

▼ STUDIO BECKER CONCEALED ELEVATION SYSTEM

Studio Becker, a Northern California–based design and manufacturing firm that specializes in kitchen furniture and cabinetry, offers a clever storage system for your kitchen. It lets you maintain clutter-free countertops while still keeping your most frequently used cooking utensils and small appliances at your fingertips. The elevation system is built into the kitchen cabinetry, and its cubbies rise out of the countertop, giving you easy access to whatever items you've stored in them. When raised fully, the system also serves as a divider between your food-prep and cooking space and the living space on the other side of the island.



▲ TERAGREN BAMBOO COUNTERTOPS

The qualities that make bamboo a preferred material for flooring— attractiveness and durability— also make it suitable for the tops of counters, kitchen islands, and tables. Teragren, which is based on Bainbridge Island, Wash., offers its countertops in traditional bamboo, strand bamboo, and parquet butcher block, which is shown here. The countertops are made with a formaldehyde-free and food-safe adhesive and are available unfinished or prefinished with a food-safe mineral oil/beeswax finish. Like all bamboo, the type that Teragren uses for its countertops grows fast, which, the company notes, means that it's a rapidly renewable raw material. This particular bamboo also is naturally bacteria-resistant. And, because it is not harvested until it is between 5½ and 6 years old (in China), when the fibers are densest, the company says the bamboo is on average 25 percent harder than red oak and 12 percent harder than North American maple.