



PROFILE OF INNOVATION



## Tile Countertops



Beautiful, durable, and maintenance-free

## TILE COUNTERTOPS

## Tile Countertops Are Back!

**There was a time when the tile countertop held a position of preeminence in the North American home because it offered a perfect balance of aesthetics and function.**

In earlier times, tile countertops were set in the traditional mortar bed method, producing an installation that was rock-solid and resistant to moisture. Countertops produced in this tradition were also true and pleasing to the eye because, using mortar as the medium, the tile setter could make them flat, plumb, level, and square.

Moreover, with the available special ceramic trim pieces, the tile setter could offer the homeowner a “tiled under sink,” a ceramic cove at the countertop/backsplash intersection, and a ceramic sink rail. Although most, if not all, of the tile lines that came with the necessary trim pieces were soft, talc-bodied tiles with relatively soft glazes, these tiles, when combined with traditional installation methods, produced countertop surfaces that were relatively durable, resistant to heat and abrasion, and easy to maintain. It was a well-balanced system of components and methodology.

**So why have tiled countertops lost their position of preeminence?** Advancements in adhesive and tile manufacturing technologies and the subsequent shift in installation methods created new opportunities for the tile industry. With these changes, however, came new challenges.

Until a few decades ago, the traditional mortar bed (mud-set) method was the only system available to successfully install tile countertops. There was also an infrastructure within the industry to properly train tile setters in this type of installation. In the late 1950s and early '60s, thin-set mortar and organic adhesives were introduced, which made tile setting easier and more accessible and ushered in the thin-bed, or direct bond, method of tile installation. Mud-set tile installation became less and less common, and the infrastructure to train tile setters in this method eroded.

By the 1970s, tile setters in many regions of the country were bonding tile directly to plywood substrates in countertop installations, which didn't bode well for the tile countertop market. Plywood is moisture sensitive and, therefore, subject to warping and rotting, which damages the tile covering in direct bond applications. In contrast to a traditional mud-set countertop, homeowners saw the service life of their tile countertop dramatically reduced.

The invention of the “monocottura,” or single-fire, process of manufacturing tile improved the strength and durability of ceramic tiles, enabling manufacturers to produce large-format tiles. However, the process didn't lend itself to producing special ceramic trim pieces such as those required for tile countertops.

The combination of reduced service life and diminishing availability of special ceramic trim pieces compelled the homeowner to seek out alternative surfacing materials for countertops.

**How can tiled countertops return to a position of preeminence?** A new system of components and methodology is now available for producing beautiful and durable tile countertops.

The Schluter®-DITRA uncoupling membrane protects the tile covering from damage due to expansion and contraction of the plywood substrate by allowing the two layers to move independently. The assembly is easily protected against repeated water exposure by using Schluter®-KERDI-FIX to seal the area between DITRA and the sink and by sealing DITRA seams and countertop/backsplash transitions with Schluter®-KERDI-BAND. In addition to uncoupling and waterproofing, DITRA also provides vapor management, which allows the plywood to breathe and, thus, helps prevent warping (critical in an environment where steam from a dishwasher would otherwise be problematic).

Schluter® prefabricated profiles and special inside and outside corner pieces can be used to produce stunning sink rails, an elegant and maintenance-free cove at countertop/backsplash transitions, and beautiful tiled-under sinks. Thus, when designing a countertop, the designer can choose from today's vast selection of tile shapes, sizes, textures, and colors without considering the availability of trim pieces. These are the new “tools” of an ancient trade, and they are available in a variety of materials, colors, and finishes, including stainless steel.

Schluter® components and methodology for tile countertops form a user-friendly system that not only rivals the technical and aesthetic merits of the traditional mud-set system but, in many ways, surpasses it. Together with today's advances in tile manufacturing processes, these new tools fulfill the promise of timeless elegance and durability, the very character of ceramic tile. Each product from Schluter®-Systems speaks to the designer's sense of quality and the homeowner's demand for substance, which is why **tile countertops are back!**





TILE COUNTERTOPS







COUNTERTOP ASSEMBLY



PROTECT COUNTERTOPS FROM MOISTURE AND PREVENT CRACKED TILES



**Schluter®-DITRA**

**Schluter®-DITRA** is a polyethylene membrane with a grid structure of cutback cavities and a fleece webbing laminated to its underside. DITRA protects the tile covering from damage due to expansion and contraction of the plywood substrate by allowing the two layers to move independently. It also protects the plywood from surface water exposure. The open ribs allow the plywood to breathe, and thus help prevent warping (critical in an environment where steam from dishwashers would otherwise be problematic).



**Schluter®-KERDI-BAND**

**Schluter®-KERDI-BAND** waterproofing strip is used to seal DITRA seams and countertop/backsplash transitions.



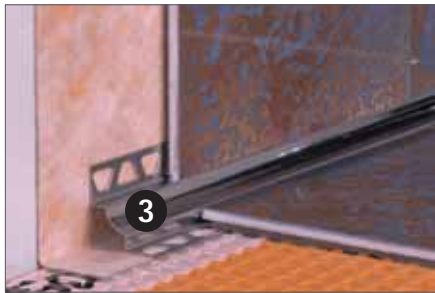
**Schluter®-KERDI-FIX**

**Schluter®-KERDI-FIX** a single-component sealing and bonding compound with a silane-modified polymer base that is used to seal the area between **Schluter®-DITRA** and the sink to protect against moisture penetration.





## PROVIDE BEAUTIFUL, HYGIENIC, MAINTENANCE-FREE COUNTERTOP/BACKSPLASH TRANSITIONS



### Schluter® -DILEX-EHK/-HKW/-AHK

**Schluter®-DILEX** cove-shaped profiles provide beautiful, maintenance-free countertop/backsplash transitions. These profiles eliminate caulk joints that must be replaced over time. The cove profiles allow for easy cleaning and will not trap debris, making them ideal for areas where food products are handled and strict hygiene is essential.

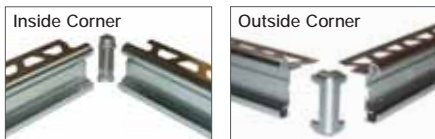


DILEX-EKE

### Alternative

**Schluter®-DILEX-EKE** provides a straight, uniform, discreet joint that eliminates caulking at countertop/backsplash transitions. Available in a variety of colors to match grout.

## PROVIDE ELEGANT SINK RAILS AND PROTECT TILE EDGES



### Schluter® -RONDEC-CT

**Schluter®-RONDEC-CT** is a sink rail profile for countertops that have been fitted with a ceramic or stone tile covering. The face of the profile features a recessed section with dovetailed grooves to which field or accent tile is bonded, thus eliminating the need for ceramic trim. Matching inside and outside corners (90° and 135°) available.



RONDEC-STEP

### Alternative 1

**Schluter®-RONDEC-STEP** is a sink rail profile for countertops that have been fitted with a ceramic or stone tile covering. Matching inside and outside corners (90° and 135°) available.



RONDEC

### Alternative 2

**Schluter®-RONDEC** in stainless steel can be used to create beautiful sink rails for tiled countertops. Matching inside and outside corners (90°) available.

## PROVIDE ELEGANT TILED-UNDER SINKS



### Schluter® -RONDEC

**Schluter®-RONDEC** is a finishing and edge-protection profile which can be used to produce tiled-under sinks. A tiled-under sink creates a neat appearance and makes the countertop easy to clean, since there is no lip to trap debris. Matching sink corners available.

Available in a variety of finishes including: nickel, chrome, copper/bronze, and brass anodized aluminum; stainless steel; solid brass; and chrome-plated solid brass.



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