



Nora and Eli Hatting have a snack on the recycled-glass-topped center island in their eco-friendly kitchen. Formaldehyde-free cabinets and low-VOC paints and finishes were also used.

DOWN-TO-EARTH KITCHENS

We take a look inside three kitchens that keep their cooks happy and still manage to be green.

By LYNN UNDERWOOD • lunderwood@startribune.com

Just a few years ago, calling a kitchen green would have meant the walls were painted sage.

Today's green kitchens have nothing to do with color. They're environmentally friendly, energy-efficient and nontoxic. They boast countertops made of recycled glass or paper, and floors of renewable bamboo or cork. The appliances use less energy, and the low-VOC paint keeps the air clean.

Eco-friendly kitchens, a byproduct of the green building movement, continue to gain steam, even in the sluggish economy, because more people want their homes to be healthier. They also want to do what they can to minimize the impact on the environment. But it took some time for green design to move beyond the back-to-basics style.

Michael Ansel, principal at Otogawa-Ansel, was one of the architects on the front lines of green design in Minnesota. He helped develop the Minnesota GreenStar certification program in 2006, which includes guidelines for green kitchen remodeling projects.

"At the time it was a radical concept, that you could use linoleum and cork and salvaged granite, and it could look high-end and classy," he said.

Now, manufacturers are crowding into what's considered a hot market, offering green building products in a wide range of styles, colors and prices.

"There's no limit to cool products that have green attributes," said Ansel. "Five years ago, it was a struggle to find low-VOC paint. Now it's at big-box stores."

But there's more to green than a label on a package, said designer David Heide, owner of David Heide Design Studio in Minneapolis. He considers good design a key green component.

"A bad design filled with lots of green products that end up in a Dumpster five years from now isn't green at all," he said. □



Green-minded makeover

The motivation: Owners Eric and Shelly Hatting designed their new kitchen, then looked for green products. "We've always liked the look of the materials," said Eric. "The fact that they were formaldehyde-free and mostly recycled sealed the deal."

The stuff: The cabinets are built without formaldehyde, with doors made from sustainably grown poplar wood fabricated into veneers. The recycled paper countertops "feel as hard as stone," Eric said. Multi-colored recycled glass covers the center island. Instead of putting in a new floor, the Hattings refinished their existing maple one. All the paints and finishes are low-VOC. While they paid a little more for some of the green materials, Eric said, the end result is a kitchen that "is more visually appealing and re-uses materials."

By: Natural Built Home, 4020 Minnehaha Av. S., Minneapolis; www.naturalbulthome.com.

The recycled paper countertop "feels as hard as stone," said homeowner Eric Hatting.

See the other two kitchen looks on H2

DOWN-TO-EARTH KITCHENS



ANDREA RUGG

Beech wood beauty

The motivation: Cathy and Mike Spengler's whole-house remodeling included an updated kitchen. "It was such a big project that we wanted it to be the least wasteful and energy-efficient as possible," said Cathy.

The stuff: They used beech salvaged from Lake Superior for the formaldehyde-free cabinets. "It's such beautiful wood, and it's so cool that it has that history," she said. The countertops are composed of granite and onyx remnants, and the breakfast bar is made of oak certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. While the Spenglers installed energy-efficient, triple-paned windows, they repaired and refinished their existing hardwood floor.

"A green kitchen makes me feel less guilty about having what feels like a fancy kitchen," said Cathy.

By: Otogawa-Anschel Design Build, Minneapolis; www.otogawa-anschel.com.

Lynn Underwood • 612-673-7619

The cabinets are constructed of decades-old beech salvaged from Lake Superior. Above, graphic designer Jessica Schugel, left, with homeowner Cathy Spengler.



SUSAN GILMORE

Molly Dinneen's updated kitchen combines new green materials with restored existing flooring and windows.

A better bungalow

The motivation: Owner Molly Dinneen wanted to update her Craftsman-style kitchen, but hoped to incorporate many of the room's existing materials. "There's nothing more green than re-using what you have," said David Heide, her designer.

The stuff: Dinneen patched and refinished the existing wood floor and restored and reinsulated the kitchen windows. She recycled her old appliances and replaced them with Energy Star appliances. The new formaldehyde-free cabinets are made of wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, which means it comes from a well managed sustainable forest. Other green features include a low-flow faucet, under-cabinet halogen lights and a clay farmhouse sink that can be recycled.

By: David Heide Design Studio, Minneapolis; www.dhdstudio.com.