



When it comes to interiors, furniture designer Erin True likes to keep it local: There are plenty of resources to be found in Chicago, and her young company, Urban Wood Goods (118 N. Peoria St., Ste. 2N, urbanwoodgoods.com), is sourcing reclaimed wood from buildings in the city and the surrounding Midwest towns. And the mix of modern, vintage and industrial styles in her interior pieces has quickly put her product in high demand.

When Erin, a former art teacher, started designing and building custom pieces of furniture, it didn't take

After being repurposed into new shapes, the pieces are welded to steel bases—the most popular being pipes and midcentury hairpin legs. “I think people like it because it's very simple. In that way, even some of the pieces that are more industrial seem to fit into [personal] spaces,” says Erin. “That's what I love about reclaimed wood—you can pair it with really funky chairs in bright colors.”

The pieces, which clients can customize or purchase from the showroom and website, include benches and console tables (\$200-\$600) and long dining room tables (starting at \$1,000). Erin incorporates interesting accessories such as an old-school locker basket that slides out from underneath a bench, but in place of a locker number there's a personalized ZIP code or wedding date. When working with vintage crates and ammo boxes, she says that she and Jason “created a way to make drawers so that you don't have to cover up the cool graphics.”

The couple has spent significant time hand-delivering products and, as a result, has already gleaned an impressive client list: a *Saturday Night Live* producer who insisted they come to a show after delivering a piece to his home in New York; the director of events for MTV/Viacom; Martha's Vineyard interior designers; a display for HGTV; and New York restaurant Luke's Lobster, for which they're creating outdoor furniture for a new location in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Locally, they're designing pieces for new wine bar Square One as well as Chicago-based wine auction and retail company Hart Davis Hart—a project from which they're looking forward to receiving a few leftover wine crates to repurpose.

“Erin is a mountain of confidence,” says Jason. To which she replies, “He'll say we aren't reaching that many people. And I say, ‘Jason, if we actually reached everyone, we'd have more business than we could handle!’” Well, something tells us these two could handle the challenge.



Out of the Woodwork

A hot Chicago company reclaims urban wood to create modern, sustainable interiors.

| By Katie Schroeder | Portrait by Jim Newberry |

long for her husband Jason, who previously worked in technology sales, to come onboard and take a “leap of faith,” as he calls it. “We're becoming a real business, and I really didn't expect it to happen this quickly,” he says. “I come from a business background and am methodical in financial plans and models, but we'll probably exceed what I thought our first-year revenue would be by the end of July.” After moving into a third wood shop for more space, the duo also moved into a new appointment-only showroom in the Fulton Market district just last month.

The process goes like this: UWG looks for large amounts (think 10,000 feet) of old growth wood—typically pine, Douglas fir and oak—that's been deconstructed into boards rather than demolished into fragments. Erin scours the web and also works with the ReBuilding Exchange to find slabs that are wide, long and durable, due to their age. (Old growth wood is also marked by dense rings and rich coloring not exhibited in quickly harvested trees, she says, as well as saw marks, knots and dents from its first life that give it character.)

Clockwise from top left: Brooklyn dining table, \$1,195 for 72 inches by 36 inches, and matching Brooklyn bench, \$495 for 72 inches; Erin and Jason True in their wood shop; old-school locker basket bench, \$265 for 3 feet; Industry wine rack/console table, starting at \$395