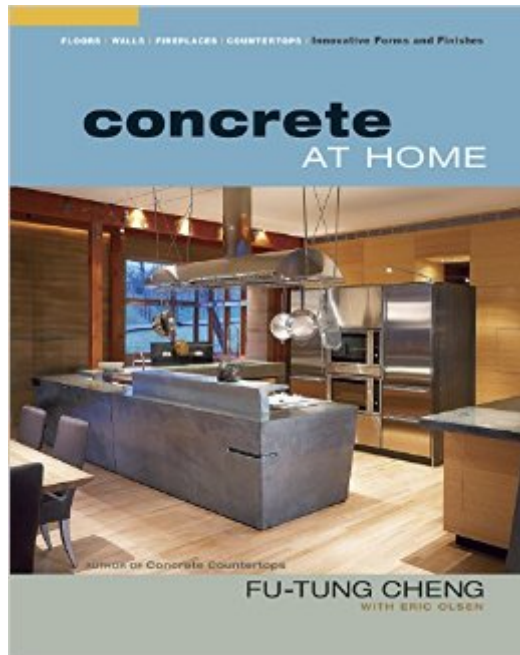


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# Concrete At Home: Innovative Forms And Finishes



## Synopsis

Fu-Tung Cheng's surprise bestseller *Concrete Countertops* paved the way for a fresh look at a familiar surface. His new book moves beyond the kitchen and transforms this commonplace material into an elegant medium that can be used throughout the house. Combining cutting-edge design with helpful how-to information, *Concrete at Home* offers ingenious ideas for planning and building walls, fireplaces, mantels, hearths, and exterior and interior floors, as well as tips on incorporating architectural elements such as counters, sinks, columns, and water pieces into the project. The construction of forms, footings, and ties is detailed in clear, easy-to-follow instructions, and special attention is given to finishing techniques, including adding color, texture, and inlays.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author Fu-Tung Cheng has opened up the idea that concrete isn't just something you skinned your knee on when you were a kid. His first book "Concrete Countertops" was a great instructional book, aimed obviously at amateurs, on how to use the massive substance and form it into any desired shape. Albeit, it leaves you learning from your own mistakes on a few things left out in the book, but all in all, it introduces the reader to concrete and gets them pointed in the right direction. With his sophomore release, "Concrete at Home", Cheng has assumingly done it again. However, what appears to be an instructional book on how to take your concrete forming ideas to the "next level", just isn't quite up to par. The book shows off over a 1000 pictures of Cheng's work, and while the

work is phenomenal in design, the summarized procedures that go along with them, are hardly enough for the reader to mimic the process. Granted, it is safe to say that Cheng doesn't want to give away all of his secrets, but his procedures skip important areas. For instance, he tells the reader that they inserted rigid foam into their countertop to drastically lighten the weight, but what he fails to mention is how exactly they form rounded angles with it, and how they place it in the mold for the pour. Rigid foam isn't the easiest of materials to manipulate into a rounded shape if you're not familiar with it. Another example is Fu-Tung shows you a rough blue-print for a fireplace surround designed to go around a zero-clearance firebox. However, what he neglects to mention is whether or not you are supposed to strip your walls to the studs, insert bolts into the studs that will protrude out into the surround, and then put up green board before you pour your surround, or if you proceed based on what he shows you, assumingly pouring against your existing textured wall, with nothing to anchor it to the wall. Timber!"Concrete at Home" is a great photo-filled marketing deliverable for Fu-Tung Cheng's business. He purposely sends the reader in the direction of creating something extravagant, but intentionally leaves out key issues so that the reader will become frustrated and in turn, give up and commission Cheng's services. If you are a professional in the field of concrete, this book is a great visual addition to add to the rest of your concrete books.

I expected a bit more out of this book than I got out of it. It seems to touch on a little bit of each aspect of using concrete for floors, walls, countertops, etc. But really doesn't go into too much depth, which leaves it up to the reader to do lots of their own experimenting. I would like to have seen the book about twice as thick, with a section more devoted to all the different colour variations and textures that the author has come up with. People tend to buy books like these so they don't have to spend a bunch of money on trial and error testing. And I think this book could have been a whole lot better in that department. There is some really nice concrete work in this book that will get the imagination fired up. And there is also some pretty corny concrete work, that may turn some people off. Lots of photo's of some of the kitchens the author has done. Not exactly Johnny Grey work, but quite nice. Even though I only gave it 3 stars, I would still recommend it.

The pictures were great and the book needs more of them. The technical side of how to create the looks needs much more material and better presented.

We used this book along with Cheng's other book and DVD when making our own concrete countertops. It was very helpful to us because we did a "pour in place" countertop where you build

the molds right on your existing cabinets and pour the wet concrete in the molds for a seamless finish. Cheng's method for countertops focuses mainly on building molds in your backyard or garage, pouring the concrete, and then flipping the finished pieces over so you start with a smooth finish. This book has a lot of good examples of poured in place projects, so it was helpful to use this in conjunction with Cheng's countertop book.

"Concrete at Home" by Fu-Tung Cheng and Eric Olsen follows in the footsteps of Cheng's "Concrete Countertops," but differs in that it is a much broader work. It is great at illustrating the possibilities of concrete in your home but is less an instruction manual, as some of these projects are fairly unsuitable as do-it-yourself upgrades. Although not really a do-it-yourself book, it has an instructional component and is good at explaining things like monolithic slab on grade concrete methodology, interior slab with radiant tubing, screeding, control joints, reinforcement, inlays, and many other important concepts. The chapter I was most interested in was chapter three, "Floor Transformations." The discussions of inlays, stamps, and finishes were of particular interest to me, and Cheng did not disappoint. The sections on stamping and use of found objects as embellishment were good, and there is a brief "Stamping D.I.Y." outline on pp. 62-64 that, while good, is too brief for a beginner. The chapter on countertops is great (as you would expect,) and I enjoyed the designs highlighted in part two, especially the emphasis of color and texture as central design elements. I also loved the aesthetics in the too brief section "Innovations in Concrete Block." Other sections of the book weren't as applicable to me (I seriously doubt I will ever have to deal with concrete walls, for instance,) but the illustrations were all very good and I enjoyed even the more esoteric parts of the book. I recommend this book to people considering home concrete projects without reservation. Understand, though, that this is not really a do-it-yourself book. There are instructions on how to do certain tasks, but I doubt that many people could successfully use them with no other training or instructions. That may sound like a shortcoming, but I think the book is best for envisioning the possibilities of concrete, figuring out what you really want to do, and taking that project to contractors (and possibly architects or engineers, as well) to execute. If Cheng had written a book detailing the "how to" of each of the project types he describes, the volume would be gigantically unwieldy and infinitely less useful to most readers. Most homeowners will like this book as a storehouse of brilliant concrete ideas, and some contractors might also like to read it as well, not for the technical information, but for the illustrations and concepts. If you are beginning to think in terms of concrete in your home, I think this is a great book to start with.

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