

The Active Life

Earth-friendly shoes reduce your footprint

By Alan M. Petrillo

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Feet have gone green, or at least, the shoes that cover them have.

The passion for fashion in shoes is getting the green treatment from a number of manufacturers, including Kigo Footwear, New Balance, Terra Plana and Oliberte Ltd.

Rachelle Kuramoto, director of marketing for Kigo Footwear, says the company started in 2006 with a line of portable footwear designed for skiers and snowboarders who wanted comfortable shoes after wearing clunky boots all day and then evolved into making green shoes that are strong, lightweight and comfortable.

"We spent two years researching and talking with manufacturers, and pulling together sustainable and biodegradable materials for our footwear line," Kuramoto says. "We wanted to make these shoes responsibly and sustainably. There are other fold-up and roll-up shoes on the market, but you won't find them with a really sturdy outsole like ours, or with fingerprint grooving on the outside that makes the shoe anti-slip."

Kuramoto says the yarn that goes into a Kigo shoe is made from plastic bottles that are broken down into powder form that is then turned into fabric.

"We use eco-friendly dyes on the fabric, which is four-way stretch, and very resistant to water and staining," she adds. "Ours is the only EPA-approved water and stain resistant treatment available for footwear. It's 100 percent eco-friendly, and is washed into the fabric, instead of being sprayed on."

Kuramoto notes, "The people who wear our shoes are active, so we needed the shoes to be comfortable, breathable and protective."

Kigo Footwear styles include the Star for women, and a unisex slip-on called the Shell.

"We launched both styles in August and use the same last so there's no waste," Kuramoto says. "Both are a slip-on style so they are very minimalist and lightweight with our women's size 7 weighing just over a half-pound for a pair."

Packaging for the shoes also are eco-friendly, with the shoe box made of recycled corrugated cardboard and the shoe bag supplied with each pair made from cornstarch, meaning it can be composted.

The two Kigo shoe styles come in differ-



ent color options, from gray with orange or green paneling, to all gray with contrast stitching in black or green.

Kuramoto says Kigo plans on expanding its line in early 2010 with two new designs.

Bryan Gothie, product manager for outdoors at New Balance, says over the past few years his company has taken a hard look at the materials used in making its shoes and has incorporated more environmentally friendly raw materials into its new 070 models for men and women.

"We're using a polyester mesh that has a minimum of 20 percent recycled content in it, which means less petroleum and energy has been used in its production," he says.

Gothie notes the synthetic fabric that serves as the base for construction of a shoe is designed in symmetrically opposite forms so that the entire piece of fabric can be used and nothing will be thrown away.

"There's no waste in this pattern, which is why our shoe looks the way it does," he notes. "The upper portion of the shoe is a combination of recycled and regular polyester, there's cotton webbing on the side in the form of a large rectangular piece, and there's a reduced impact synthetic on the toe."

The rest of the shoe is recycled content, Gothie says, with the outsole having a speckled look to it because it incorporates rice husks in with the rubber in order to

encourage less rubber use."

The 070 series, which also uses water-based adhesives in its manufacture, was launched in the fall of 2009 and is available in multiple colors.

Terra Plana in New York City got its start in the early 1980s making exclusive handmade men's shoes. But after the company failed in 2002, it was taken over by

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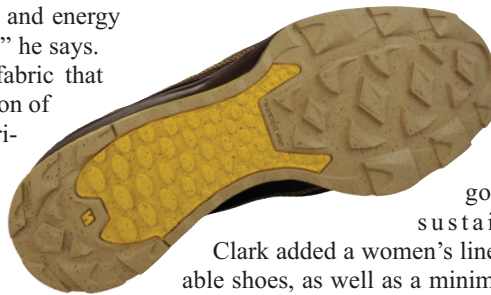
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Clark added a women's line of sustainable shoes, as well as a minimalist line of shoes and sandals.

"We approach a green shoe by creating an eco-matrix, which is a series of scores based on life cycle analysis," Clark says. "For every product we use, we look at its components - where they come from, how they get to the factory, how they're processed, how they're used and how they're disposed of. Most shoes have 30 components so we try to use those components that are close to our factory."



