

DIY FIELD GUIDE

HOW WE BUILT OUR OUTDOOR KITCHEN ISLAND

A practical, step-by-step guide to the concrete-block base, thin-overlay countertop and wood-look finish.



Before You Build

IMPORTANT: This guide documents our personal DIY process. A masonry island is heavy. Confirm that your slab or foundation can support the load; follow local codes; and use licensed professionals for gas, electrical and plumbing work. Maintain every appliance manufacturer's required clearances and ventilation. Wear eye, hearing, skin and respiratory protection, and use wet methods or HEPA dust collection when cutting or sanding cement-based products.

Our island at a glance

Island base	126½ in. L × 45 in. D × 34 in. H
Finished countertop	130½ in. L × 47¼ in. D
Side overhang	2½ in.
Seating /leg overhang	17 in.
Walkway clearance	33½ in. between island and back counters
Pendant clearance	34 in. from countertop to bottom of pendant
Finished counter height	37 in.
Countertop edge thickness	2½ in.

Storage openings	38.3 × 22.7 × 20.7 in. cabinet; 13.4 × 26 × 19.6 in. trash drawer

Plan around seating

Test the actual stool before locking in the counter height and overhang. Aim for 10–12 inches between the stool seat and the underside of the counter, then confirm comfortable knee space.

Surface	Typical surface height	Typical seat height
Counter height	34–36 in.	24–26 in.
Bar height	40–42 in.	28–30 in.

Comfort check: Wayfair recommends 26–30 inches between stool centers and roughly 12–18 inches of knee depth.

Shop the project

[SHOP: Wayfair outdoor kitchen collection](#)

[SHOP: Danielle's full Wayfair storefront](#)

Lowe's: individual commissionable product links are included in Part 2

[SHOP: Danielle's Amazon storefront](#)

[SHOP: Countertop product link](#)

Affiliate disclosure: Lowe's, Wayfair and Amazon links in this guide are commissionable. If you purchase through them, I may earn a commission at no additional cost to you.

Affiliate disclosure: This guide may contain affiliate links. If you purchase through them, I may earn a commission at no additional cost to you. Always confirm that the exact product is rated for your location and intended use.

Materials & Tools

Choose the right system for the location

Component	Indoor / protected use	Outdoor / freeze-thaw use
Countertop finish	SureCrete MicroTek One Coat may be used on compatible interior cement-based surfaces.	Use a countertop system whose manufacturer explicitly approves exterior and freeze-thaw exposure. SureCrete XS-Precast is approved for outdoor countertops, but it is a cast/pour system—not a skim-coat substitute.
Backer board	A backer board approved for interior countertops, installed to its instructions.	Use a board specifically approved for outdoor kitchen counters, such as PermaBASE UltraBacker; include the manufacturer-required water-management and fastening system.
Plywood	Use the grade and thickness required by the finish system. Keep it dry.	Exterior-rated plywood alone is not weatherproof. Protect every edge and penetration and use only within an approved exterior assembly.
Island finish	Pine tongue-and-groove is a cost-effective decorative finish.	Prefer exterior-rated porcelain tile, composite cladding, masonry veneer or naturally durable/treated wood rated for the exposure.
Adhesives + fasteners	Products compatible with masonry, wood and the selected finish.	Exterior-rated, corrosion-resistant and approved for freeze-thaw/moisture exposure; follow service-temperature and cure

		requirements.
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"Moisture resistant" does not automatically mean approved for exterior use . Check the current technical data sheet for every layer in the assembly .

Concrete–block base

- Concrete masonry units (CMUs/cinder blocks), quantity based on your dry fit
- Mortar suitable for the existing slab and outdoor exposure
- Exterior-rated construction adhesive compatible with masonry
- Rubber mallet; 2-ft. and 4-ft. levels; tape measure; chalk/pencil
- Mixing bucket, drill and mortar paddle; masonry trowel
- Drawer/shelf inserts and appliance installation specifications

