



The Kitchen & Bath Insider[®]

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Remodel & Save the Planet

Green, (er), (ing), v. the act of saving our planet, one little step at a time, by not squandering our precious resources. What a concept! Originally *greening* pertained to our outdoor environment, but the media has expanded the definition to include anything that is earth friendly. So, it's high time that I figured out how to jump on this popular bandwagon and do my part to preserve our ecosystem, (and make some money to boot).

If you truly yearn for a new kitchen but have held off for fear that it will negatively impact the planet, consider refacing. This process reuses all of the existing cabinet boxes, which make up the bulk of the cabinet. Reflect for a moment on all of the trees that you will save. If you're ready for an exciting new look for your kitchen and you're happy with the location of the cabinets, refacing provides an attractive, inexpensive alternative to replacing them. You can have the look and feel of a new kitchen in three to five days. Replacement components come in easy-to-clean thermofoil which is a vinyl like coating over recycled wood products. Real wood fronts in cherry, maple and oak are also available. With the addition of cabinet and drawer organizers, your kitchen can have all the new conveniences found in new cabinets. And you can proudly tell your grandchildren that you contributed to the reduction of global warming, (and saved money, too).

If you want to change the layout of your kitchen then you must consider replacing the cabinets. However, don't despair, there are ways to go green with new cabinets as well. Consider cabinets where the box is made out of "engineered wood". Engineered wood is made up of recycled wood products. Although, the doors and frames of the cabinets are made from solid wood, even some higher-end cabinet companies have started to offer medium density fiberboard (MDF) internal components to reduce cost and save our trees. MDF even offers some advantages over plywood. These include greater dimensional stability, (resistance to warpage), and better insular qualities. Medium Density Fiberboard is similar in manufacture to particleboard and high-density fiberboard, but it is made to much higher standards.

Frameless, or European cabinets, are another earth friendly alternative. These cabinets eliminate the face frame on the cabinet box and so reduce the material necessary to create the finished product. Although their cost is similar to framed cabinets they can save another tree.

Even if you're not ready to renovate, there are ways to make your kitchen greener. The easiest and least expensive way is to start recycling by installing a double garbage container system in one of your existing cabinets. These can be purchased at the Evil Empire, (i.e., big home center), and although, they won't install them, if you're handy you can do it yourself. When you have one bin devoted to garbage and another to cans, you're much more likely to do your part and separate the trash.

And, what about all those appliances that you've had for 20 years? Chances are they're eating up electricity or gas. Now is the time to update them with more energy efficient units. When you buy a new appliance you must consider three factors; the price, the cost of repairs and most importantly, the operating costs.

Today, all major home appliances must meet energy conservation standards set by the U.S. Department of Energy (and many appliances even beat the standard). Each new appliance comes with an energy guide cleverly called the *EnergyGuide*. This label helps you compare the efficiency or annual energy use of competing brands and similar models. Look for the labels on dishwashers, refrigerator/freezers, stoves, clothes washers, air conditioners, etc. For further details about the Energy Guide go on to the Federal Trade Commission's web site: www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/homes/applnces.htm. It is a wealth of information.

So, go ahead, have your cake and eat it too! Get a new kitchen and save the planet. Generations that follow will always be indebted to you and you'll sleep better knowing that you helped with the *greening* of America!