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# **If You Build it (Green), They Will Come**

## **Tools and Tips from the Green Restaurant Association**

Green building materials aren't just for start-up restaurants. Any restaurant can update its look, and add new green design elements to its scheme...it just takes a little creativity and the right resources.

At the core of the green movement is the mantra "reduce, reuse, recycle." In green design this is first and foremost. Opportunity is hiding behind every old table and used bar stool. When it's necessary to purchase new materials, like paint, or equipment, keep key factors in mind like sourcing non-toxic products and energy efficient equipment that will run for years and provide a solid return on investment.

When it comes to designing your start-up, or re-vamping your existing space, remember that salvaged goods are gold! Not only do they add character, charm, and conversation starters, they cost less and can help reduce your environmental impact, too.

### **Simple Ways to Green Your Design**

- Use natural light whenever possible. This will help warm the space and conserve electricity.
- Look online, or in your community, to find restaurant furniture auctions. These auctions often showcase retro materials, hard to find novelties and even antiques.
- Research local artists that make furniture from felled wood.
- Whenever possible, use products that contain recycled materials (insulation, wall coverings, etc.)
- Old wooden doors make great tabletops, hostess stands, coat hangers, etc.
- Design kitchens around energy efficient appliances and equipment; this upfront investment in high-quality, efficient products will save significant cash down the road. Go beyond the minimum energy efficiency and look to GR4.0 standards to see various levels of efficiency for equipment.
- Look for tiles, décor, centerpieces, and light fixtures made from recycled glass, ceramic, and acrylic.
- Several companies make countertops made from recycled glass, mirrors, ceramic, stone, and iron scraps.
- Offer your wall space to local artists who want to showcase their work (free wall art!)

### **A Little Creativity Goes a Long Way**

There are many restaurants across the country using refurbished, reused, and recycled materials. The following Certified Green Restaurants<sup>®</sup> use unique building and design materials that add character, creativity, and originality to their design scheme:

- Le Pain Quotidien, a multi-unit, international chain integrates salvaged wooden doors into their restaurant designs, using them as tabletops.

- Rouge Tomate in New York City commissioned stylish stools to be made from recycled coconut shells.
- Award winning, Eletaria in Greenwich Village, New York, uses recovered barn wood throughout the restaurant.
- The Coffee Cup, a small café in Ohio, used recycled denim insulation during the construction process of their space.
- E Street Café in California uses recycled burlap sacks as chair coverings and extensive LED lighting throughout.

It's important to remember to really do your research and carefully select products and materials that have a trusted endorsement or certification from a third party source. Greenwashing (a company selling a product as "Green" when it really is not) is a term that has crept into the green lexicon and is quickly becoming something to watch out for.

*For resources you can trust and count on, the US Green Building Council and Green Restaurant Association offer extensive ideas and solutions to greening your design concept.*

## Green From the Ground Up

The following materials will allow you to build a restaurant with sustainable materials and furnishings.

- **Bamboo** is a fast growing, rapidly renewable grass. It can be harvested in three to five years and requires no pesticides or fertilizers to grow. It is harder than most wood species and has a very similar appearance to traditional hardwood flooring.
- **Salvaged Wood** is collected from old buildings set for demolition, wine barrels, and felled trees
- **Sisal Fiber** is made from sustainable, rapidly renewable materials and contains low or zero VOC's. Sisal safeguards indoor air quality by reducing emissions from paints and adhesives, and minimizes sound transmission within the building.
- **Granite alternative:** there are materials made from recycled newsprint that feel and look similar to a hard granite surface, these are great alternatives for countertops.
- **Terms to remember** when wood shopping: Sustainably Harvested Wood, Salvaged Wood, Recycled Wood Fiber. *Keep in mind to look for FSC certified wood products. That is certification to seek when purchasing virgin or non-recycled wood products.*

These are just a few tools, tips and guidelines that will point you in the right direction in terms of greening your design techniques. As the movement grows, more products and services will sprout up. Because of the creative nature of the design and architectural world, there are endless opportunities to take advantage of the resources around us and to reduce our impact, reuse retro furnishings, and recycle old materials, giving them new life in your space.

As an organization focused on creating an ecologically sustainable restaurant industry, it's our hope that some day these green materials will be the norm. In our Field of Dreams, someday virgin wood will no longer be necessary, all equipment will be energy efficient, and every restaurant will green from day one. Until then, we remind all restaurants that good design is not only intelligent from an aesthetic perspective, but it also leaves the patron thinking about the restaurant long after the meal has been digested. So, accept the green

design challenge head on, do your research, and create spaces that leave lasting impressions on customers, but not on the planet.

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### **About the Green Restaurant Association**

The Green Restaurant Association (GRA), a national non-profit organization, helps the restaurant industry improve its environmental practices through research, environmental consulting, education, and certification. Founded in 1990, long before green was cool, the GRA utilizes a collaborative strategy that involves restaurants, manufacturers, vendors, community organizations, government, media, and restaurant customers. The GRA's model provides a convenient way for all sectors of the restaurant industry, which represents 10% of the total U.S. economy, to become more environmentally sustainable. The GRA has the world's largest database of environmental solutions for the restaurant industry and has been featured on CNN, NBC Nightly News, NPR, in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and in several other media outlets.

*For more information on how your restaurant can improve its environmental impact, visit [www.dinegreen.com](http://www.dinegreen.com), or call 617-737-3344.*

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