

THE PRODUCT PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. ARCHITECTURAL MARKET

# Architectural PRODUCTS

MARCH 2008

**TREND LINES**

Sustainable Design Helping to Sustain the Building Industry

**ACHIEVING LEED**

William H. Kerr Foundation Office

**SPECIAL REPORT**

How Testing of VOCs has Evolved

## FUNCTIONAL GREEN





## Bamboo Adds Green Accent to Organic Café Design

Not only is its food environmentally conscious, but so is the actual environment at Organic To Go—a Southern California food retailer, thanks to the innovative green designs of San Diego-based Bluemotif Architecture. Organic To Go, the nation's first fast casual cafe chain to be identified as a USDA-certified organic retailer, enlisted

*"Bamboo plywood was the first of many materials and finishes we incorporated to really achieve the sustainable approach to their build-outs."*

**MATTHEW ELLIS**, Bluemotif Architecture, San Diego

the services of Bluemotif to design its new San Diego and Los Angeles area locations. To reinforce Organic To Go's strong commitment to the environment, Bluemotif designed cafes for the organic retailer that feature a palette of sustainable, renewable and recyclable materials and finishes. "Organic To go was already trending toward sustainable materials and finishes. We found sustainable products with specifications which would reflect Organic To Go's earth-conscious philosophies and also lower VOC emissions. Bamboo was the first of many materials and fin-

ishes we incorporated to achieve the sustainable approach to their build-outs," explains Matthew Ellis, founder of Bluemotif Architecture.

For the café's cabinetry and furniture, Ellis specified bamboo plywood from **Teragren**, a highly renewable building material due to bamboo's ability to be easily and quickly re-grown. Although, he warns, "not all bamboo is the same. Teragren sources its bamboo from a sustainable harvesting resource. It is extremely dense and emits 48 times less VOCs than allowed by OSHA standards and 32 times less than California's standards." According to Ellis, "Teragren bamboo is very durable and holds up really well, and the quality is more consistent even than most veneers."

The bamboo comprises almost 60% of finishes at Organic To Go's cafés, including tabletops and custom cabinetry. Ellis specified 3/4-in.-thick Teragren bamboo with a horizontal grain for the furniture and a vertical grain for the cabinetry. Because the bamboo appears frequently in the visual landscape, mixing the direction of the grain achieved a variety of looks with the same material. "The vertical grain gives more of a contemporary feel to the case goods; the horizontal grain shows more irregularities, and that adds character and visual interest to the furniture," remarks Ellis.

Bamboo's natural beauty shines through with a natural finish or caramel color. "To get the caramel color, they just

heat up the bamboo, which caramelizes the sugars in the wood," explains Ellis. Bamboo patinas similar to other wood finishes, but "I haven't seen it in use long enough to witness that patina process," admits Ellis. "It actually takes longer to patina than traditional wood because it is so dense."

The first San Diego Organic To Go cafe opened this past September, and as many as eight cafes are currently slated to open in Southern California within the next year. "Bluemotif has done a nice job capturing the spirit of our company and what we represent," said Jason Brown, founder and CEO of Organic To Go. "They found a way to represent the freshness and purity of the food we serve in the ambiance of our cafes. Visit [www.teragren.com](http://www.teragren.com) or Circle 286.



Mixing the direction of the grain achieved a variety of looks with the same material.