

2/17

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54

## 2017 DIRECTORY OF SURFACING MATERIALS

DESIGN PIZZAZZ • 38

Kitchens With  
'Wow' Power

ELEMENTS OF STYLE • 32

Portfolio of  
Backsplash Designs

**DESIGNER: VINCE WINTEREGG**

**Kitchen Style; Largo, FL**

For many of Vince Winteregg's clients, less is often more when it comes to backsplashes. "I've been seeing a trend toward a more neutral backsplash with less variation and a more even color palette, especially when clients want the island or countertops to be the focal point," he says, referencing marble and subway tile as particularly popular material choices. "Then the backsplash can be a complement – something that will give the space an extra touch without taking away from anything else."

If clients want a plain island or countertop, Winteregg suggests a show-stopping backsplash. "But it's still neutral," he states, "maybe one or two colors, nothing overly intricate. Even if a client wants something drastic and bold, it's more along the lines of gray painted cabinets paired with white subway tile for contrast. My advice to clients is that they can bring in color with accessories that are easy to change, such as glassware, towels or even paint that can be easily changed down the road. I've had clients come in thinking they need to have a lot of pattern in the backsplash. Then they end up going with a 3"x6" marble that contrasts with the cabinets."

Winteregg references a current project as an example where the kitchen features a gray stained island, white Shaker perimeter cabinets and white subway tile with gray grout as the backsplash. Rustic wood beams and columns reclaimed from a local historic hotel add interest. "There is a lot going on, so the backsplash will complement, and not take away from anything in the design," he says. "It's the icing on the cake."

Winteregg also kept the backsplash design neutral in this kitchen, where he collaborated with Rochefort Construction. To create a larger footprint, they bumped out the kitchen about three feet and removed two walls to open up the previously tiny space to make room for the island. At the cooking niche, he added tumbled travertine contrasted with polished Diana Royal marble in a brick joint pattern, all set behind the custom copper hood.

The juxtaposition of rough and smooth is a popular trend, the designer notes. "People seem to want a mix of textures

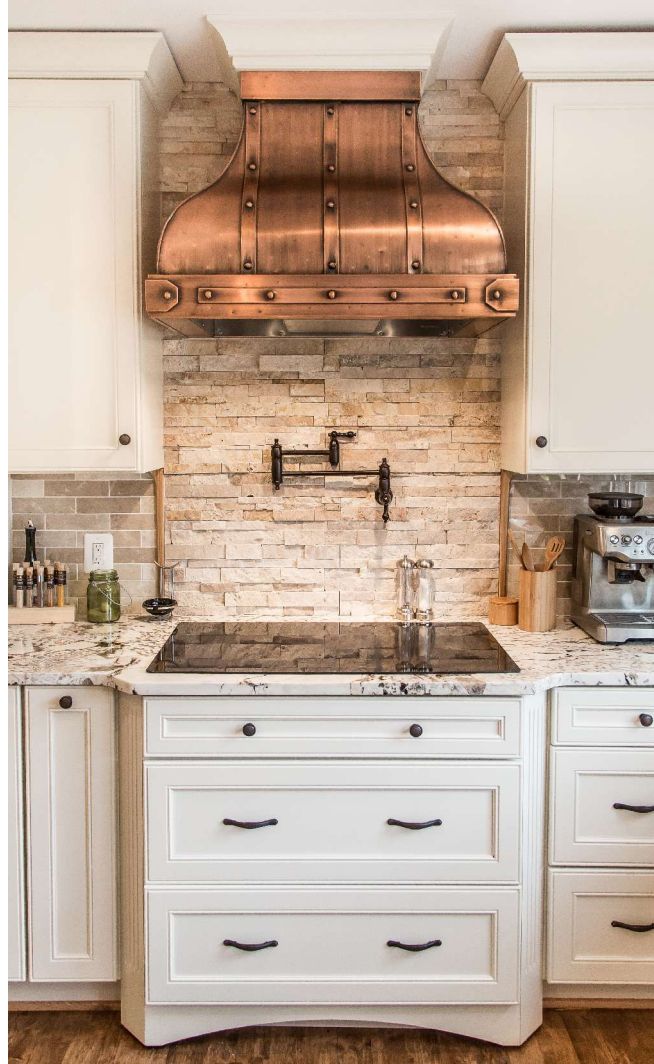


Photo: Vince Winteregg

Designer Vince Winteregg chose a tumbled travertine backsplash in this cooktop niche. The material contrasts nicely with the polished Diana Royal marble countertop and plays off the warm hues of the custom copper hood located above.

now," he says. "The dichotomy of these two is intriguing. It breaks up the monotony and gives visual interest."

The designer admits that a textured backsplash behind a range can be more difficult to keep clean, but his client was willing to compromise for the look, which is a trend he sees more. "Certain materials, such as marble, for example, are becoming popular again," he states. "They can be finicky and can require more maintenance, but they provide a look people want, and they are willing to do more to get that look."