Countertop substrate + finish

- Plywood of the grade and thickness required by the complete countertop system [ADD SIZE/THICKNESS]
- INDOORS: countertop-approved cement backer board and its specified screws
- OUTDOORS: exterior/outdoor-kitchen-counter-rated backer board, such as PermaBASE UltraBacker, and its complete approved assembly
- Alkali-resistant mesh tape and compatible mortar/thinset for seams
- INDOORS ONLY: SureCrete MicroTek One Coat, white, 40-lb bag
- OUTDOORS: a manufacturer-approved exterior countertop system, such as cast/poured SureCrete XS-Precast; do not treat it as a one-for-one MicroTek replacement
- SureCrete SC Color Pack in Limestone, matched to the selected SureCrete system
- ElastoShield waterproofing/crack-isolation product; confirm its intended layer, compatibility and exterior rating from the current label
- Squeegee/magic trowel, steel finishing trowels, damp sponge and spray bottle
- Concrete-rated wet sanding blocks or diamond pads
- Exterior clear sealer; confirm compatibility with the selected countertop system
- Plastic sheeting, painter's tape, PPE and HEPA dust control
- SHOP: SureCrete MicroTek

SHOP: ElastoShield

SHOP: Limestone pigment

SHOP: Sanding discs

SHOP: Exterior clear sealer

SHOP: Countertop product

Island wrap

- Unfinished pine tongue-and-groove panels — exact Lowe's link included in Part 5
- Paint tinted Bar Harbor Beige — exact Lowe's link included in Part 5; confirm the selected base is exterior-rated
- Stain in Early American — exact Lowe's link included in Part 5; use an exterior-rated stain for outdoor work
- Exterior clear sealer — exact Amazon link included above; confirm compatibility and exterior rating
- Liquid Nails construction adhesive — exact Lowe's link included in Part 5; verify exterior, masonry and wood compatibility
- Chip brush for stain; table saw; miter/chop saw
- Alternative: exterior-rated wood-look porcelain tile [ADD LINK]

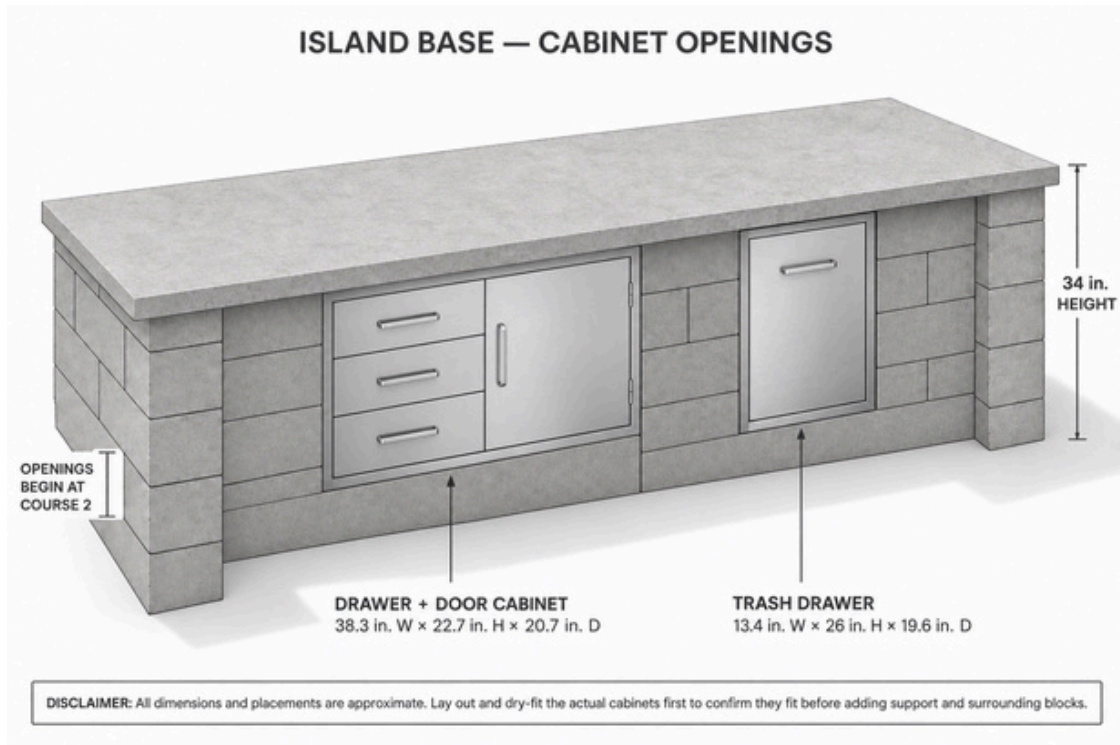
Part \ | Build the Concrete Base

\ Measure the space

Record the maximum width, depth and height available. Mark the island footprint on the slab, checking walking clearances, door swings and appliance access. Our island base measures 126½ inches long × 45 inches deep × 34 inches high. We left 33½ inches of clearance between the island and the back countertops.

