

**Ask Greta**  
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A familiar thought in today's media revolves around "green" living. But rather than evolving as a trend, the green movement is here to stay---a direct result of global warming, increasing energy costs, and a world determined to set straight current and past generations degradations to our earth.

One area in which the green movement is gaining ground is in the home, specifically kitchens, baths, windows, doors, appliances and building materials in general. Greta has been inundated recently with questions about green kitchens, so today's issue will focus on this specific issue.

**Greta, I am so confused. What is a "green" kitchen? I am an environmentalist, but there doesn't appear to be any information out there for us consumers.**

Answer: I understand your confusion. So, I went directly to the horse's mouth for the answer. [Chris Donaghy](#), owner of [Kitchen Brokers](#) based out of Lorton, Virginia is the sole green kitchen designer between New York and South Carolina. His approach is simple but logical. "If each renovation simply does one or two things that reduces the use of carcinogens in their project, our world will last much longer and our health will be much better", says Donaghy. "Over the past 40 or 50 years, the world has subsisted on non-renewable and non-sustainable products such as glues containing formaldehyde, plastics containing assorted toxic chemicals, and even seemingly natural materials such as pressure treated wood that make our living spaces unhealthy. As a result, a big part of our work is for those with chemical allergies. Only recently have products become available that reverse the process. Kitchen cabinets are now available using material with no added formaldehyde, low VOC glues/adhesives, low VOC finishes and FSC certified wood. But, thankfully, the recent media blitz and Al Gore's movie have bumped the notion of going green to the headlines, and it is finally being noticed in the money markets."

**Why are "green" kitchen products so hard to find?**

Answer: Donaghy continues, "right now, it is a matter of dollars and cents. As of late 2006, only 1/2 of 1% of kitchen projects gave any thought to the use of environmentally sensitive materials. So, manufacturers look at that number and don't see a viable market. They don't want the hassle of building a market for others to follow. One cabinet company in America that emphasizes green manufacturing is Neil Kelly Cabinets out of Portland, Oregon. They, along with several other west coast based manufacturers, have shown their competitors that a company can thrive serving this small but burgeoning market. It takes guts and leadership and patience to make big changes, and I am proud to be involved with these forward thinking folks."

"A huge change is coming down the pike in the form of "green" plywood. A very exciting new product is coming onto the market called Purebond. This is a soy based

adhesive that will be used by Columbia Forest Products to manufacture plywood that has zero off gassing. This product will not only be used for “green” projects, but will be used for all residential and commercial work in America. That means that green is going to the masses, and that means more availability and it most importantly means that affordable green building materials are within a year of being available. That means that all of us will have access to affordable green products.”

**Dear Greta: Are green kitchens more expensive than standard kitchens?**

According to Donaghy: “the straight answer is yes. At least for now. But as volume grows, prices will drop. As of today, a consumer can expect to pay up to 20% premiums to gain a low voc (volatile organic chemicals), FSC certified (controlled growth) cabinet, zero off gassing and renewable countertops, sustainable flooring, and energy star appliances. Make no mistake, these are premium products manufactured under the strictest guidelines. And if anything, the green movement is all about design, so style is not forgotten as we strive to go green. The challenge for us out there making a living doing green projects is to creatively maximize client’s budgets. In most cases, a compromise must be made to meet a budget. But as mentioned at the beginning, if we each do our part in going “green”, the entire world will benefit.”

For more information, go to:

[www.TheKitchenBrokers.com](http://www.TheKitchenBrokers.com)

[www.NeilKellyCabinets.com](http://www.NeilKellyCabinets.com)

[www.USGBC.com](http://www.USGBC.com)