

How to remove rings from soapstone countertops and clean them daily?

Q. We just bought a home with 11-year-old soapstone kitchen counters. Which product do you recommend to remove the rings and also a product for daily cleaning? Thank you for your help.

A. Soapstone countertops are a lot like a favorite pair of blue jeans... comfortable, durable, and better with age. This type of stone tends to develop a lived-in patina that beautifully tells the story of a useful surface. Rings on soapstone are often not traditional “stains” like you’d see on marble or granite, but rather areas where moisture or oils have interacted with the surface or where the mineral-rich stone has darkened unevenly.

Because soapstone is softer than many other stones, it responds differently to cleaning and maintenance than other types of stone.

The first step in addressing rings on soapstone is to determine whether what you’re seeing is surface residue or deeper absorption. Soapstone doesn’t etch like limestone or marble, so most rings you see are from oils, food spills, water minerals, or just general wear.

For daily cleaning, keep it simple and use a mild, pH-neutral cleaner or warm water with a drop or two of dish soap. Apply with a soft microfiber cloth or a non-abrasive sponge, gently wiping the surface. Avoid anything acidic (like vinegar) or harsh chemicals, as these can alter the natural surface finish over time. After cleaning, rinse with clean water and dry with a soft cloth to prevent water spots or streaking.

NOTE: Follow the manufacturer’s safety precautions when using chemicals.

For removing existing rings, start with a dedicated stone soapstone cleaner or a mild degreasing stone cleaner. These products are designed to lift oils and residues from the surface without damaging the stone. Apply according to the label, gently working in a circular motion, then rinse and dry thoroughly.

If the rings persist after gentle cleaning, you can lightly sand the surface with very fine (600–1200 grit) wet/dry sandpaper. Soapstone can be carefully buffed by hand to even out darker areas or rings. Keep the stone wet while sanding, use consistent pressure, and follow up by wiping clean with a damp cloth. This step subtly refreshes the surface and can reduce the appearance of rings.

Soapstone tolerates light sanding well, but take care to keep the finish uniform across the countertop. You don't need aggressive abrasion. Just sand enough to lift surface discoloration.

Once the surface looks even and clean, you can apply a stone conditioner or mineral oil specifically made for soapstone. This is not a cleaner, but a finishing oil that enhances the stone's natural color and helps mask minor variations. Apply a thin layer, let it absorb for the time recommended on the product label, then wipe off any excess.

Over time, regular applications of soapstone conditioner or mineral oil will help the soapstone develop the rich, warm patina.

If you're not satisfied with the outcome of your DIY efforts, you might consider having a stone restoration professional evaluate the countertop. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**. A PRO can confirm whether the marks are simply surface-level or if deeper attention is needed. They can safely achieve a consistent finish.

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