∪ Plan every opening

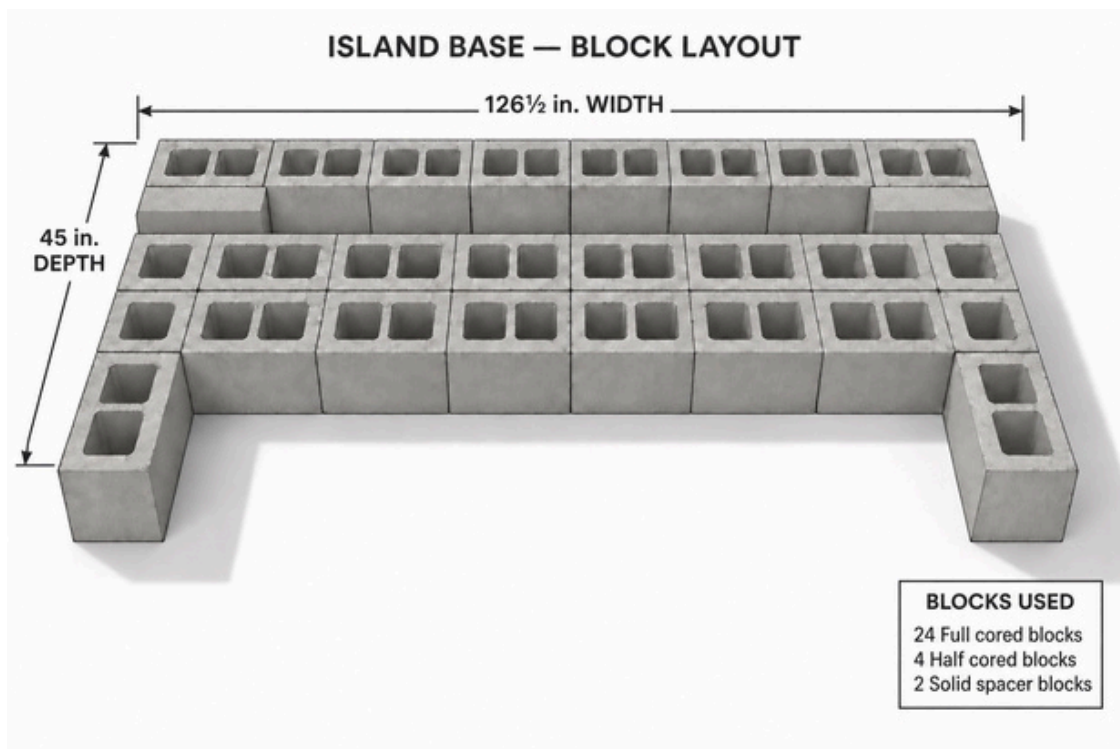
Lay out drawers, shelves, utilities and appliances before adhesive or mortar. Our drawer-and-door cabinet measures approximately 38.3 inches wide × 22.7 inches high × 20.7 inches deep; our trash drawer measures approximately 13.4 inches wide × 26 inches high × 19.6 inches deep. Both openings begin above one course of block. Use the manufacturer's actual cutout, ventilation and combustible-clearance diagrams—not the appliance's outside dimensions alone.



Approximate cabinet-opening plan. Dry-fit the actual cabinets first, then add support and surrounding blocks only after confirming the fit.

🔧 Dry-fit the complete first course

We laid the entire first row without adhesive, then removed blocks where the drawer openings would go. Our illustrated layout uses approximately 24 full cored blocks, four half cored blocks and two solid spacer blocks. Quantities can change with actual block dimensions, joints, cuts and cabinet placement, so buy from a verified dry fit—not the illustration alone.



Approximate 126½ × 45-inch block layout. Verify every dimension and block count with the actual materials on site.



Dry-fit the first course and mark every opening before bonding anything.

