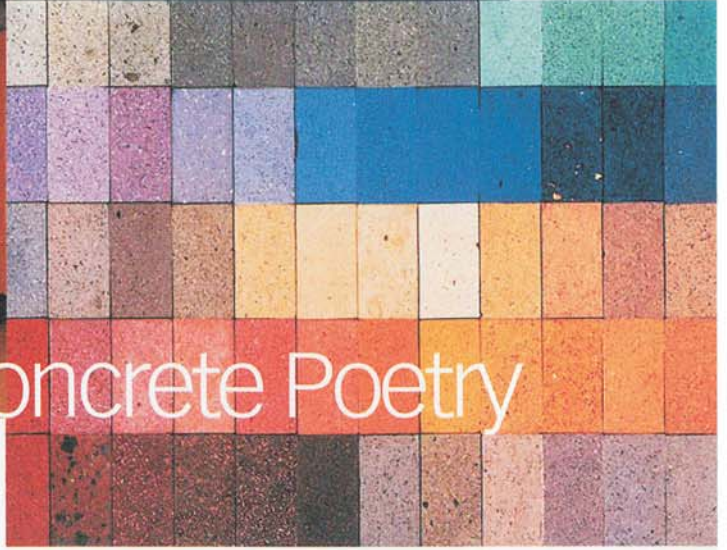


A concrete countertop, LEFT, can be paired with a wood cutting board. Concrete fabricators can create a multitude of colors, BELOW, by adding powdered and liquid pigments.



## Fu-Tung Cheng's Concrete Poetry

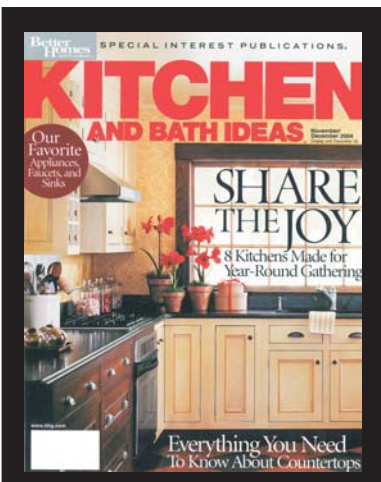
Tough as any street or sidewalk, yet cast in all the colors of the rainbow, concrete countertops make a solidly contemporary style statement.

Concrete countertops offer a sophisticated look and add unusual color to your kitchen. Cast in place or installed as preformed slabs, these countertops are usually 1½ inches thick.

The key to concrete's increasing popularity as a countertop surface is its versatility as a design medium, according to Fu-Tung Cheng, *above*, architect, designer, and author of *Concrete Counters* (Taunton Press, 2002) and *Concrete at Home* (to be released by Taunton Press in early 2005). Through such techniques as stamping, staining, and imbedding personal mementos into the surface, Cheng uses concrete to create looks as unique as the homes and people he works with.

Concrete can take on different shapes, colors, textures, and edge treatments. Although concrete is versatile, care must be taken to keep the surface in good shape. It is similar to marble in terms of durability and porosity, and it should not be used as a cutting surface or a resting place for hot pots. Cutting on it will leave marks, and sudden changes in temperature can cause curling or warping on newly installed slabs. Regular sealing maintains stain resistance.

Concrete countertops typically cost \$55–\$100 per square foot. As proper installation is key to the quality of the finished product, look for an installer who has extensive experience with concrete.



## Set in Stone

“If a client really uses the kitchen and wants the countertop to look as though it is never used, polished granite is really the way to go,” says Jan Lindemann, a kitchen designer at the Manhattan Center for Kitchen & Bath in New York. “Other stones, as well as concrete, will ‘patina’ over time.”

Soapstone from M. Teixeira (from \$27 per square foot); 877/478-8170; [www.soapstones.com](http://www.soapstones.com)