

Over the Edge

Waterfall islands and counters add sleek appeal to any space



An asymmetrical waterfall island adds a dramatic edge to this light-and-bright kitchen by Tatiana Machado-Rosas of Jackson Design and Remodeling.

With an ever-increasing popularity, waterfall countertops—in some variation—occupy space in nearly every kitchen inspiration gallery you peruse, and not just in the most modern of homes.

Simple, clean lines define the waterfall design, which is associated with a contemporary look, says Tatiana Machado-Rosas, interior design department head at Jackson Design and Remodeling in Kearny Mesa.

Whereas a traditional countertop is composed of a single horizontal surface that ends at the edge of a peninsula, island or bank of cabinets, the waterfall countertop descends vertically down the side or sides, creating an unbroken flow to the ground.

“A waterfall edge is not only for the ultra-modern home,” confirms Kate Lindberg, senior interior designer at McCormick &

Wright in City Heights. “It can work in a contemporary, transitional, coastal or even the right type of traditional space if you are open to blending elements. If a home has more traditional bones and architectural details, a modern kitchen can be dynamic since the clean detailing will be quieter and allow you to experience all the other more traditional touches throughout the home.”

Form and Function

Waterfall countertops provide an aesthetic focal point for a room as well as more function.

“I think the biggest benefit of a waterfall countertop is the design aesthetic that it adds,” says Christie May, principal interior designer at Rockwell Interiors in Solana Beach. “It brings a clean, high-style look by concealing the sides of cabinetry with

beautiful stone—and seeing a greater amount of stone makes a space feel more high-end and polished. It works particularly nicely on kitchen islands with open seating on one side, as it allows for a clean integration since the counter and two sides are continuous and seamless in creating the seating area.”

Additionally, the open seating that Christie prefers offers a way for lovers of texture and contrast to get creative with a little mix-and-match: Try pairing a white marble waterfall counter with a warm wooden base, or find some to-die-for tile to add an engaging pop of pattern underneath.

In kitchens, waterfall counters bring a clean termination to cabinetry, Kate says. “They can also create a nice juxtaposition in the space if you choose to extend and float the countertop to create a bar or breakfast area.”

And in practical terms, waterfall counters are easier to clean. “If done in a natural stone or solid surface—especially in wet areas—they provide better durability than a wood side to a cabinet,” Kate explains.

Oh, the Places It Can Go...

Though kitchens are the obvious place to install a waterfall counter, there are plenty of other potential spaces for them to make a dramatic statement, from bathrooms—natural stone is conveniently waterproof—to living room consoles and outdoor bars.

“There is no right or wrong place for the waterfall,” Tatianna assures. “As long as it works with the rest of the design, it can go anywhere. We have utilized them in custom offices, kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor areas.”

“No need to keep a waterfall detail confined to the kitchen,” Kate agrees. “Currently, I am working on a project where we are having a double waterfall detail



It's a Material World

Christie May of Rockwell Interiors says:

MARBLE "I love a good marble slab top with waterfall sides where the patterned grain is continuous and seamless. It looks really gorgeous and can make a big statement!"

QUARTZ "They are starting to make some pretty good marble-like quartz slabs that do a good job of pulling off the same look at a lower price point, with the added benefit of durability and lower maintenance."

WOOD "When it comes to built-in designs, wood waterfall edges are also a very nice detail. I like when the grain is continuous, further exemplifying the waterfall edge detail. In all of these material applications—wood and stone—it's important to call for a mitered edge and keep the grain direction continuous."

Tatiana Machado-Rosas of Jackson Design and Remodeling says:

GRANITE "Granite is a great choice for a more organic, natural look. It works really well in softer spaces that are not ultra-modern."

DEKTON "Dekton is a synthetic quartz-like, ultra-compact material made by Cosentino. It can handle a change in temperature well—unlike true quartz—and I utilize it often for outdoor projects."

CONCRETE "You can use any material that is solid and strong, I've even used concrete for a more industrial look."



Clockwise, from top left: The earthy tones of *Cristallo Tiffany* quartzite give this waterfall island a tranquil feel—available from Aria Stone Gallery. • Kate Lindberg of McCormick & Wright expertly balanced warm wooden cabinetry with a snowy waterfall countertop in this seaside residence. • The addition of a waterfall counter gives the vanity in this bathroom—by Tatiana—a chic update.



installed on a bathroom vanity—it can make for a clean transition if one cabinet is abutting another and they are at different depths. We have also put them in home theatres that have a bar area."

"I have done a waterfall side in a closet—just one side—that turned out really nice," Christie notes. "I really like how clean the look is, especially with a mitered corner, so I do tend to incorporate this detail on a lot of our custom furnishings."

Think on It

Before committing to this look, consider whether a full or asymmetrical counter suits your space, what material works best—and the price tag.

"Having stone waterfall sides will definitely be an added cost, both by needing additional stone material as well as fabrication costs," Christie says. "If the island is floating, like in a kitchen, definitely do both sides. If one end butts up to a wall, such as in a

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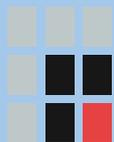


Christie May of Rockwell Interiors designed this sleek waterfall island with plenty of space for cooking and dining.

bathroom or closet, then doing one end is fine. Even then, you may still choose to do the stone on both ends, but you will only see the front-edge profile. I would look at the material quantity and overall budget costs.

"If you have the extra stone material on hand and have the budget to support it, then you may consider adding the stone to the side that butts up to the wall," Christie continues. "However, if you don't have enough material to do that end, and it would mean purchasing a whole other slab, I would just butt the millwork into the wall and have a singular stone waterfall edge. As of late, I've been playing with overlapping countertops to get a layered look with added details and multiple materials. If you are doing quartz countertops, look into the option of jumbo slabs. Many lines are now making bigger slabs, which means you may be able to purchase fewer slabs to get your job done with reduced waste and cost."

Kate stresses that it is essential to have all of the necessary measurements on hand when selecting a slab. "If you are contemplating a waterfall edge, make sure to note what that extra size would need to be that returns to the floor to see if the specific slab would be large enough. You don't want to get too far in the planning and realize you have to purchase an additional slab just to finish the side of the waterfall." ❖



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