Zinc, pewter, copper and stainless *bar tops*

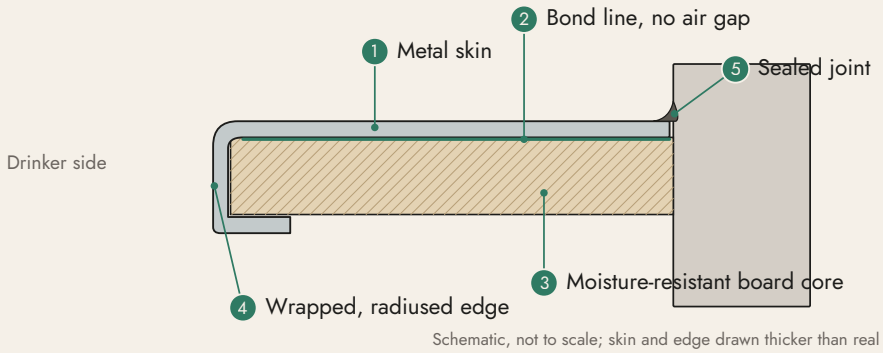
Zinc, copper and pewter are living finishes; stainless changes least. We found no food-contact rule written for metals in England, only the general duty in Regulation (EC) 1935/2004.

Compliance guidance. Guidance, not legal or environmental-health advice. It reports documents read on 5 and 6 November 2026 and quotes no release or composition limit. Whether a bar top is a food-contact surface is for the operator, the partner workshop and the environmental health officer; check each current text.

AT A GLANCE

Metal	Look in use	Scratches and dents	Acids and spills	Food contact: what we read
Zinc	Light grey oxide patina indoors. Damp zinc corrodes to white powder. Fingerprints leave zinc chloride, which etches (CCI).	Soft: a US article says it "is not as hard as other metals". Polish, then let it re-patinate (CCI, objects).	Council of Europe 2002: easily dissolved by acids; not for wet or humid acidic food.	May carry cadmium and lead as impurities (CoE 2002). Consumer use banned in some countries (CoE 2002).
Copper	Darkens and changes colour with handling and time (patination sheet). Polishing is abrasive.	Soft and malleable (US article).	Council of Europe 2002: acidic food can attack copper; high release can discolour.	No restriction for copper coated with tin, stainless steel or another suitable covering (CoE 2002). No antimicrobial claim made here.
Pewter	Darkens to a grey patina. Sanding or polishing removes it (consumer guide).	The softest of the four (US article). Abrasive cleaners scratch it. Soldered, not welded.	Acidic cleaners, including citrus ones, can harm the patina (consumer guide).	BS EN 611-1 sets pewter composition. CoE 2002: pewter may release lead. Ask for the alloy certificate.
Stainless 304 or 316	Does not patinate (US article). Finish decides what shows: bright and mirror finishes scratch easily, patterned ones mask scratches (Euro Inox).	The hardest of the four (US article). Brushed finishes can be blended along the grain; electrolytically coloured stainless cannot be repaired.	Chlorides and hypochlorite stain and pit it; concentrated salt and vinegar may pit it (SSAS 7.20).	Euro Inox: all stainless families may be used; release limits apply to every constituent element.

Brass and bronze: see the patination and lacquered sheets. CCI: Canadian Conservation Institute notes on objects. The US article is a 2008 magazine piece on domestic countertops. No source tests these metals on a working bar.



A wrapped-edge metal bar top in section. Original schematic by Make Bespoke Studio, not to scale.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

METAL AND CONSTRUCTION

Bar top finish: [zinc / copper / pewter / stainless steel grade 304 or 316], [ ] mm finished thickness, alloy and composition stated in writing by the supplier with [an alloy or mill certificate], bonded to [moisture-resistant board, [ ] mm] with [adhesive stated by the fabricator], continuous bond line. Edge: [wrapped, radius [ ] mm]. Corners: [welded and ground flush / folded / soldered]. Seams: [none / at the positions on drawing [ ]], finished [as stated]. Joint to the back wall and to any return sealed with [sealant stated by the fabricator]. Thickness, core, bond, edge, corners and seams to be shown on the shop drawing and approved before manufacture.

LIVING FINISH ACCEPTED

[Zinc / copper / pewter] is a living finish. The client accepts that it will darken, mark and show use, that rings, scratches and etching from acids are part of its character, and that it will not stay as the approved sample. Routine care: [soft cloth, mild detergent, water, dry]. Acids (citrus, vinegar, wine), abrasives and [chloride-containing cleaners] are to be kept off or wiped at once. A care card is issued at handover. Accepted by [name], [date].

FOOD CONTACT

The supplier is to state in writing: (a) whether the surface is intended or suitable for direct contact with food; (b) the composition of the metal and of any solder, adhesive, sealant, wax or lacquer on a surface that may meet food; (c) the basis on which it meets Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 as it applies in [England]; (d) the cleaning and disinfecting agents it tolerates. The operator is to confirm the intended use of the top with the local authority's environmental health officer before opening. No antimicrobial or hygienic benefit is to be claimed for the surface.

SAMPLE AND APPROVAL

Before production the partner is to make a [300 by 300] mm sample of the approved metal, finish and edge. [Name] is to approve it after it has been treated as the care card describes and with [lemon juice, wine, the named cleaning agent and the base of a glass] as agreed with the partner. The approved sample is kept as the reference.

TERMS USED

Living finish
A metal finish left unsealed so it changes colour with handling and time, as opposed to a lacquered one that stays as made.

Pewter
An alloy that is mostly tin, with small amounts of other metals such as antimony and copper. It is soft, and older pewters could contain lead, so the alloy certificate matters.

Food-contact material
A material or article that is intended to touch food, already touches it, or can reasonably be expected to touch it or pass its constituents to it in normal use (Article 1(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004).

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 as retained in UK law; SI 2012/2619 regulation 4; Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II: read on legislation.gov.uk, latest available (revised).
- Council of Europe, Guidelines on metals and alloys used as food contact materials, technical document, 13 February 2002: read; superseded. The 2013 resolution and 2024 second edition were not read: confirm the current text.
- Euro Inox, Council of Europe Guidelines in a nutshell (2014); Euro Inox Building Series Vol. 15 (2011); BSSA SSAS 7.20 (2001): read.
- BS EN 611-1:1996, pewter: BSI listing read: current. Text not read.
- HSE, Treated articles (updated 14 April 2026); CCI Notes 9/9, Care of Objects Made of Zinc (2007): read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/zinc-pewter-copper-and-stainless-bar-tops. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.