



Rides, Shoots & Leaves

Calfee Design builds a bicycle guaranteed to reduce your carbon footprint.

BY BRAD A. GREENBERG

CRAIG CALFEE HAD SPENT a decade building top-end, carbon fiber bike frames. So when his dog Luna dragged a piece of bamboo into the yard behind his Santa Cruz shop, he wasn't exactly looking for a new foundation for high-performance road bikes. But that's exactly what he found. "From that point on," Calfee says, now 10 years after building his first bamboo bike, "it has just been about learning about bamboo and being amazed by it."

There were, of course, plenty of skeptics. People who told Calfee that bamboo wouldn't hold, last, or cooperate. And, at first, they were right. But when Calfee Design shifted from black bamboo to smoked bamboo, the wood stopped splitting. Now some 140 road-bike enthusiasts, particularly long-distance riders, enjoy the \$2,695 frame. "No matter how you build it, it is going to be very smooth riding," Calfee says. "It fully absorbs the road buzz."

Each frame, weighing four to five pounds, takes 25 to 30 hours to build. There is no mold. Bamboo shafts are bonded with mitering, glue as well as a hemp and epoxy wrap.

Recently, Calfee set his sights on spreading the gospel of bamboo bike frames to Africa. He's made two visits to Ghana. On his first trip he taught the tricks of treating bamboo and fitting the pieces together. Then, in March he oversaw as locals built the bikes by themselves.

Calfee is developing a plan to couple this humanitarian effort with \$100 micro loans for needed bike parts. (The loans would be offered to people building their own bamboo bikes by people purchasing Calfee's.) "They have plenty of bamboo, they need bikes and they need jobs," Calfee reasons. "What better way to solve that problem than with a bamboo bike?" □

Calfee Design, 800.965.2171, www.calfeedesign.com