

# bon appétit

The Sustainability Issue

30 ultra-tasty, very doable recipes,  
created with the planet in mind



Hummus Bowls With  
Merguez-Spiced Tempeh  
p.87

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# Built to Last

California design studio Commune outlines sustainable strategies for kitchens

BY SAM COCHRAN

## ▼ Better With Age

For as long as Alonso and Johanknecht have steered their design firm, sustainability has been Commune's philosophical North Star. "From the beginning we've had the same fear: that we would add to landfills," Alonso says. "Our goal has always been to create things that will last forever." That starts with using natural materials like durable hardwood—instead of ubiquitous but flimsy particle board—for cabinetry and honed stone for countertops, as in this Santa Cruz kitchen. "With a little care, these surfaces will only enhance with time," Alonso says.

## ► Waste Not, Want Not

The worst thing one can do from an environmental perspective, Alonso emphasizes, is to prematurely discard what's perfectly good. "If we can reuse things that are there, we absolutely will," he says. Commune focuses on strategic tweaks to transform a space's look while preserving as much as possible. Case in point: For a Bay Area project, they left the existing kitchen in place, adding Delft tile above the range, updating the cabinet fronts in a cool gray hue, and painting the floor in a unique geometric motif using Farrow & Ball colors.



### DESIGNERS

Roman Alonso and Steven Johanknecht of Commune

### HOME BASE

Los Angeles

### KITCHEN CREDO

"Functionality first, durability second—everything else follows."

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON (SANTA CRUZ); TREVOR TONDRO (BAY AREA); RICHARD POWERS (LOS FELIZ); SPENCER LOWELL (PARIS); COURTESY HEATH CERAMICS (PLATE); COURTESY COMMUNE DESIGN (VASE, BOWL)

## ► Embrace the Near and Dear

"We try to localize as much as possible," says Alonso. As a general rule, Commune looks to a home's immediate region for local or, better yet, reclaimed wood, thus reducing the environmental burden of shipping. "If you live in California, why import a kitchen from England?" Alonso says. (And if you live in Europe, why import from the US? This Paris kitchen cabinetry uses salvaged European oak from Exquisite Surfaces.)



## ◀ Less Is More

A sprawling kitchen with double islands and dual dishwashers might sound glamorous, but at the end of the day the smaller kitchen, the lower its environmental impact. Commune works closely with clients at the beginning of a renovation to map out their exact needs and max out every square foot. "It's a small but obvious way to be sustainable," Alonso explains. "If everyone did that it would make a big difference." (Shown is a modestly scaled kitchen in Los Feliz.)

**CALIFORNIA DREAMING**  
The LA-based company's favorite ways to keep it local



"Our West Coast clients sign up for that total California lifestyle," reflects Alonso, who—like many of them—eats off Heath dishes at home. [heathceramics.com](http://heathceramics.com)



"I collect artisan ceramics from people like Kevin Willis and Zoe Dering," he says of the respective Joshua Tree and Bay Area artists. [communedesign.com](http://communedesign.com)



Made from locally sourced walnut, carved nesting bowls by Marin County woodworker Niles Wertz are feats of contemporary California craft. [communedesign.com](http://communedesign.com)