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The Main Company used Caesarstone's Raw Concrete engineered quartz worktop, which contrasts well with teal painted units and reclaimed wood.

# MATERIAL OF THE MONTH



# HARD ROCK STARS

Natural surfaces in the home are undoubtedly beautiful, but the new kids on the block are practically perfect. Welcome in sintered and engineered stone for a fine finish

Words Louise Nevin

For this island, Sheraton Interiors chose the dramatic and dark Laurent, by Dekton. Set beside contrasting cream bar stools, it makes a real statement in this stunning, moody kitchen.



Sintered stone is an ideal material for kitchens. Lapitec's Orion sink in Nero Assoluto Velluto with black tap creates a sleek and minimalist look.



This custom-built basin and vanity were made using Neolith's Strata Argentum, which perfectly mimics natural stone's gentle undulations.



Photography Carlos Velez

**W**hen planning a kitchen, one of the major factors will always be the worktop and the type of material to choose. The market is awash with products to suit all price ranges, from natural quartzite, marble and granite to man-made laminates and engineered surfaces. And then there's sintered stone, which many people have never heard of, so what is it?

Remarkably, it is quite similar to what nature does over thousands of years to create granite or marble – except “sintering” is an almost magical process that can be completed in less than 24 hours. It begins with a blend of natural minerals, which are ground down, mixed with water and then heated to a pretty extreme temperature, at which point they melt and are then compressed and cured to create vast stone slabs. Next, they are cooled, cut and polished, ready to go out into the world.

Sintered slabs can then be used for myriad purposes in the home, although usually for kitchen worktops or flooring. While natural stone needs loving care and regular sealing, sintered absolutely does not; it is non-porous and tough as anything, so if you have family members who are likely to use your kitchen surface like a DIY work bench, subjecting it to knives, glueing and hammering, you might want to move away from marble and say *salut* to sintered.

Melissa Klink, creative director at Harvey Jones, says: “Sintered stone has a number of qualities that make it perfect for using in kitchens thanks to its durability, heat resistance, anti-fade and non-porous surface. This means it's easy to clean and maintain and is suitable for busy family life. There are numerous colour and veining options available, making it a really impactful and versatile worktop choice.” >