

Essential Questions to Ask Your Fabricator

How to Select Your Granite Countertops

Essential questions to ask your stone fabricator

When people are planning on getting new natural stone countertops and ask me what the most important things they will need to know about stone care, I emphatically state the first consideration in stone care is to be very selective in choosing their fabricator.

A poor installation, the wrong stone for the environment, and doctored or poor quality stone are just some of the problems that can result in a very unsatisfactory and frustrating-- and often costly--experience. On the other hand, a quality natural stone installation will be visually stunning and practical while adding value to your property and will be easy to properly maintain.

Through www.stoneforensics.com and www.stoneandtilepros.com we hear countless tales of misery from consumers that were swayed by price only (and ended up paying far more in the end). Because of this we have drafted a checklist of recommended questions to ask your prospective fabricator.

Please note: even if you are getting your new kitchen countertops through a big box store, keep in mind that they subcontract the work to local fabricators. Always make sure you can talk with the fabricator directly.

Most fabricators have access to granite from numerous distributors or importers. If a particular slab can be shipped to any fabricator, what's the difference? It's not the granite. It's the fabricator! The fabricator adds value in quality of workmanship, timeliness, full service, convenience, product education, buying experience, etc.

We suggest that you visit the fabricators you are considering to do business

with. Use the following points to do an informal interview to determine who will give you the best value (not necessarily the best price):

Do they know stone and educate you accordingly?

Is the fabricator knowledgeable about the properties of stone and why some stones, although beautiful, may not be suitable for some environments?

Are they educated about the characteristics of natural stone? Were things like pits and fissures discussed?

Care and maintenance

Will they provide proper care and maintenance instructions?

How long has the fabricator been in business and are they willing to provide a list of references from satisfied customers?

Here are some of the questions you might consider asking references:

1. Turn-around time. How long did it take from templating to installation?
2. Were there issues or problems and how were they addressed?

Are they willing to discuss seam placement with you?

There are important structural considerations that a fabricator must take into account, but a good fabricator should be willing to hear your wishes.

What is their customer satisfaction policy?

If something goes wrong with the job, will it be corrected? What is their policy on this?

Do they have a written warranty?

Do they have an orderly and well run shop?

Do they use their own employees or will all or part of the job be subcontracted?

Are the fabricator and their employees fully insured?

Selection

Do they stock a wide variety of slabs to choose from or give you direct access to their slab sources? Since some granites are so varied in color and movement it is strongly recommended that you see the actual slab your countertops will be fabricated from. Can you choose the actual slabs for your project?

Are the slabs resined and or sealed to provide long term stain protection?

How long must you wait for the job to be installed?

Will they set an installation time that is convenient for you?

Plumbing and Electrical

If you need assistance with plumbing and electrical work, can they provide this added value service? What about removing the old kitchen?

Estimates and Payment Terms

Are estimates easy to understand and clearly state the scope of work? Are the terms of payment fair? Large down payments or full payment before installation are warning signs.

Do you like them?

Do you sense that the fabricator is trustworthy and will do a great job for you? Are they pleasant to work with? Do they give you the feeling that you are special and not just another number?

Of course, all of the stone fabricators listed in www.stoneandtilepros.com are professionals that we know and which have all signed our commitment to quality standards of professionalism and we would urge you to consider them first, but, if no one is listed in your area, do yourself a favor -- arm yourself with these Essential Questions to Ask your Stone Fabricator before

choosing your fabricator.

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