

Great Ideas

INGENIOUS SOLUTIONS TO COMMON DESIGN PROBLEMS



Meet the modern hearth. A radiant-heat mat installed under the granite countertop keeps the island warm.

Warming up to granite

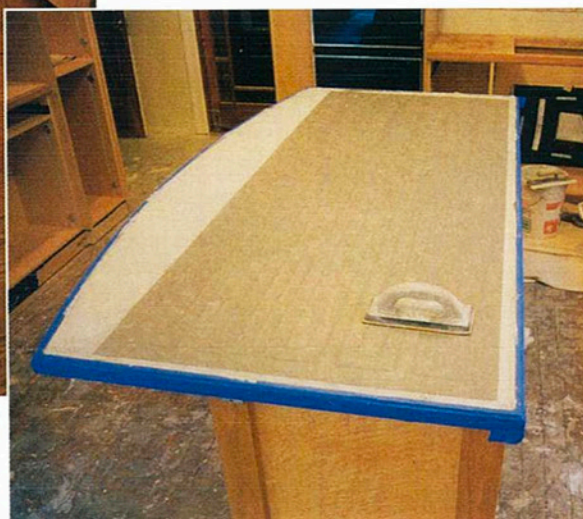
Every kitchen-design discussion seems to involve an exchange about the kitchen's role as the gathering place and hearth of a home. We don't gather around a fire anymore; we assemble in the kitchen.

My clients Kevin and Sheila loved the idea of a central island where their friends and family could gather. I planned to top it with a slab of granite, but they didn't like how cold stone can be. I solved this problem by heating the slab from below.

With a GFI-protected circuit in the floor below the cabinet, our crew installed a Nuheat electrical radiant-heat mat (www.nuheat.com) in the subcounter. These mats are typically installed in the mortar bed under tile floors. In this kitchen, the mat is embedded between two layers of thinset mortar troweled onto a plywood substrate. After the thinset cured, we put in a granite countertop. We installed a thermostat—the kind typically installed on a bathroom wall—in the kitchen-sink cabinet. The thermostat relies on a sensor embedded under the granite rather than one that reacts to room temperature.

Now my clients don't have to worry about cold stone. In fact, the island even keeps their bread warm.

Kurt Lavenson is an architect in Oakland, Calif. Photo left by Charles Miller. Photo below by the author.



Recipe for warm granite. Embedded between two layers of thinset mortar, a radiant mat sits atop the island's plywood substrate.

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BONUS: Design
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breakfast
nook,
p. 94

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