



SURFACE BEAUTY

THIS IMAGE: SHAUN LIPSEY DESIGN. PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE CHAUEN PHOTO

There is a wide array of tile options, from natural stone to engineered slabs.

You've decided it's time to renovate but you're overwhelmed by choices. If you're considering the many selections of stone surfaces, it's essential to consult an expert to help you make the right choice. Living Luxe asked Tariq Darwish of Cava Surfaces to weigh in on the vast variety of stone his company sells—from granites and marbles to quartzite and onyx. Here's his expert advice on how to choose wisely.

Living Luxe: Tariq, marble has been a favoured stone since the time of ancient Rome and Greece. How are we using it now?

Cava Surfaces: For centuries, marble and other natural stones have been cherished for their beauty and timelessness. At Cava, we collaborate with designers, builders, and architects, who use our materials throughout the city. Our marbles are used to adorn floors, walls, vanities, furniture, and fireplaces. Today, marble is experiencing a resurgence, with engineered slabs offering replicability while Mother Nature's stones remain unparalleled.

Living Luxe: How are homeowners using granite now? Has granite's popularity shifted since the 1980s and '90s?

Cava Surfaces: Granite has long been the foundation of iconic structures, such as the sculptures carved into Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. In kitchens, its popularity surged in the late 1980s into the early 2000s, due to its exceptional durability. While design trends have evolved with the advent of such engineered materials as quartz and porcelain that mimic marble, granite remains one of our offerings at Cava. We focus on sourcing the most ▶



unique and exotic global varieties. Recently, there's been a resurgence in North American interest in natural stone for its unparalleled charm.

Living Luxe: What are quartzite and onyx and how are they used? What are the pros and cons of these materials?

Cava Surfaces: Quartzites, primarily mined in Brazil's Espirito Santo region, are gaining popularity for their exceptional durability, some even surpassing granite. They come in diverse colours, patterns, and textures, resembling marble or featuring unique, otherworldly appearances. Certain quartzites exhibit translucency, making them ideal for striking applications: illuminated bars or stylish powder rooms, for example.

In contrast, onyx, softer than quartzite and akin to marble, varies significantly across quarries. Its blocks come in various shapes, colours, and sizes due to its rarity. Such rare hues as vibrant pinks, greens, oranges, blues, and blacks command premium prices, solidifying onyx as the pinnacle of luxury stones.

Living Luxe: Quartz composite surfaces have also gained mass appeal. Why? What are your recommendations on the use of quartz?

Cava Surfaces: In the past two decades, quartz has dominated the countertop industry, surpassing granite. This engineered alternative gained popularity for its durability, lighter weight, diverse colour options, and marble-like surfaces, all with minimal maintenance. Unlike natural stone samples, quartz samples closely resemble full slabs, simplifying



design choices for designers and consumers. Quartz continues to be a preferred option for countertops and has become a standard choice among builders.

Quartz colours evolve with design trends. At Cava, we've introduced the latest generation: Nano-Ink quartz. This technology uses HD printing to authentically mimic marble patterns on quartz slabs.

Living Luxe: Porcelain is not a natural stone, but is widely sought after for its hard texture and ability to resemble marble and granite. How is porcelain used? What are its pros and cons?

Cava Surfaces: In the past 10 years, porcelain has gained ground over quartz for building surfaces. Traditional marble-look quartz has become repetitive because many manufacturers have replicated each other's designs, saturating the market. This widespread availability has diminished the uniqueness of quartz for those seeking distinctive kitchen aesthetics. Porcelain slabs emerged as pioneers in mimicking marble patterns, offering a near-perfect replica without the upkeep or high cost. Porcelain's advantages include low porosity, light weight (for easy installation) and resistance to staining. However, porcelain's fragility during manufacturing can lead to higher labour costs, and repairs are nearly impossible if tiles are chipped or cracked, unlike natural stone which can often be seamlessly repaired, maintaining its original appearance. ¹¹