

**above left**

Project by
*Krywicki Interior
Design* featuring
a *Walker Zanger*
slab splashback.
*Photography Ali
Harper; styling
Ginny Branch*

above right

Contemporary,
Shaker-style
kitchen designed
by *The Myers Touch*
in collaboration
with *Adam
Knibb Architects*.
*Photography
Paul Craig*

WONDER wall

With stone drenching's popularity in kitchen design showing no signs of waning, **Irina Iacob** has noticed a trend within the trend... Meet single-slab splashbacks



above left Breccia Capraia marble, from £1100 per sq m, *Cullifords*.

above right Bracebridge Heath kitchen by *Victoria Covell Interiors*, priced £80,000. *Photography Sean Davies of Two Bears Studio*



Natural stone (along with its man-made counterparts) is having a real moment in the world of interiors – especially when it comes to worktops adorned with over-the-top veining. It should come as no surprise, then, that homeowners are now looking to their walls to continue the drama.

Using stone for splashbacks is nothing new, but I've recently noticed a shift towards designs featuring grand, large-scale solid slabs to protect the areas behind hobs and sinks. Which got me wondering – are they just eye candy for luxury lovers or a practical solution to deter splashes and stains? I reached out to my kitchen contacts to see if I was on to something. And, as I'm sure you've guessed by now, the answer was a resounding 'yes'.

The first thing everyone agreed on is – put simply – these enormous slabs look fantastic. “Having a single piece without joins is always going to be nicer than two pieces joined together,” explains Keith Myers, director at kitchen company The Myers Touch. But apart from offering a seamless look visually, this design does have a practical purpose, too, as it's incredibly hygienic and easier to wipe clean. (Essentially, the lack of joins means you won't have to worry about oil or food build-up in grout lines, Keith tells me.)

However, this also depends on the material you choose – and, believe me, the choice is vast. From statement marble adorned with intricate veining, such as Calacatta Viola or Rojo Levante, to high-quality quartz,



sintered stone, granite, ceramic and porcelain. “Generally, stone is an incredibly durable material and, budget-dependent, a great option for a splashback due to its hard-wearing nature,” explains Keith. However, while stone slabs are mostly scratch-, stain-, heat- and water-resistant, it’s important to pick a material that complements your cooking habits. For example, if you love savoury, spicy dishes, you might want to think twice before purchasing marble, as it is porous and has the potential to stain more easily. So, do talk to your designer about which material would work best for you.

But the most important factor to consider is the maximum dimensions of the slab itself. “If the area you’re looking to cover exceeds the slab size, you’ll need more than one piece,” says Matt Payne, design consultant at Roundhouse. So, how big can you go? According to Oliver Webb, director at Cullifords, the largest slab of natural stone you can get is approximately 340cm x 200cm, with man-made measuring 338cm x 180cm.

Although, while you can go bigger, this comes with its own challenges. For example, the size limitations of the engineered surfaces are influenced by a range of considerations, such as manufacturing constraints, structural integrity, quality control, transportation and handling practicalities. Make sure to visit different suppliers and see what’s possible.

More importantly, don’t overlook how you’ll get such a large slab into your kitchen, and how you will fit it onto the wall, advises Victoria Covell, creative director at Victoria Covell Interiors. In one of her projects, a single-slab splashback was the best choice as it was much cleaner visually and easier to maintain, but it took a genie lift and six men to install.

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above Design by *Kitchens by Holloways*, price on application.

left *Sola Kitchens'* Gustavian and Hygge cabinetry styles with quartzite Fantasy Brown Primera surfaces. A similar bespoke kitchen in oak and marble starts from £54,000. *Photography* Darren Chung



left Arbor kitchen, from £30,000, Harvey Jones.

below Urbo and Metro Classic luxury kitchen in Little Greene's Mushroom, with brass detailing. Roundhouse kitchens start from £35,000. Interior design by The Mint List. Photography Mary Wadsworth

This type of splashback has the potential to be costly, depending on the material you choose, so it's worth keeping this in mind when planning your budget. If you want to achieve a similar look without breaking the bank, stone-effect materials such as porcelain, laminate or printed glass are great options. "They are lower in cost and can be a preference for some homeowners. These alternatives allow for personalised finishes with various patterns, tones and visual effects," adds Keith.

There is no doubt that single-slab stone splashbacks boast clean, contemporary aesthetics and will infuse any space with bags of sophistication. The question is, how big are you prepared to go? &

