

Kitchen Cabinetry Can Be Both High End and Green

By Stephen James Smith

Just as vehicles, cleaning products, shopping bags and many other consumer goods are going green, so too are the companies that make building products and services. Almost anyone in the industry today is now aware of the need and demand for sustainability, and, believe it or not, that includes high-end kitchen cabinetry. But can upper-end products such as this really meet the requirements that allow it a label of “green”?

The answer is, most assuredly. As with all aspects of homes today, consumers drive how builders, architects and designers act, and homeowners’ preferences today reflect not just personal tastes within their living spaces, but also values.

Because of this, interior designers, architects and builders are pushing their own suppliers to help them meet the challenges of specifying green products. As a result, the issue of green has been spread along the length of the supply chain — and that includes kitchens.

Today, those that supply to the kitchen industry are aware that their products must meet certain green specifications, not just to satisfy the current trend towards sustainability, but also to *compete*.

TODAY’S GREEN CABINETRY

When it comes to custom cabinetry, for the kitchen or for any other room in the house, specifiers, designers and builders should be looking for manufacturers that have already recognized this trend. So, too, should the companies that offer support services to the industry. That’s why, from the beginning of our existence, our company placed green at the top of our requirements in establishing manufacturing partnerships.

What that did for us and what it does for other companies that offer services to the building industry is that we can boast that all products in a particular line (for us, our elite line) comply with a list of qualifications



Beauty is in no way sacrificed in today’s sustainable kitchen.

that put them in the green category. Our list includes:

- Green-certified hardwoods and plywood
 - No particle board, flake board, nor medium-density fiberboard (MDF) is used in the product. Particle board and MDF have a much higher glue and formaldehyde content than plywood.
 - No Asian raw materials are used. Products from Asia have a higher carbon footprint than Peru, where our raw materials are sourced. Most U.S. cabinet manufacturers buy plywood with cores made in China even though the panel is made in U.S.A.
 - No cabinets are stapled. Staples add additional energy required to drive them into the product. They also usually come from China, where again, energy consumption in the manufacturing process is high.
 - No hot melt adhesives are used. Hot melt glue adds additional formaldehyde content.
 - Cabinets are finished with low-formaldehyde products.
 - Functional hardware comes with a manufacturer’s lifetime warranty — made to last forever so the track will not need to be replaced, which means not having to use energy to replace cabinet parts.
- We haven’t stopped there, and neither

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This custom-designed base is manufactured entirely from green-compliant materials.

should other suppliers; we all need to continually press our manufacturing facilities to ensure that we can change “low” products (such as the low-formaldehyde finishes) to “no” wherever possible.

All these factors may not be available in one product or product line, and different suppliers will provide different types of deals to builders and designers. But our company contends that, unless the product

complies with our list, it just isn't green.

I can already hear builders asking themselves, “But doesn't this come at a premium?” Maybe, but I also question why — there really should be no increase in material costs for supplying green products, and there is definitely no increase in cost to specify them!

My point is that not only should all of us in the building industry ensure our products comply with green requirements, but we should also take some responsibility for *maintaining* high standards — and even in *improving* on what we expect from our suppliers.

This demand for quality is key in keeping any company ahead in its field. And the spin-off is that your building company will be ahead of the field in attracting more clients.

Stephen James Smith is co-owner and Managing Director of Deborah James Coastal Kitchens, a company providing design and manufacturing support services nationwide to specifiers and designers, including architects and builders. For more information, go to www.deborahjameskitchens.com. ■



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