ξ **Make the first course perfectly level**

Check each block front-to-back and side-to-side, then check across neighboring blocks with a longer level. This first course controls everything above it.

ξ**A** **Correct an out-of-level slab with mortar**

Mix the mortar according to its label. Apply a supporting bed beneath the block and gently tap the high side with a rubber mallet until the block is level. Repeat block by block, continually checking the neighboring units and the whole run. Allow the mortar to set according to the product directions before loading it.



Level each block individually—and then level the row as a system.

- **Stack to the planned height**

Once the first course is secure, apply exterior-rated masonry construction adhesive in the pattern required by its label. Stagger joints where your design allows, preserve planned openings and keep checking plumb and level as you stack. Our base is 34 inches high before the countertop assembly.

Part ۲ | Build the Countertop Substrate

۱ Measure, mock up and confirm the overhang

Our finished countertop measures 130½ inches long × 47¼ inches deep, with a finished height of 37 inches and a 2½-inch-thick edge. It extends 2½ inches at the sides and 17 inches on the seating side for legroom. Size yours for the substrate's strength, planned support and actual stools. Test one stool and maintain 10–12 inches of seat-to-counter clearance.

۲ Cut and assemble the plywood deck

Piece together exterior-grade plywood to the planned finished size. Support all seams and spans. Any cantilevered seating overhang may require brackets or engineered reinforcement; do not assume plywood and cement board alone can carry it.



Cut the deck to the finished footprint and support seams and long spans.

🔧 **Anchor the deck to the masonry base**

Position the plywood, predrill as required and fasten it with corrosion-resistant concrete/masonry screws suited to the substrate. Keep screw heads flush and avoid cracking block edges.



Secure the deck only after the dimensions, support and planned openings have been checked.

ξ **Add the correct backer board for the location**

We added cement backer board over the plywood to create a cementitious surface. For an indoor counter, use a board approved for interior countertop applications. For an outdoor counter, use a product explicitly approved for outdoor kitchen counters—PermaBASE UltraBacker is one documented example. Backer board is not structural and does not guarantee compatibility with every overlay. Follow both the board and finish-system manufacturers for plywood thickness, bedding or membrane, water management, fastener type and spacing.

CORRECTION : Do not describe cement board simply as “made to adhere to concrete.” It is a stable cementitious underlayment, but adhesion still depends on the complete manufacturer-approved system. James Hardie’s guidance for countertop applications calls for a suitable plywood base, specified fasteners, filled joints and alkali-resistant tape.



Fasten cement board without overdriving screws or breaking the edges.



Cut and dry-fit the board before fastening; protect yourself from silica dust.

◦ **Build the finished edge**

Attach strips of plywood and/or cement board around the exposed perimeter to create the visual edge thickness. Our finished edge is [ADD EXACT THICKNESS]. Keep the edge straight and reinforce long unsupported runs.

⌘ **Reinforce the seams**

Fill joints and cover them with 2-inch alkali-resistant glass-fiber mesh tape embedded in the compatible mortar/thinset. Cover screw heads and feather the material smooth. This reduces movement at joints, but no surface treatment can guarantee that a moving substrate will never crack.



Embed alkali-resistant mesh tape at seams and transitions.



Use alkali-resistant—not ordinary drywall—mesh tape with the compatible cementitious seam material.

Part ۳ | Apply the Thin Concrete Overlay

INDOOR VS. OUTDOOR: We used white SureCrete MicroTek One Coat with an SC Color Pack in Limestone. SureCrete currently describes MicroTek as an INTERIOR overlay, so the thin-overlay steps and ratios below belong in an indoor version of this project. For an OUTDOOR countertop, choose a complete exterior/freeze-thaw-approved countertop system. SureCrete XS-Precast is approved for outdoor countertops, but it is cast or poured at a specified thickness and requires a different forming, mixing and placement process. Do not swap products while keeping MicroTek instructions.

