



## Caring for Your Soapstone

Stone countertops, flooring, or any other home upgrade is an investment. It's only natural that you want to protect that investment so it can last for years and years to come. The good news is that soapstone is impressively durable, so it does not require a ton of care. If you want to keep your soapstone in good shape, it will need a bit of help here and there, though. Here's what you need to know about caring for soapstone, broken down by the different soapstone uses out there.

### Kitchen Counters

Kitchen countertops are, arguably, the single most popular soapstone uses out there, so we'll start by touching on the one most of you are concerned with. The good news is that soapstone kitchen counters do not need a whole lot of help to look great and hold up over time. You can place hot dishes directly onto soapstone counters without worry, and you can chop fruits and veg without wearing away at the counter's surface like you might have seen on formica counters — though, you might want to use a cutting board anyway, for the long-term health of your knives. In terms of daily care, just use your counters as you normally would. Wipe off crumbs and spills, obviously, but do it for the sake of cleanliness, not necessarily for your counters! You don't need to rush to clean things off because soapstone is non-porous, so gunk that sits on your soapstone counters won't be able to seep in and damage the stone. Over time, you may notice small scuffs and dings on your soapstone counters, especially if you like to chop straight on the countertops without grabbing a cutting board. Any dings and scuffs can be buffed out with a fine-grit sandpaper or with a gentle use of steel wool. However, this isn't *necessary* for the care of your soapstone counters. Those scuffs and marks will eventually give your counters the patina that soapstone is known for, so you may just want to leave them alone! You can also oil your soapstone occasionally with Mineral Oil. This will bring out a better depth of colors and patterns in your soapstone but, since it's a non-porous stone, it will need to be re-oiled only on occasion. But, again, this isn't a necessary step, just one that boosts the visual appeal. Otherwise, that's it. That's all the care that your soapstone kitchen counters really need.

### Bathroom Counters

Caring for soapstone bathroom counters is going to be pretty similar to the above things we mentioned for kitchen counters. Of course, since these are counters in the bathroom, we understand that germs and bacteria are even more of a concern than in the kitchen. The good news is that, just like with the kitchen, the fact that soapstone is non-porous is a big benefit in terms of keeping things clean. It basically means that there are fewer places to harbor germs, and it is easier to clear all of that ick away. The other important factor here is that soapstone is chemically inert, which basically means that it's non-reactive to other solutions. In the kitchen, this is a great thing because it means soapstone is pretty much stain-proof. In the bathroom — and everywhere else, of course — the fact that soapstone is non-reactive means you don't need to worry about which cleaners you use. Simply pick your preferred anti-bacterial cleaner and go to town. Household cleaners aren't about to damage your soapstone counters. Outside of cleaning concerns, you'll care for soapstone bathroom counters the same way you would kitchen counters. You may need to buff out the occasional ding, and you may want to oil the surfaces, but those steps aren't necessary. Just keep them clean for the sake of sanitation!

# Soapstone Sinks

Surprise, surprise, soapstone sinks are going to be pretty similar to counters as far as care is concerned. Since they're non-porous, you don't need to worry about staining or funky smells soaking into the pores of a soapstone farmhouse sink. Nearly all gunk and grime will just rinse out. Likewise, standing water isn't a problem, so don't worry about damage that might occur from load after soapy load of doing dishes in a soapstone sink. You can expect your soapstone sink to hold up well, even with a lot of use.

The one big difference between caring for a soapstone kitchen sink and a countertop is the question of oiling. Since it is not a necessary step, you don't need to worry much at all. But if you do like the sheen you get from oiled soapstone, you may notice that you have to oil your sink more frequently than you would soapstone counters. This is because the warm water and degreasing soaps commonly used on dishes also breaks up the oil used to give your soapstone a good sheen. If you want to skip oiling your soapstone sink, go ahead; it won't really make a difference. More often than not, your soapstone sink will darken up a bit just from age and use, so the oil isn't necessary. But if you do like the way it looks, just be aware that you may need to oil your soapstone sink more often.

# Soapstone Fireplace Surround

Caring for a soapstone wood stove or fireplace surround is a bit more complex, just because of the soot and grime created by burning wood. The good news is that your soapstone fireplace is not going to cling on interminably to the ash, so it can be pretty easy to clean. However, you will want to clean the area more frequently, just to prevent unsafe buildup. If you use your soapstone stove or fireplace regularly, expect to clean it at least once a week in order to get rid of the accumulating ash. You can start by going over everything with warm water and a small amount of soap to break up the grime, and then keep wiping until your cloth comes away clear. You will likely want to do one last once-over with plain, warm water just to wipe away any residual soap. You will not want to oil or polish your soapstone fireplace or stove. These have the potential to be flammable, especially if too much of the substance is used, so it is safer to skip that step. The stone will get a lovely natural patina over time that provides a similar result. The other concern is what to do about any scuffs or dings. Especially since fireplace tools are hearty, they can cause scratches. If this happens, use a fine-grit sandpaper or steel wool to gently buff the scratch out, and then wipe down everything with warm water to clean up the dust. As you clean your soapstone fireplace, this is a good time to ensure that everything else is functioning properly. Check that doors still fit snugly, and that nothing is off balance or loose. You should also schedule an inspection by a professional chimney sweep at least once a year, but that is the same level of care that you would give for any wood-burning stove or fireplace.

