KITCHEN SURFACES

Marble
Marble Worktops

Hardness Level: 3
(1- soft to 10-hard)

What is it?
– Marble is a metamorphic rock (transformed limestone, made from shell remnants formed from mineral calcite), transformed by heat and pressure as it slips beneath the earth’s crust to fold and fuse into the forms we know as marble.

Its appeal
– Beautiful, functional, revered, poetic, perfectly imperfect, timelessly irresistible, cool to the touch – a perfect working surface for handling chocolate, dough, and pastry

Appearance and Available Colour

Tones
– Rippled (marbled) streaks of colour run through the stone
– Classic white – the purest form of marble – pure calcite (calcium carbonate)
– White with grey ‘striping’ – calcite rippled with clay
– Pink marble (often tinted with iron oxide)
– Green (coloured by Serpentine)
– Deep red (coloured by Serpentine) (rich in magnesium)
– Breccia marble – marble that has fractured underground and been ‘repaired’ by mineral rich ground water – Arabescato marble is an example

Finishes
– Available in honed (matt) or polished versions – polishing and sealing will have some effect on the depth of colour and on colour contrasts. Sealing may protect from staining but will not protect from etching or scratching.

Properties
– Rates only 3 on a hardness scale, which makes it vulnerable to scratching (from knives and from dragging items across it)
– Reacts with common acids (lemon juice, colas, wine, vinegar) which will leave its surface ‘etched’. If the stone has a polished surface, etch marks will leave an appearance of being unpolished (the marble acts to neutralise the acid and in that process some of the stone is dissolved)
– Heavy objects dropped onto marble may leave ‘stun marks’ or ‘star marks’ – these are normally aesthetic blemishes rather than structural but may cause chips or ‘flaking’ if they happen on an edge.
– Porosity – contrary to common belief, is relatively low (not as low as for granite or quartzite however) and, as for other stones, variable. It may absorb some stains – sealing will help minimise this problem.

Photo: Day True Bayswater House
A Day True View

– Despite its delicate fragility, and its propensity to show a few signs of wear and tear (or to remind of a good party!) we remain in thrall to the natural, classic, beautiful charms of almost every kind of marble.
– Know what you’re choosing – not all marbles are as fragile or as porous as each other. Colour is one indicator of the mineral composition and layering that will inform the robustness or vulnerability of the stone.
– Marble will suit those who embrace a process of transformation over time, and who do not mind that stone surfaces will patinate over the course of a human lifetime.

Photo: Day True Bayswater House