



# [Ad] A sustainable alternative to man-made quartz – 100% recycled kitchen worktops by Stone Italiana

by [cate st hill](#) December 4, 2023

If you're in the process of designing a kitchen, as well as the aesthetics of the kitchen fronts and the overall style of the space, you're probably most concerned with what type of worktop to choose. Now we have more options than ever, from traditional natural stone and richly veined marble, through man-made quartz and high performance composites, to porcelain surfaces and sustainable recycled materials. There's even smart materials that use innovative tech to integrate invisible hobs into surfaces so you can cook directly through your worktop!

There's pros and cons of each and it pays to do your research. After all, a new kitchen is an investment and you want it to stand the test of time, especially if you're looking for environmentally friendly alternatives.

*[Ad – I was hosted on a press trip to Verona to visit the [Stone Italiana](#) factory]*



## MEET CATE ST HILL




**Cate St Hill** is an interiors writer, stylist and designer based in London. She set up her blog in 2011, sharing simple design for everyday living.

An introvert through and through, Cate is fascinated with how our homes can become our inner sanctuaries, soothing our souls and uplifting our wellbeing.

Cate has been named one of London's best interior bloggers (Vuelio 2018 & 2019 and Ideal Home magazine) and has been featured in The Times, Grazia, House Beautiful, Enki magazine, Elle Decoration Denmark and Apartment Therapy.

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I think natural stone will always have an enduring popularity, as it has connotations with luxury interiors, timeless design and authenticity. I've also seen a trend towards statement worktops, which are bolder, whether that's in their colour (dark reds, browns and blacks) or their character (dramatic veining). That said, marble is one of the most expensive materials and will need regular sealing and polishing to keep it in good condition. You'll also want to be careful if you're a keen chef who likes using turmeric, lemon juice or red wine, as it stains easily. Neither does natural stone rate highly when it comes to sustainability – as stone extraction can cause deforestation, soil erosion, air pollution and water contamination.

Then you have the man-made surfaces, such as quartz, ultra compact surfaces like Silestone and Dekton, Corian and porcelain. They are designed to replicate the look of natural stone, but have the added benefit of being much more resistant to wear and tear as well as scratches and stains. They're less expensive, helping to appeal to the mass market and those who want a smart, sleek look, but don't want something that's too precious.

Quartz worktops are typically made from man-made engineered stone mixed with resins and polymers, creating a very solid, non-porous surface. This allows for a more uniform look and the creation of much bigger slabs without joins, which are perfect for contemporary details like seamless waterfall edges on kitchen islands. Corian, on the other hand, is made of 1/3 resin and 2/3 natural materials, resulting in a stain and moisture resistant surface that's non-porous and easy to clean. It's more affordable than quartz or natural stone, but is more prone to scratches and can be easily damaged with hot pans. Porcelain is also strong, low maintenance and resistant to wear.

As with anything man-made, there's a cost to the environment, and in turn potentially our health. I think now when we're choosing objects and materials for our homes, we're more mindful of where things have come from and the impact on the natural world and the people making it.

Quartz is a mineral composed of silicon and oxygen, and quartz worktops typically contain up to 95% crystalline silica. It's now becoming better known that the dry cutting of silica products can lead to silicosis, a serious and irreversible lung disease, which mainly affects the workers who are exposed to toxic dust during the

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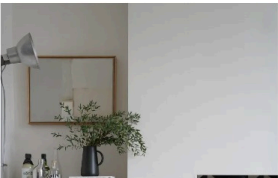
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SEARCH



A minimalist grey kitchen





manufacturing process. Indeed, it has worried scientists so much that Australia is the first country that is taking steps to ban the use, manufacture and importation of engineered stone. The US and UK could potentially follow suit.



A calm, cosy living room



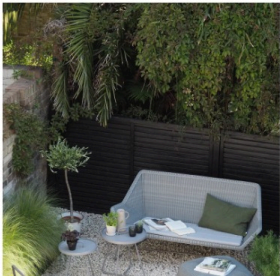
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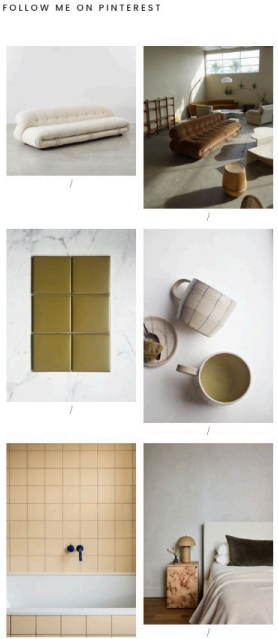
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What does that mean for our homes? I think we're likely to see a move towards more sustainable materials and recycled kitchen worktops. Enter, Cosmolite by Stone Italiana, for instance, which is made from 100% pre-consumer recycled waste minerals from the stone quarrying industry. First released two years ago, it can be seen as a more environmentally friendly alternative to quartz. Looking to reduce the amount of raw natural resources they consume, the stone that Stone Italiana uses comes not far from their factory just outside Verona, and they are very proud that the surface is entirely made in Italy.

