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Photos: Paul Dyer

Jennifer Macdonald combined natural soapstone and commercial-grade concrete in this kitchen. Pairing the two materials balances the overall design while playing to the strengths of each material.

For example, custom commercial-grade concrete perimeter countertops offer durability and versatility. “It’s something we love to use,” she says. “Because it’s a commercial-grade surface, it really stands up to the rigors of daily kitchen use. It can also be matched to any color and customized in so many ways. We love how drain boards and sinks can be carved right into it. It’s a wonderful material to work with.”

Macdonald counterbalanced the rugged concrete with natural soapstone for the kitchen’s focal-point island. “Soapstone is such an elegant material, but it’s also extremely durable,” she says. “Many people remember soapstone counters in the science labs of their youth, which held up to the extreme temperatures of Bunsen burners and the accidental spills of harsh chemicals.

“The soapstone finish can also be left raw for a beautiful soft blue/gray color, or darkened with oil to create an almost black surface,” she continues, noting that this kitchen’s raw state mirrors the palette’s warm, caramel tones used throughout the home. “Because it’s a natural stone, it’s full of beautiful veining and organic imperfections that look even better with time as the material starts to take on its own natural patina.”

Purswell also has clients who appreciate the beauty and durability of soapstone as well as its timelessness, the latter of which was a particularly important characteristic for a recent remodel where his clients built upon a bright, coastal theme for their kitchen, mixing soapstone on the island and perimeter with white Shaker cabinets and a beveled subway tile backsplash.

“We’re in a historical area and you just can’t get more classic than soapstone. It has a built-in patina that can’t quite