SHOP: MicroTek used

SHOP: ElastoShield used

SHOP: Limestone pigment used

SHOP: Countertop product link

Verified mixing ratios

Batch	Dry MicroTek	SC Color Pack	Water range
Full	40 lb	8 oz / 0.5 lb	5–6 qt
One-half	20 lb	4 oz	2.5–3 qt
One-third	13 lb 5⅓ oz	2⅔ oz	1⅔–2 qt

For partial batches, weigh the dry mix and pigment separately; do not divide by eye. Stay within the manufacturer's water range. The mixed overlay should be smooth, lump-free and easy to trowel—not soupy. Weather, substrate and technique affect feel, so measured water is more reliable than a visual “pancake batter” rule.

These batch ratios apply only to 50-lb MicroTek One Coat with the specified 20-lb SC Color Pack. They are not ratios for XS-Precast, XS-PROcast or another exterior system.

1 Choose the weather window

SureCrete specifies air and substrate temperatures of 50–90°F during placement and for 48 hours afterward. Avoid precipitation during that period. In heat or wind, shade the work, cool materials, stage tools and mix smaller weighed batches you can place promptly; never add extra water to revive material that has begun to set.

2 Protect the work area

Cover the floor, cabinets and appliances with plastic. Mask clean edges. Keep measured water, a misting bottle, damp sponge and clean tools within reach before mixing.

3 Mix consistently

Measure the water first, blend in the weighed pigment, then slowly add dry MicroTek while mixing. Mix for at least one minute after all powder is added and scrape the bucket to eliminate dry pockets. Mix only what you can apply within the product's working window; SureCrete advises no more than can be placed within 45 minutes.



Use the same weighed ratio in every batch for consistent color and performance.

ξ **Tight-trowel a thin first coat**

Lightly mist a compatible cementitious surface—never leave standing water—then place material and pull it very thin with a squeegee or finishing trowel. Work from a wet edge. If the trowel drags, clean it and lightly dampen its edge rather than flooding the countertop.



LEFT: Place a manageable amount. RIGHT: Pull it across the surface in a thin, even pass.

◦ **Coat the vertical edges**

This was the hardest section for us. Hold one clean trowel beneath the edge to catch and support material. With a second trowel, push a small amount over the top edge, then pull the supported material upward in thin passes. Keep both tools clean to avoid ridges. A manufacturer-approved vertical formulation may be easier.



Two-trowel edge method: support the underside while pressing and pulling thin coats over the vertical face.

Part ٣ | Sand, Layer & Refine

٦ Let the coat set before refining

MicroTek's current instructions allow a second coat after the prior coat has properly cured—typically 2–6 hours—while the technical data lists initial set at roughly 6–8 hours depending on conditions. Cooler or humid weather slows curing. Use the current product label and test a small inconspicuous area; do not sand material that smears, gums or dents.

٧ Sand lightly between coats

Knock down ridges and high spots with a concrete-rated wet sanding block or diamond abrasive. Start conservatively around 120–220 grit for light refinement, depending on the defect and the tool, then test finer grits. An orbital sander can remove material quickly; wet sanding by hand or with a tool specifically rated for wet use gives more control. Never expose an ordinary electric sander to water.

SHOP: Sanding grits and discs used



Dry sanding creates a large amount of fine dust—use wet methods or HEPA extraction and proper respiratory protection.

SILICA SAFETY: Dry cutting or sanding cement products can create respirable crystalline silica. Prefer wet methods or a shroud connected to a HEPA dust extractor, work outdoors with containment, and wear properly selected respiratory protection. Follow the product SDS and OSHA guidance.

^ **Apply additional thin coats**

We applied three thin layers, allowing each layer to set and lightly refining it before the next. Thin coats may show tonal variation or substrate shadowing; SureCrete notes that a second coat may be needed when imperfections show through. Maintain consistent batch ratios and technique.



Use long, controlled passes and keep a wet edge as each thin layer is refined.

9 **Fill pinholes with a compatible slurry**

A slurry is a fine, spreadable cement paste used to fill tiny voids and pinholes—not a thick resurfacing coat. For a professional recipe, use SureCrete XS Slurry or the filler approved for your chosen overlay and follow its measured ratio. Press slurry across and into clean pinholes with a plastic scraper or trowel, remove nearly all excess, allow it to cure, then refine the surface. If reproducing our homemade touch-up, reserve proportioned dry mix and pigment and add measured

water a teaspoon at a time; make a test sample because SureCrete does not publish a homemade MicroTek slurry ratio.

