

## Springfield Bakery Goes Green

Swiss Bakery and Pastry Shop owners apply a Swiss upbringing to new business outlet.

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By Mike DiCicco



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As Reto and Laurie Weber open their second Swiss Bakery and Pastry Shop, in Ravensworth Shopping Center, they are bringing a Swiss sensibility to more than just the food.

While constructing, decorating and equipping the shop's interior, they tried to base their decisions on environmental and social responsibility. This is a luxury they did not have when opening their first shop in Burke, where they took over an existing bakery, said Laurie Weber.

"This has brought together a lot of how we are naturally and how we feel about the environment," she said. "It just seemed like the natural course." She noted that the Swiss and other Europeans tend to be more environmentally conscientious than most Americans. Laurie Weber is American, and her husband came to the U.S. from Switzerland 11 years ago. They live near their new shop, in Northern Springfield. Inside the bakery is abundant woodwork, all of which is made from bamboo, said Laurie Weber. The couple hired an environmentally conscious American designer and a Swiss carpenter to handle the interior design, and the designer had insisted upon bamboo because, as a fast growing plant, it is an easily renewable source, she said. It also turned out to be the cheapest of the hardwoods.

The rest of the wood in the place — from the tables and chairs to the cabinets and shelving — was salvaged from another bakery that was closing. A couple of additional furniture pieces, as well as the door and window frames, were built from leftover bamboo scraps, said Laurie Weber.

She also noted that the back countertop was made from recycled paper and resin compound, decorative windows were made by setting bamboo rings in environmentally friendly "ecoresin," most of the lights use low-energy bulbs, and the paint on the walls is a low-toxicity, milk-based paint. "Cows, Switzerland, cheese, milk — it all comes together," she said.

Reto Weber said he chose a tankless water heater not only to save space but because "it just heats what I need," rather than using all the energy required to keep 80 gallons of water constantly heated. A hot water booster in the dishwasher allows it to sanitize dishes with hot water, so that no chemicals are necessary.

He said he was looking into the cost of installing solar panels on the roof, noting that they would save money in the long run. "I don't know if I can change something, but this is just how I grew up," he said. "Solar panels are common in Switzerland. Life over here, it's too busy to do it." He had talked to a number of people about a water heater before someone reminded him of the availability of the tankless heater, which he remembered his parents using in the sauna they built over 30 years ago, he said. "I'm here 10, 11 years, and I start to forget how it is at home."

Reto Weber also voiced a suspicion of trash pick-up services that take away garbage and recyclables in the same truck. He noted that he grew up with different recycling containers even for glass of different colors.

Keri Klockowski, who the Webers call their "operational assistant," is looking into trustworthy trash removal companies, including finding out how much the drivers are paid. "It's also about that level of social responsibility," said Klockowski. She is also looking into the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System created by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Taryn Holowka, a spokesperson for the Green Building Council, said the rating system was created because no definition for a "green building" exists. Creating such a building "is not re-inventing the wheel," she said, explaining that the idea is to consider the consequences of each decision.

In a world of climate change and water shortages, environmental responsibility "is really important for a company to look into," she said. She added that green building practices can save money on energy and water bills, and that some research has connected green building to higher morale and lower staff turnover. "You're showing the community and you're showing your employees that you care," said Holowka.