

## Sustainable kitchen materials

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Now you have the design tips, it's time to take a look at materials.

If you're renovating and the cupboard carcasses are in good condition, consider reusing them and reconditioning the doors, changing the handles and giving them a good coat of non-toxic paint. It will save you loads of money, be more convenient than ripping it out and save rubbish to landfill.



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However if you're building new, or the current kitchen cupboards are simply falling apart then look for cabinetry that is good quality, locally sourced, has recycled or sustainable product content, is recyclable at end of life, and that has low or no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). On the subject of VOC's, there is a range of low formaldehyde products (called E1, or preferably E0 cabinet boards which are even lower in chemicals) available these days, so opt for those if you can.

When looking at benchtops and splashbacks they should have a solid, non-porous surface that is durable, stain and scratch proof. Instead of using glues and adhesives to attach countertops to the cabinetry, look for mechanical means (such as screws) which enables them to be easily removed and recycled at a later date. It also minimises the chemicals in the area and makes it a healthier environment. Good options include Wood or Bamboo (sustainably sourced or recycled), Paperock, Recycled Stone, Tiles or even concrete if it's got recycled content and is locally sourced. There are a variety of recycled glass and plastic products coming into the market these days, but check credentials carefully to ensure they are what they say they are.



When it comes to tap ware ensure your kitchen tap(s) are WELS rated at 3 Stars or more. Again, quality provides for longevity and remember that things that are nice to touch bring joy for a long time. If you have a tap you love and want to keep, flow restrictors are cheap and easy to install and will make the tap more water efficient.



Kitchens need strong, durable flooring. If you can, put the flooring wall to wall (yes under the cupboards) so that you can remodel in the future without having to redo the floors. Choose flooring that can be fitted with non-toxic sealants and glues. Options include recycled products, FSC certified timber and bamboo products, recycled rubber, cork and tiles.

Finishes are just as important. There is an increasing range of natural oils and paints available for walls, cabinetry and benchtops. Companies like Livos and Resene have good products; Mythic Paints (just entering the Australian market) are also a good option.

One final point, if you want an independently certified product or just want to know what's out there, see the listings on Eco Specifier (Global Green Tag) or Good Environmental Choice Award (GECA). Alternatively, ask the supplier where the product comes from, is it sustainably and ethically sourced and is it safe for my family.

In our May article we'll look at energy efficient appliances.

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