✦ **Decide when the surface is finished**

Aim for a flat, clean, comfortable surface—not manufactured perfection. Soft movement, subtle trowel marks and slight color variation can make the countertop resemble natural stone. Repair sharp ridges, open pinholes, weak edges and low spots that hold water; keep the character that looks intentional.



A finished overlay can retain soft movement and small variations that read like natural stone.

Part 3 | Seal the Countertop

SHOP: Exterior clear sealer used

FOOD-SAFE MEANS FULLY CURED: SureCrete states that XS-327 becomes food-safe after the complete seven-day cure—not when it first feels dry. It is intended for outdoor counters, is UV stable and is heat resistant to 300°F, but trivets and cutting boards are still smart protection.

1 Prepare the surface

Allow the overlay to cure for the period required by both the overlay and sealer instructions. The surface must be clean, dry, sound, contaminant-free and properly profiled. Vacuum with HEPA filtration and use the cleaning/profile method specified by SureCrete.

2 Mix Parts A and B

XS-327 is a two-component product. Mix 3 parts A to 2 parts B continuously for three minutes. Its listed pot life is about 30 minutes, so mix only what you can apply. Do not guess the ratio.

3 Apply the prime coat

SureCrete's current published instructions call for a prime dilution of 7 parts water to 1 part catalyzed sealer. Saturate the surface with a high-density foam roller, then back-roll with a relatively dry roller using only the roller's weight.



LEFT: Measure the required dilution. RIGHT: Load a clean high-density foam roller without oversaturating it.

⌘ **Apply two finish coats**

When the prior coat is dry to the touch and no longer tacky, apply the next coat evenly. SureCrete's published directions dilute each finish coat at 2 parts water to 1 part catalyzed sealer. Back-roll to prevent marks. If more than 12 hours passes, sand with 220 grit before recoating.



Apply thin, even coats and back-roll lightly to eliminate lap marks and excess sealer.

◦ **Protect the cure**

Allow 24 hours before light duty and seven days for full cure/food-safe status. Keep the surface dry and free of objects during the manufacturer's cure window. Follow the current label if it differs from this summary.

Part 0 | Wrap the Island

INDOOR VS. OUTDOOR: INDOORS: solid pine tongue-and-groove is a cost-effective decorative finish. OUTDOORS: even under a roof, ordinary pine faces moisture, UV and freeze/thaw movement. Prefer exterior-rated wood-look porcelain tile, composite cladding, masonry veneer, or wood specifically rated for exterior exposure. In Vermont, select frost-resistant porcelain and an exterior mortar/grout system with drainage and movement accommodation.

The exact products we used

SHOP THE BUILD These are my commissionable Lowe's links. If you purchase through one of these links, I may earn a commission at no additional cost to you.

SHOP: Unfinished pine tongue-and-groove panels

Unfinished pine is not inherently weatherproof. Outdoors, seal all faces, backs, ends and fresh cuts and plan for maintenance.

SHOP: Liquid Nails construction adhesive

Before outdoor use, confirm the exact linked formula is rated for exterior exposure and compatible with masonry plus your finished wood.

SHOP: Paint tinted Bar Harbor Beige

Bar Harbor Beige is the color. For an outdoor island, the paint base itself must be exterior-rated.

SHOP: Stain in Early American

Early American is the color. For outdoor use, confirm the exact stain is exterior-rated or select an exterior equivalent.

SHOP: Chip brush used to apply stain

Choose a brush compatible with the coating and discard or clean it according to the product label.

SHOP: Miter/chop saw

Use the specified guard, support long boards, clamp small pieces and follow the saw manual.

SHOP: Exterior clear sealer

Confirm the linked product is compatible with every underlying coating and rated for the island's outdoor exposure before applying .

SHOP: Trowels & All Tools Used on this project

🔧 Prefinish every face

Before installation, seal all sides, ends and cut edges. We used exterior paint to reduce knot show-through and create a weather-resistant base, then layered stain to restore the wood tone, followed by at least two coats of exterior clear sealer. Confirm that the paint, stain and topcoat are compatible. Let each coat dry, sand lightly between coats as directed and remove all dust.

📏 Measure and cut

Plan the tongue-and-groove orientation and corner treatment. Measure each section individually, dry-fit it, then cut with a table saw for rips and a miter/chop saw for length. Seal every fresh cut before installation.

