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Keen on Green: Divine Kitchens opens Green Kitchen Studio in Westborough showroom

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Kitchens and baths, with their wide array of components - cabinets, countertops, appliances, plumbing fixtures, lighting, paint - may actually offer homeowners the greatest green potential of any rooms in the home when remodeling. To showcase this concept and educate consumers about how to go green in the kitchen, award-winning design/build firm Divine Kitchens has built a green kitchen studio in their showroom.

"Everyone is talking green," said certified kitchen designer Mariette Barsoum, owner of Divine Kitchens in Westborough. "Lots of companies pay lip service to green initiatives, so homeowners and builders need to do their homework. Divine Kitchens has made educating ourselves and our customers about green kitchen and bath design a top priority."

According to Barsoum, who won two Contractor of the Year awards from the National Association of Remodeling Industries in 2007 and a Best of Boston Home distinction for countertops in 2008 and 2009, the new Green Kitchen Studio incorporates cabinets from Holiday Kitchens, an environmentally responsible cabinet maker in Wisconsin.

"You have to look for cabinets made of sustainable raw materials like fast-growth poplar or bamboo," she explained. "Some of the Holiday Kitchens options are made from recycled materials and all are created using manufacturing processes that maximize material yield, recycle waste wood, and are finished with stains or paints that contain no volatile organic compounds (VOC) and no added formaldehyde."

The appliances in Divine's new kitchen are all manufactured by Gaggenau, a European company devoted to innovative technology and materials designed to reduce energy consumption and promote healthy cooking. Divine Kitchens also wanted to explore new options for countertops in their Green Kitchen Studio. They incorporated two new alternatives, one from IceStone, a material produced in Brooklyn, NY, that is made from 100% recycled (post-consumer and post-industrial) glass and concrete. Completely non-toxic and free of any petroleum-derived materials, IceStone offers a beautiful array of colors. The island countertops are being made from a recycled paper-based product that could pass for soapstone called Squak Mountain Stone.

On the topic of lighting, Barsoum says an owner's first priority should be natural light, with large windows to offer the best that nature can offer. When darkness falls, she recommends using LED lighting, which is initially more expensive, but offers a very positive return on investment, saving \$17 per year per recessed fixture in electricity, and offers dimmable lighting that will enhance your home.

Divine also recommends new low VOC paints from Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams. In addition to product selection, Divine Kitchens encourages clients to donate their old kitchen cabinets and appliances to reduce the environmental impact of these large-scale items on landfills.