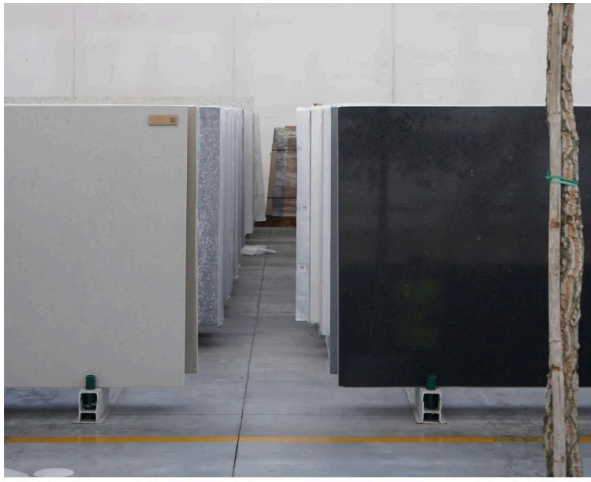
Available in 20 colours and three stone-effect finishes, Cosmolite is every kind of resistant – stain, odour, impact, scratch, cold and heat, and acid resistant. It's silica content is much lower than quartz at around 24-34% and it holds a Greenguard Gold award, meaning it doesn't release any VOC emissions after installation.

I visited the Stone Italiana factory just outside Verona to see how their recycled kitchen worktops are made. They liken it to the process of making a cake. Quartz powder, sand and polyester resin (with 25% organic content) are combined to make a mixture before being poured into a mould. It then goes through a machine that presses it flat using a vacuum vibration, which takes out every single bubble of air. A process which takes just 40 seconds. This creates a really compact and hard wearing material. The slabs then go into an oven that is set to 80 degrees for 30-40 minutes. The final step is polishing the slabs with diamond polishers. In this way, Stone Italiana can create 150 slabs a day.





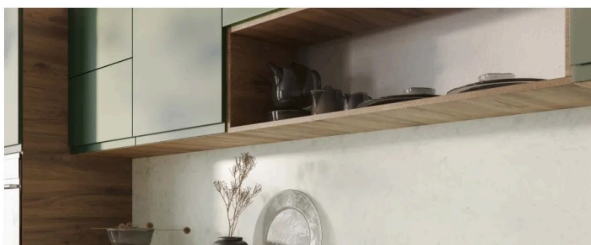
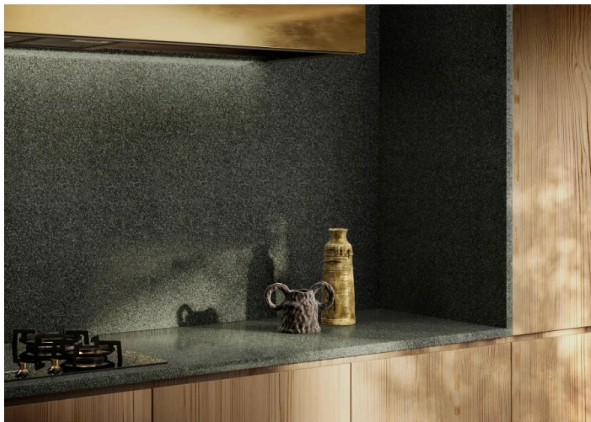




This year, Stone Italiana also launched Supernova, a new derivative of the Cosmolite collection that took a year to develop. Supernova uses raw materials that are quartz free, resulting in a silica content of just 5%, which can officially be labelled silica free. Previously, it was very hard to create a quartz in pure white, even though that was the most popular option for consumers. But with Supernova, Stone Italiana have managed to achieve five different shades of white, including an ultra-pure Superbianco.

Founded in 1979, Stone Italiana was in fact the company behind the making of the first slab of recomposed quartz. Other companies caught up some 15-20 years later. So it's saying something that Stone Italiana are choosing to stop all their quartz production next year and focus entirely on recycled surfaces. They can put almost anything into their product – they've created surfaces using recycled mirrors from the automotive industry, old computer chips, plastic bottles, rice husks and even discarded street waste. As they say, 'recycling is in our DNA'. And recycled kitchen worktops look like the future.

Stone Italiana is distributed in the UK by [Italian Luxury Surfaces](#), based in Berkshire





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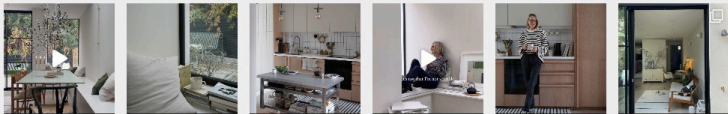
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