🔧 Start at the corners

Establish straight, plumb corner boards first. Apply exterior-rated construction adhesive compatible with masonry and painted/sealed wood, then use clamps, braces or weighted blocks until cured. On a wood base, small corrosion-resistant finish nails may hold boards while adhesive cures, provided the fastener method suits the exposure.



Begin at a plumb corner and hold each board in place until the adhesive reaches its required cure.

⌘ **Allow for wood movement**

Do not force tongue-and-groove joints unnaturally tight. Follow the board manufacturer's acclimation and expansion guidance. Keep wood clear of standing water and seal penetrations without trapping moisture. Optional but my plan is to add pvc / faux wood trip boards along the bottom of the entire water so any moisture won't penetrate the wood.

◦ **Install storage and finish the openings**

Install drawers, doors or shelves to their manufacturers' instructions, keeping hardware square and providing ventilation or access panels where required. All of our product sources including our stainless steel drawers and cabinets are linked here [➡](https://creatorsold.io/wayfair/abraujewelry/d/wayfair/my-outdoor-kitchen)
<https://creatorsold.io/wayfair/abraujewelry/d/wayfair/my-outdoor-kitchen>



The finished base adds warmth and texture beneath the concrete-look top.

The Finished Island

The variations that remained after troweling, sanding and sealing became part of the final look—soft movement like natural stone rather than a perfectly uniform manufactured slab.

LIGHTING MEASUREMENT: We hung the pendants with 34 inches of clear space from the countertop surface to the bottom of each pendant. Check sightlines, fixture proportions and local electrical requirements before choosing your own height.



Finished details: integrated storage, a thick concrete-look edge, warm vertical paneling and comfortable counter-height seating.

Designed for Everyday Living

The long overhang creates room for serving, dining and gathering, while the drawers keep the working side practical. The finished island connects the kitchen to the pool and turns the covered patio into a true outdoor room.



The final styling shows the island at work as both a prep surface and an outdoor dining table.

Final Checklist

- Slab/foundation and block layout are suitable for the completed weight.
- All appliance cutouts, ventilation and combustible clearances match current manufacturer instructions.
- The first course is level; the base is plumb; and the countertop has no unintended low spots that collect water.
- Plywood spans, seams and seating overhangs have adequate structural support.
- Cement board, fasteners, tape, mortar/primer and overlay are approved as one compatible system.
- Every partial concrete batch was weighed; water stayed within the published range.
- Silica dust was controlled and appropriate PPE was used.
- The surface was fully cured, cleaned and profiled before sealing.
- Sealer ratios, coat timing and seven-day food-safe cure were followed.
- All faces and cut ends of the wood were sealed; water cannot sit against the base.
- Affiliate URLs, exact project dimensions, products and sanding grits have been added below.

Measurements / Links

Base length × depth × height	126½ × 45 × 34 in.
Counter length × depth	130½ × 47¼ in.
Side overhang	2½ in.
Seating /leg overhang	17 in.
Island-to-back-counter clearance	33½ in.
Pendant clearance above counter	34 in.

Finished counter height	37 in.
Edge thickness	2½ in.
Plywood + cement-board thickness	1/4" plywood / 1/4" cement board
Sanding grits /disc URL	https://a.co/d/07mUflv7
Drawers /shelves URL	https://creatorsold.io/wayfair/abraujewelry/d/wayfair/my-outdoor-kitchen
Exterior clear sealer + URL	https://a.co/d/07mUflv7

Verified reference links

SureCrete MicroTek One Coat — interior overlay

- SureCrete MicroTek One Coat — technical data
- SureCrete XS-Precast — outdoor countertop option
- SureCrete XS-327 sealer — ratios and cure
- PermaBASE UltraBacker — outdoor kitchen counters
- TEC exterior tile installation guide
- Wayfair stool sizing guide

Wayfair storefront

<https://creatorsold.io/wayfair/abraujewelry>

Home Depot Storefront

<https://creators.homedepot.com/mypage/danielleenright>

LTK Storefront

https://www.shopltk.com/explore/Danielle_Enright

Amazon Storefront

<https://a.co/d/07mUflv7>

Product formulas and instructions can change . Before publishing or building . compare this guide against the labels and technical data sheets supplied with the products you actually purchase .