


KITCHENS:
**THE SPLASHBACK
SURFACES**
you need to know about

ONCE PURELY PRACTICAL, THE KITCHEN'S BEST SUPPORTING
ACT IS NOW A STYLE STATEMENT IN ITS OWN RIGHT

STORY VANESSA KEYS

JUST LIKE OUR kitchen benchtops, we demand a lot from our splashbacks: they must be hard-wearing, hygienic, easy to clean and resilient to heat. Pair that with the requisite wow-factor and the humble splashback suddenly has a lot to answer for. It's all about finding the sweet spot that straddles both practicality and style, says Vanessa Thompson, strategic designer for Beaumont Tiles. "You want something that adds to your space's overall design concept - but also protects the walls." Here's our comprehensive guide to finding your perfect splashback, in a material that suits your lifestyle and the look you love. >



*Smartstone in
Concreto Naturale
delivers durability
- and a touch of
rough-luxe.*



MIRROR

PROS: Reflective splashbacks, as seen in this design by Meir Australia, bounce light around the room and create the illusion of more space.

CONS: They're vulnerable to corrosion and discolouration, so look for a more premium, moisture-resistant coating.

TRENDING NOW: Distressed, mottled mirrors that create contrast in modern kitchens.

"If you have a small area, use the same benchtop material on the splashback – this will open up the space and make it feel bigger" ~ Catherine Valente, Laminex

STAINLESS STEEL

PROS: It's hygienic, very easy to maintain and any scratches will simply add to its character.

CONS: Stainless steel is reflective and prone to fingerprints, so go for a brushed or textured finish to disguise smears.

TRENDING NOW: For a more industrial look, choose a metal tile in brushed stainless steel or try a glimmering hammered copper for show-stopping style.

IN THE KNOW "Matching benchtops to splashbacks using complementary colours has been big this year," says Linda Hannah, brand manager at Caesarstone. Shiny silver and glossy white are a perfect pair.



DOS & DON'TS

BEFORE SELECTING YOUR SPLASHBACK, CONSIDER THESE FIVE EXPERT TIPS

DO choose your cooktop first. If you opt for a gas stove, you need a heat-resistant surface, says Kate Deakin-Bell, marketing manager at Cosentino. She recommends a composite stone over acrylic, which can react badly to heat. "If you've got an induction cooktop, your priority is something with stain- and scratch-resistant properties," she says.

DO consider placement. The most obvious location for your splashback is above the cooker and the sink, but these aren't the only places where heat and moisture lurk. Steam from a kettle or oil from a pan can travel, so think carefully about all exposed wall space.

DO think about joins. "If you're using different materials for your splashback and benchtop, you'll need to think about transition points," says Craig Smith, director at Corian. Also make sure that your tiler is using a suitable epoxy grout or a silicone sealant for best results.

DON'T disregard how much you use the space. "Enthusiastic cooks should avoid porous stone such as marble, which can scratch and stain easily," says Mikayla Rose, principal designer at Hearty. "And small tiles have grout, which needs regular cleaning."

DON'T choose materials in store. Depending on where your splashbacks are located – tucked away in the back or directly under task lighting – they will most likely look different to the shop displays, so ask for take-home samples.

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE FROM TOP): MEIR AUSTRALIA, BRIGID ARNOTT

TILES

PROS: "Tiles let you experiment with colour and pattern, and they're scratch-, stain- and water-resistant," says Vanessa from Beaumont Tiles. "They also don't retain odour." Here, the unique 'Ubiquity' tiles from Alloy provide visual interest.

CONS: More grout lines, particularly behind the cooktop and sink, means more routine cleaning. To minimise this level of maintenance, opt for tiles with a larger profile (up to 600mm), which need less grouting, or models with a rectified edge, which will lie completely flat to the wall.

TRENDING NOW: "We're seeing a lot of people choose pastel colours and small-format tiles in squares rather than rectangles," says Belinda Panuccio, interior designer at Perini Tiles. >



IN THE KNOW "Marble mosaics in all shapes and sizes are huge right now," says Vanessa. "New technology means that complex configurations are easier to install and people are embracing this."

GLASS

PROS: Strong, durable glass splashbacks are easy to clean and install. Choose from clear, frosted, tinted or colour-backed styles – decorative wallpapers can make for a unique, stunning backdrop.

CONS: Glass varies in quality, so ensure it's toughened to Australian standards.

TRENDING NOW:

Contemporary kitchens suit colour-tinted glass – it injects definition and character without overpowering the room.



ACRYLIC STONE



PROS: Made from a mix of acrylic and minerals, Corian is non-porous and hard-wearing. "And because you seamlessly cover the junction where the Corian benchtop meets the splashback, no mouldy silicone or grout will fall out over time," says Corian's Craig.

CONS: It can't have direct contact with hot pots or pans, unlike stone.

TRENDING NOW: Softly speckled surfaces, spanning the colour spectrum from ivory to onyx.

"A splashback not only needs to complement the style of your kitchen, it should also be functional and meet the mandatory Australian fire safety standards" ~ Linda Hannab, Caesarstone

METALINE



PROS: Metaline from Laminex is an aluminium-based material that resembles glass, but can easily bend for seamless corners and edges.

CONS: This product is not for DIY-ers and needs to be installed by an authorised Laminex tradesperson to ensure building code compliance.

