

Go Green

ECO-LIFE

Beware of 'off-gassing'

Cabinets and furniture made from particleboard that contains low levels of formaldehyde can leech harmful gasses into the air, a process called "off-gassing." Avoid purchasing products that contain solvents, adhesives or exposed particleboard, or keep them in the garage or another well-ventilated location for a week before bringing them into your home.



DID YOU KNOW? You can install a \$7 aerator in your kitchen faucet to use less water and save energy and money.

GREEN  HOME THIRD IN A SERIES

NOW YOU'RE COOKING

FROM COUNTERTOPS TO CABINETS, MAKE YOUR KITCHEN ECO-FRIENDLY

BY ALLECIA VERMILLION | GATEHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Kitchens are often the heart of a home; why not make yours the centerpiece of your commitment to green living? Eco-friendly adjustments can be costly, but these tips ultimately can save you money.

1 Give old cabinets a new face From hard slams to greasy hands, the doors of your kitchen cabinets withstand more wear and tear than the frames and shelving within. If the cabinet is still in good shape and you like the existing configuration, consider changing out the doors and "reskinning" the exterior to match, says contractor Chuck Kensicki of Good Home Construction in Southern California.

Kensicki says his firm is doing more refacing than ever before, as homeowners look to reduce waste and save money. Sanding and repainting wood cabinets can be a do-it-yourself project, but Kensicki recommends enlisting professional help for hanging new cabinet doors — unless you are extremely handy and good with measurements.



2 Seek out sustainable surfaces Myriad options are available for countertops made from sustainable, recycled and otherwise eco-friendly products. From reclaimed wood butcher block to ceramic tiles, you can choose from a variety of styles and price points.

One of the greenest options is Vetrazzo — a combination of various glass chips bonded with cement that offers a sustainable alternative to granite. Vetrazzo is made with up to 85 percent recycled glass and is durable and easy to clean. Slabs vary in price but cost about \$110 to \$190 per square foot, including installation.

3 Illuminate efficiently Kitchens are traditionally well-lit rooms because nobody likes to cook in the dark.

However, the modern kitchen lighting can suck up thousands of watts of energy when using standard incandescent and halogen lights.

Lower your wattage by switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs. CFLs use less energy than a standard incandescent bulb and last 10 times longer. These bulbs cost a bit more, but each bulb lowers your energy bill by \$30 over its lifetime.

If you are looking to make larger changes, reconfiguring your kitchen lighting can help cut down on your watt consumption and save you money. Consider installing under-cabinet task lighting that uses xenon or slim fluorescent bulbs. With the advent of better technology, you may not need as many overhead lights.

