

## table talk

place setting  
the origins and inspirations of Green Table

Where did Green Table come from? Well, where more every reasonably good idea usually comes from - a bit here and there.

Until very recently, Green Table executive director André LaRivière was invited to Vancouver restaurants not to analyze their eco-efficiency, but to sample their new menus in his role as freelance food writer. A former CBC Radio executive producer, he'd also completed chef training at the French Culinary Institute in New York, and cooked in restaurants in France before embarking on a combo food/media career.

The need to contribute regular food and sustainability features, such as The Conscientious Kitchen column, to Vancouver weekly the Georgia Straight, along with business and menu trends features for Foodservice & Hospitality, a national Canadian trade magazine, prompted a visit to the 2004 Bioneers conference in San Francisco to research stories about sustainable food systems and 'green restaurants.'

André met some inspiring, enterprising individuals, including Canadian ex-pat Larry Bain, then the director of sustainability and social responsibility at Jardiniere, and Ritu Primlani, executive director of Thimmakka's Resources for Environmental Education, who'd developed an innovative certification program for 'greening' the South Asian restaurant community in the Berkeley/Oakland area.

Convinced that these ideas and programs would be welcome by Vancouver restaurants, André spent his free time exploring the challenges of importing them to his region which, unlike the Bay Area, did not have facilitators such as municipal government services or any 'green business' standards and protocols.

Then by coincidence came a call from the Business Services department of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), looking for suggestions for 'case study' candidates among local restaurants for its new SmartSteps eco-efficiency program, which would provide the platform and protocol on which to 'Canadianize' the California model.

As well, through contact with organizations including Your Local Farmers Market, Farm Folk/City Folk and the Vancouver Food Policy Council, André identified an important role for the restaurant and foodservice industry to play in nurturing a more sustainable regional food system.

After setting up a partnership with Ritu, André invited both she and Larry Bain to Vancouver to help introduce the pilot phase of what was now known as Green Table. On a sunny April afternoon in 2006, a few dozen chefs and restaurateurs gathered at C Restaurant, and from among this group (with a few late additions) emerged the charter 'piloteers' (who launched the program in late August).

They tracked how much energy we used, then our water and the amount of refuse we rack up. We really appreciated their efforts. We simply hadn't the time to monitor this closely. All our time was taken up running the restaurant and seeing to our three kids.

Suzanne Fielden, Rock Mountain Flatbread Company

Green Tables, EAT Magazine &ndash; March/April 2007

From that running start, with the invaluable participation of program manager Amy Robinson and support from the entire food community, the Green Table Network is now poised to connect restaurants and foodservice facilities across the region.

Read more about our beginnings in this story ( [eat\\_green\\_table](#) 1.10 Mb) by Julie Pegg in EAT Magazine.