TRENDING NOW: Metallic finishes in a scheme of classic black and white.

NATURAL STONE

PROS: "With variations in colour, intricate veins and a smooth finish, stone is always a winner and can be a real statement piece," says designer Mikayla.

CONS: Most natural stones are porous, so will need to be regularly resealed. Too much heat can also cause the sealer to degrade or discolour.

TRENDING NOW: "We're seeing a move towards mixing natural stones, such as using a marble splashback with a granite worktop," says Mikayla.

IN THE KNOW "Full-height splashbacks that match the width of the benchtop will be a major trend next year," says Craig. "This works especially well in small kitchens."



PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) GREG COX | BUREAUX, NIKOLE RAMSAY, SHANIA SHEGEDYN, ANNETTE O'BRIEN

IN THE KNOW "Kitchen design in 2019 will be chic and mature," says Mikayla, noting that mixed materials and earthy hues will be in. "Think matt finishes, warm greys and olive greens."



ENGINEERED STONE

PROS: Also called quartz composite, engineered stone has the same tactile qualities of the natural version, but has better resistance against stains and cracking. And it looks good, too! This Dekton splashback by Cosentino provides the kitchen's industrial flavour.

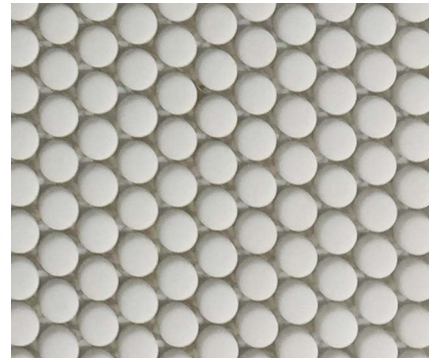
CONS: It's heat resistant, but not fireproof. When installing behind a gas cooktop, you need 200mm minimum distance between the burner and the splashback.

TRENDING NOW: Choosing the same material for both benchtop and splashback. >

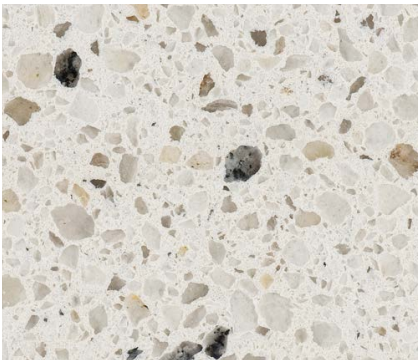


'Excava' engineered stone, \$1100/sqm, Caesarstone, caesarstone.com.au.

SPLASHBACKS:
10 OF
THE
BEST



'Moda' glass tile in Bianco, \$179/sqm, Perini Tiles, perini.com.au.



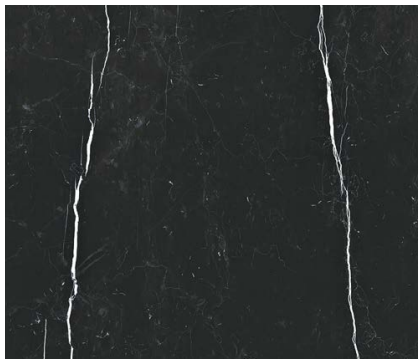
Quantum Quartz 'Everest' engineered stone, from \$285/sqm, WK Stone, wk.com.au.



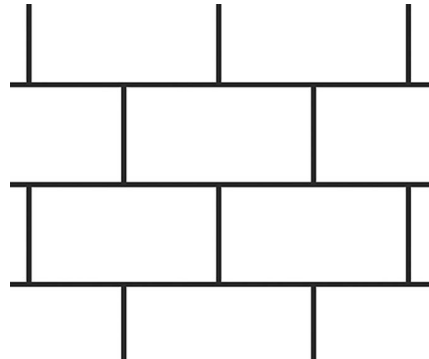
'Cherie' tile in Black, from \$299/sqm, Beaumont Tiles, beaumont-tiles.com.au.



Kaboodle Kitchen gloss laminate in Calcutta, \$305/sqm, Bunnings, bunnings.com.au.



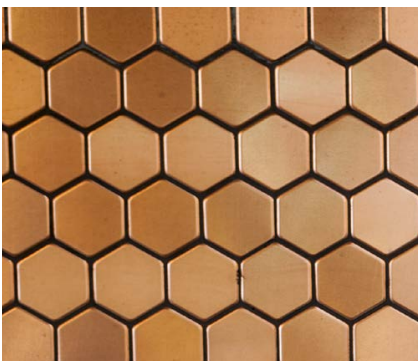
Quantum Quartz 'Marquina Quartz' engineered stone, from \$700/sqm, WK Stone, wk.com.au.



Kaboodle Kitchen gloss laminate in Subway Tile, \$285/sqm, Bunnings, bunnings.com.au.



'Lava Rock' solid surface, \$650/lineal metre, Corian, casf.com.au.



'Honey' stainless-steel tiles in Copper Mill, \$905/sqm, Alloy, alloydesign.com.au.

"Your splashback can be an opportunity to unite wet rooms in your home by using the same tile story throughout"
~ Vanessa Thompson, Beaumont Tiles



'Herringbone Calacutta' tile, \$32.95 (20cm x 40cm), Beaumont Tiles, beaumont-tiles.com.au. **HB**