

The Tile Oracle: How do you protect marble?

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NORTH JERSEY HOMES

Antonella Romano is owner of the Stone and Tile Emporium in Wycoff (www.stoneandtilenj.com). Send your stone and tile questions to her at emolo@northjersey.com.

QUESTION. I have a 100-year-old coffee table with a marble top. I have tried everything to get water marks out of it, but nothing seems to work. Is there a way to get them off? And why won't they come off?

ANSWER: Everyone loves a marble top for its beauty... until it's used, when they find it's no longer beautiful.

That's because marble is porous and does not release stains. Unlike other materials, such as granite, it will absorb any substance such as oil, juice, wine or coffee. What's more, it can't withstand most cleaning products – especially detergents and anything acidic – without suffering damage. So the beauty of a marble top on a coffee table, countertop or vanity is an illusion, because if you want it to stay beautiful, you can't use it.

Marble will fade with time, its natural, polished finish will go away, and all you'll have left is a matt surface with lots of stains. The only safe way to get out these nasty stains is to gently soak them off.

Use an absorbent cloth, such as thick paper towel. Lightly soak with hydrogen peroxide, place it over the stains, cover it with Saran Wrap and leave it there for a few hours or even a whole day. The stains should either wipe off or at least fade after this treatment. Repeat if needed.



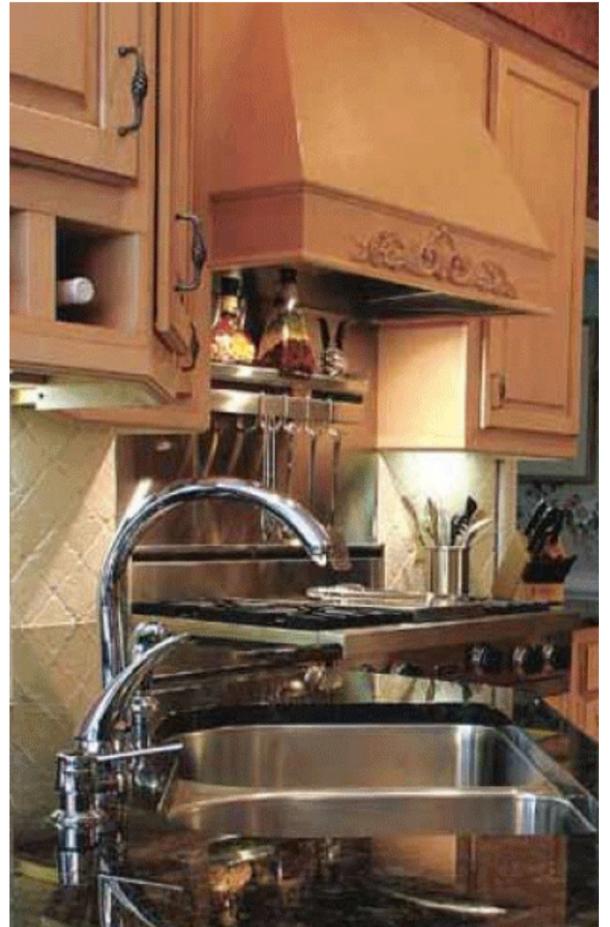
If you want to use marble for your kitchen countertops, you must be prepared to keep them sealed, clean and well-protected to preserve their natural beauty.

A heat source such as coffee pot or cup will leave a mark or a ring within a minute. Spills of any kind will etch into the stone, leaving your counter dotted with bits of chicken and broccoli that will never go away.

If you already have a marble countertop, use trivets and coasters to protect the surface. And never use white vinegar to clean it – a common mistake – because it eats away at the polish. Seal your marble with an impregnator several times a year, since sealers evaporate when the pores in the marble “breathe.”

For countertops, I suggest granite instead, because it releases stains and will not scratch. Or use a manmade product such as Silestone or CeaserStone, made of stone resin. These look similar to natural stone and come in various finishes to resemble marble or granite.

This way you can have your countertop and use it, too.



The best way to keep marble clean is to wipe it down with lukewarm water and a soft cloth, or use a mild, non-abrasive agent such as clear Green Works spray cleaner. I'd also apply a light coat of wax every time you clean. My secret is Lemon Pledge: spread it on your marble, then buff it away, for a shiny top. It will also help repel water, which caused those marks in the first place.

Ultimately, a marble top needs to be sealed to protect it. However, if this one is a century old it already has absorbed too many liquids over the years, so I recommend putting all drinks on a placemat or trivet.

Many homeowners today are purchasing marble for their kitchen countertops, and most shops do not inform their clients that it will stain and scratch from the get-go. Almost anything placed or used on a marble countertop will damage it. If you cut food on it, it will scratch. Practically any food will stain it, but especially acidic foods such as tomatoes and oranges.