finish over time.

CLEANING

In most cases, soap and water or a mild detergent is all that is required to maintain a wood finish. It's very important that wood counters be thoroughly dried after cleaning. Do not use abrasives as they will permanently scratch the surface. A non-oily furniture polish can be used to maintain the wood lustre.

STAINS

For stains or marks on wood surfaces, use soap and water to remove the stains or a more aggressive cleaner such as Windex®. Do not expose wood surfaces to abrasives, strong alkaline, acetone, acid, free radicals, oxidizers or similar products (whether high, neutral or low pH) cleaners. Don't expose wood surfaces to such products as bleach, oven cleaners, Comet, Soft Scrub, SOS, Pumice products, batteries, paint removers, acetone, nail polish remover, furniture strippers, oil soaps, tarnish, or silver cleaners.