Sabra Ellingson, Terra Plana's USA operations director, says the company launched its Dopie line in 2008. The shoes are made from recycled lightweight foam rubber, which "gives the feeling of being barefoot," according to Ellingson. She says the Dopie is the result of a search for a sandal in a simpler form with a single shape sole to protect the foot, yet folds up between the toes to provide control.

Another line, Vivobarefoot, has a patented puncture resistant sole and is manufactured on the same molds and last shapes for each style. Ellingson says the shoe strengthens the muscles in the feet, helps realign posture and stimulates sensory perception.

"Also, by not opening up new molds or lasts at the factory each year we're able to save energy,"

Ellingson says. "We like to

do everything handmade,

which allows us to stay

with an artisan feel to

making the shoes. If

it's not eco-friendly

and sustainable, we take

it back to the drawing board

and come up with something better or drop it altogether."

Ellingson points out that all Terra Plana's shoes use a recycled rubber component for their soles and a recycled memory foam for their liners.

"With our leathers, we do tanning with vegetable extracts," she adds, "which also is much more sustainable."

Oliberte Ltd., headquartered in Ontario, Canada, calls itself the first footwear company to market urban-casual footwear that's exclusively made in Africa.

The rubber used in the soles of Oliberte's footwear is 100 percent natural, produced from the milk from rubber trees tapped in Liberia, Africa. Known as "crepe rubber," Oliberte calls it the most traditional way to process rubber into soles for shoes.

A company statement notes, "since we prefer not to use chemicals in making our rubber soles, it means you get to walk on the most natural rubber on earth, which is very sticky. As such, the rubber sole will darken, but remain strong and durable."

In addition to sustainable methods of rubber production, the leather tanneries that Oliberte works with meet strict environmental standards.

Author: Alan Petrillo is a local freelance writer.

Try mindful eating instead of stuffing

By Michelle May, M.D.

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This holiday season, experience maximal pleasure from all the wonderful food. By eating mindfully you'll eat less and enjoy these special holiday meals even more.

The key to mindful eating is to notice the details. Pretend you're writing an article about your Thanksgiving or other holiday meal for a gourmet magazine. The following tips are from *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle*:

- Focus on the people you're sharing your meal with. Engage in interesting conversations. Ask questions and really listen to your companions.
- Notice how hungry you are. If you aren't hungry yet, become aware of the reasons you feel like eating anyway. If it's for social reasons, then be social for awhile longer, then eat when you get hungry.
- Decide how you want to feel when you're done eating. Stuffed and miserable? Or comfortable and content? Eating the right amount of food is not about being good but about feeling good. Fill your plate or order accordingly.
- Mentally describe the table setting and the ambiance. Notice the aromas, colors, textures, and presentation of the meal.
- Before eating, take a moment to be truly

thankful about where your food came from, including all the people who invested their time, effort, and talent to get it from farm to plate.

- Choose food carefully by asking yourself what you want and what you need. Don't waste your appetite on cranberry sauce shaped like a can if you don't love it!
- Put one small bite in your mouth. You only have taste buds on your tongue so the flavors of a large bite of food are lost on your teeth, cheeks, and the roof of your mouth.
- Notice the texture and flavors of the food on your tongue then slowly begin to chew. Breathe since flavors other than salty, sweet, bitter, and sour actually come from the aromas.
- Set your fork down between bites. If you begin to load your next forkful your attention will be on the next bite, not the one you are eating now. And if you are focused on the next bite of food instead of the one you're eating, you won't stop eating until there are no more forkfuls.
- Sit for a moment and let the flavors and experience linger before you take the next bite.
- Notice as the food gently fills your stomach. Pause for several minutes in the middle of eating to reconnect with your hunger and

fullness levels and enjoyment of the meal.

• Food is abundant this time of year (actually all year for many of us). Remind yourself that you can eat more later or at another meal so there's no need to eat it all now and ruin the experience by being too stuffed.

Mindful eating is a great way to enjoy Thanksgiving and other meals more while eating less. You'll be thankful that you did!

Author: Michelle May, M.D. is a recovered yo-yo dieter and author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*.

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