Winteregg completed this design with exotic Vienna granite. "This particular slab had some busy and quiet sections," he says, noting that the chunky quartz areas were a great choice for turning the island into a focal point. "We played with the thought of doing a different stone for the island to set it apart, but then we found this slab. The variation between the busy and consistent sections gives it the look of two stones that look great together."

**DESIGNER: COURTNEY ZANELLI**

**Courtney Zanelli, LLC; Summit, NJ**

For clients who seek guidance when selecting backsplash materials, Courtney Zanelli creates an assortment of options – some that fall into the realm of what they think they want, others that bring them out of their comfort zone, and some the designer thinks will work best, chosen with the overall design aesthetic of the kitchen and home in mind as well as cues taken from conversations with the client.

"Some clients can get tired by the time decisions need to be made for the backsplash...experiencing project fatigue," she says. "They simply can't make one more decision and will settle on sheetrock or a 4" backsplash of countertop material.

In this kitchen, designer Courtney Zanelli selected a watery blue tile to integrate the indoors and outdoors, with the pooled glaze that gives the tile a depth of color echoing the view of the pond outside.



Photo: John Bessler

In my opinion, that's a tremendous missed opportunity to add an important design element that enhances both the form and function of the space."

Over time, the backsplash has evolved and has become an important design element, she notes, so she is always looking for interesting backsplash materials, exploring both color and texture. "Something more interesting and unique ultimately makes it more special," she adds. "I believe that you can have a beautiful kitchen that is also hardworking."

In the case of this kitchen, located in a weekend/summer retreat home where every room has a view of the pond it overlooks, Zanelli's client brought her an image featuring a dark blue backsplash. "A white kitchen with dark blue tile can be ordinary," she explains. "So I used her image as inspiration, checking the box that she wanted something blue. It served as a jumping-off point in my search for finding the right backsplash material. When I found this tile, I knew instantly that it would be perfect. Its watery blue color was quite literally an extension of the view outside, giving an almost seamless integration between the inside and outside...and she loved it from the first time I showed it to her."

The 3"x12" Water Gloss handmade tile from Walker Zanger's Café line is particularly interesting, given the way the glaze pools in different places, producing imperfections that add to its beauty, she offers. "It creates areas of dark and light blue, which result in a beautiful depth of color," she observes. "I find tile such as this so much more interesting than flat, solid colors that are too consistent and lack any character. This tile has gravitas!"

Zanelli paired the backsplash with Carrara marble countertops. "I wanted something that would be quiet, something that wouldn't compete with the backsplash," she says, noting the importance of making sure all components of the kitchen (cabinet color and hardware, backsplash, countertop, etc.) are considered together to create a story. "The marble's elegance and subtle veining was a 'no brainer.' The softer blue tile and light shades of gray and white in the marble work so well together."

**DESIGNER: BRONWYN REICE, AKBD**  
Buckminster Green; Philadelphia, PA

Given the nearly infinite number of choices available for backsplashes, Bronwyn Reice's clients often start a design project by selecting cabinets and countertops, followed by the backsplash. "Backsplashes are usually one of the later choices," she says. "But when you walk into a kitchen, it's at eye level and stands out, so it isn't unusual for clients to bring us something they love."

Regardless of when it is selected, choosing a backsplash material can add a subtle touch of handmade character or a burst of color, pattern or texture into the room, she notes. Trending choices are primarily tile, especially ceramic, porcelain, glass and cement, although she says uniform looks provided by slabs of stone, quartz or other countertop material are popular now, too. Backsplashes can also be a way to tie together different elements into the design, most often counters to upper cabinets. Material selection can further the goal of the kitchen design as well, such as with this historic Victorian home in the Northern Liberties neighborhood just north of Philadelphia.

The previous 1950s-era design featured metal cabinets, a sink and little else, recalls the designer, who opened up the kitchen by combining two rooms. "The new kitchen used to be the breakfast room and a 100-plus-year-old addition," she says.

While the past played a role in material selection, the home was not intended to be historical, she stresses. "We used materials like soapstone and cement tile that would have been used

Photo: Josh Douglas Smith



▣ This Cuban Heritage encaustic cement backsplash tile features a classic pattern that fits the history of the home, but using it on the backsplash adds a modern twist, says designer Bronwyn Reice.

in that era, along with salvaged wood, to relate the kitchen to the rest of the house, while creating what is clearly a modern kitchen, and not a period piece," she explains.

The Cuban Heritage encaustic cement tile boasts a bold pattern in more subtle colorways. "It's a classic pattern," she states. "It really wouldn't have been out of place on a vestibule floor in a home like this, so it isn't necessarily out of place historically. By using it on the backsplash, we played with the tradition – that is the twist – to take a tile that has some historic place in the home and do something more modern with it, like covering an entire wall."

Reice combined the tile with soapstone perimeter countertops, which pick up the black and blue colors in the backsplash tile. She further enhanced the design by adding warm gray cabinetry and a salvaged wood island top made by combining floor joists she found when remodeling another home in the area.