



BEING GREEN

Auliana Poon has created stylish, sustainable outdoor furniture for the tropical lifestyle. **Sharon Millar** got a surprise when she heard what it's made from

Photography courtesy
Being Sustainable

Every plastic milk bottle can now aspire to great things, thanks to Dr Auliana Poon. She's the creator of "Being Sustainable", a line of clean, up-market outdoor furniture – which begins life as milk bottles. They're converted into "plastic lumber", which can be used for a variety of purposes, including roofing.

Poon is adamant that tourists are seeking the outdoor experience when they visit the Caribbean. Visitors crave the sheer oxygen and wide open sky. So lying on comfortable daybeds or lounging in relaxing chairs should be a given. But such a product did not exist. So she created her own and tweaked the details until she got what she wanted – and, more importantly, what she's certain that every visitor to the region wants.

Has she got it right? The Hilton Trinidad thinks so. The hotel used her designs when it installed an outdoor room as part of its refurbishment to welcome President Obama to the country for the 2009 Summit of the Americas.



ist would respond not only to the style but also the “feel-good” knowledge that no trees were harvested to make the product.

Today’s global awareness of issues such as climate change and conservation is reflected in how people choose to spend their money and where they put their own resources. This is of particular importance to the small islands of the Caribbean, where many economies depend on tourism.

The most obvious advantage that this chic furnishing option brings to the Caribbean market is that it’s made from recycled material. But there are others, such as its durability and low maintenance. As Poon points out, that it turn means that staff members have more time to devote to the art of hospitality.

The Being Sustainable range hasn’t sacrificed style to sustainability. On the con-



Poon, a Trinidadian, knows what she’s talking about. Her book *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies* discusses the concepts of “old tourism” and “new tourism” and has been frequently cited as a guide to understanding the mechanics of how and why people travel. Published in 1993, the text was one of the earliest advocates of identifying consumer needs to analyse and influence tourism trends. Poon is also the founder of a consultancy firm, Tourism Intelligence International, which creates blueprints for sustainable development, and has worked for clients such as South Africa, Iceland, and Abu Dhabi, developing tourism policies and strategies.

The company has bases in both Trinidad and Germany, and also runs a small luxury rental property in Tobago. Villa Being,

which opened in 1998, is a stylish, upmarket example of green gone glam. A small organic farm, a devoted staff, and a healthy commitment to local farmers and providers help make this project a working example of what TII represents. Managing a villa in the tropics gave Poon firsthand experience of the hidden costs of wear and tear on a property exposed to the elements – and the cost of maintaining wooden outdoor furniture was of particular concern.

In her search for alternatives, Poon knew that environmentally friendly options would have to be chic and contemporary, and she was confident that the “new” tour-

trary, the line is as attractive as it is ecologically friendly. Buyers can choose from traditional white, teak, and mahogany finishes, but there are also black, green, Pacific blue, sunset red, tangerine, and lemon options, and outdoor cushions are also available in complementary colours. So far, the range includes loungers, club chairs, Adirondack chairs, love seats and sofas, with accompanying side and coffee tables, and Poon is also working on a line of daybeds. ■