

Member Profile

Arthur Lauer, Inc.

(Formerly Wood Classics)

Year Founded: 1983

Location: Gardiner, NY

Number of Employees: 28

Principle Product: Luxury outdoor teak furniture.

Council Member Since: 1993

Walking into the lobby at Arthur Lauer, Inc. can transport you from the grey cold February day outside to a warm June afternoon poolside. The beautiful teak wood glistens from a variety of patio furniture sets and the employees are just as warm and inviting. This is a company that has worked hard to create its own niche market, luxurious outdoor teak furniture handmade here in the Hudson Valley.

Arthur Lauer, Inc. was known as Wood Classics originally, and was started by Eric and Barbara Goodman twenty five years ago. They began by selling teak furniture they produced in their New Jersey home through inserts in Horticulture Magazine. As the demand grew they

purchased the current property in Gardiner, New York in the early '90s. The company has grown from there. Two years ago, Jeremy Smith and Bruce and Leslie Lauer became the three majority owners of the company and changed the name to Arthur Lauer, Inc. There are several factors that contribute to the company's continued success: the expert craftsmanship, the high quality teak wood, the excellent customer service and the eye pleasing, comfortable designs.

One reason this furniture is so special is the wood it is made from, genuine *Tecona Grandis* of First European Quality, the highest grade of teak in existence. Teak wood is special because it is one of the hardest and most durable. Often people assume teak is a rainforest wood, but it is not. In fact, teak is one of the most responsibly harvested woods worldwide.



Oak, Pine or Maple have a tendency to rot, split and crack, and eventually weather unevenly. Teak has a high oil content that enables it to naturally repel moisture and insects as well as prevents it from drying out, rotting or warping. The teak wood weathers evenly to a soft silvery grey that doesn't require preservative treatments.

It is from this wonderful wood that each piece of furniture is expertly crafted here in Gardiner, New York. The employees who create each piece have a lot invested in their work. Since 1997 Arthur Lauer has been employee owned. The Goodmans decided that as they were exiting the company they would like to reward their employees by making them part owners in the company. In fact, 75% of Arthur Lauer, Inc. is employee owned (over one-quarter by the company's Employee Stock Ownership Plan). According to President Jeremy Smith, this helps to keep everyone on the same page and makes for a very happy company. As part owners, the employees have a vested interest in the final product and the customer's satisfaction.

The customer service at Arthur Lauer is outstanding. If a customer doesn't want to assemble the furniture themselves they can request white glove service where a fully assembled piece is delivered and placed exactly where the customer wants. Arthur Lauer also is committed to answering every phone call during their business hours with a person, not an automated help line. This is only one way they strive to please customers; the beauty of their products is another.

Up until this year, the designs have been very classic and simple: a straight backed bench or a curved backed garden chair, a round dining table or an oval coffee table. For

2008, Arthur Lauer has brought in three top of the line designers and will be debuting several new collections by Sheila Bridges, Phil Behrens and Staci Mandrell throughout the year. The idea is to make the customer's outdoor living space an extension of their indoor home with the same sense of style and quality. Maybe it's the bright look of future success that gives the lobby that summertime feel.



An employee at Arthur Lauer, Inc. assembles a teak resort umbrella.



The Dunwoody Garden Seat.