



*Above and at right: Two examples of how useful an island can be in the kitchen, whether acting as another stage for food preparation, or as a "catch-all" for the entire family.*

activity center, the counter tops are being used for more than just cooking. Granite is still a popular choice with its dependability and resistance to heat. Many homeowners have found that using granite countertops also complements stainless steel sinks and appliances. But some designers feel that granite may be on its way out, with concrete taking over the lead for the most popular countertop. Mixing materials has become more popular and has given room for development of new materials. More homeowners are asking for butcher blocks to be installed into the countertop revealing that homeowners not only want style, but simplicity and organization as well. Laminate countertops are still in high demand because they are inexpensive, durable and come in a variety of colors and patterns. Warm tones such as bronze and copper are rising in popularity, with glass looks not far behind. Natural colors are popular too, but non-dimensional colors are out. Texture is in.

Formica Corporation, a leading manufacturer in counter tops, came out with the 2004 laminate color families in response to consumers requests, which included warm, usable grays, rich earthy browns, soft blacks, deep saturated blues, yellowed greens, sophisticated golds, and shades of white. "Texture is becoming more important than ever as colors blend and neutralize," said Renee Hytry, vice president of design,



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