

Sustainable American white oak vs. red oak

Criswell Davis

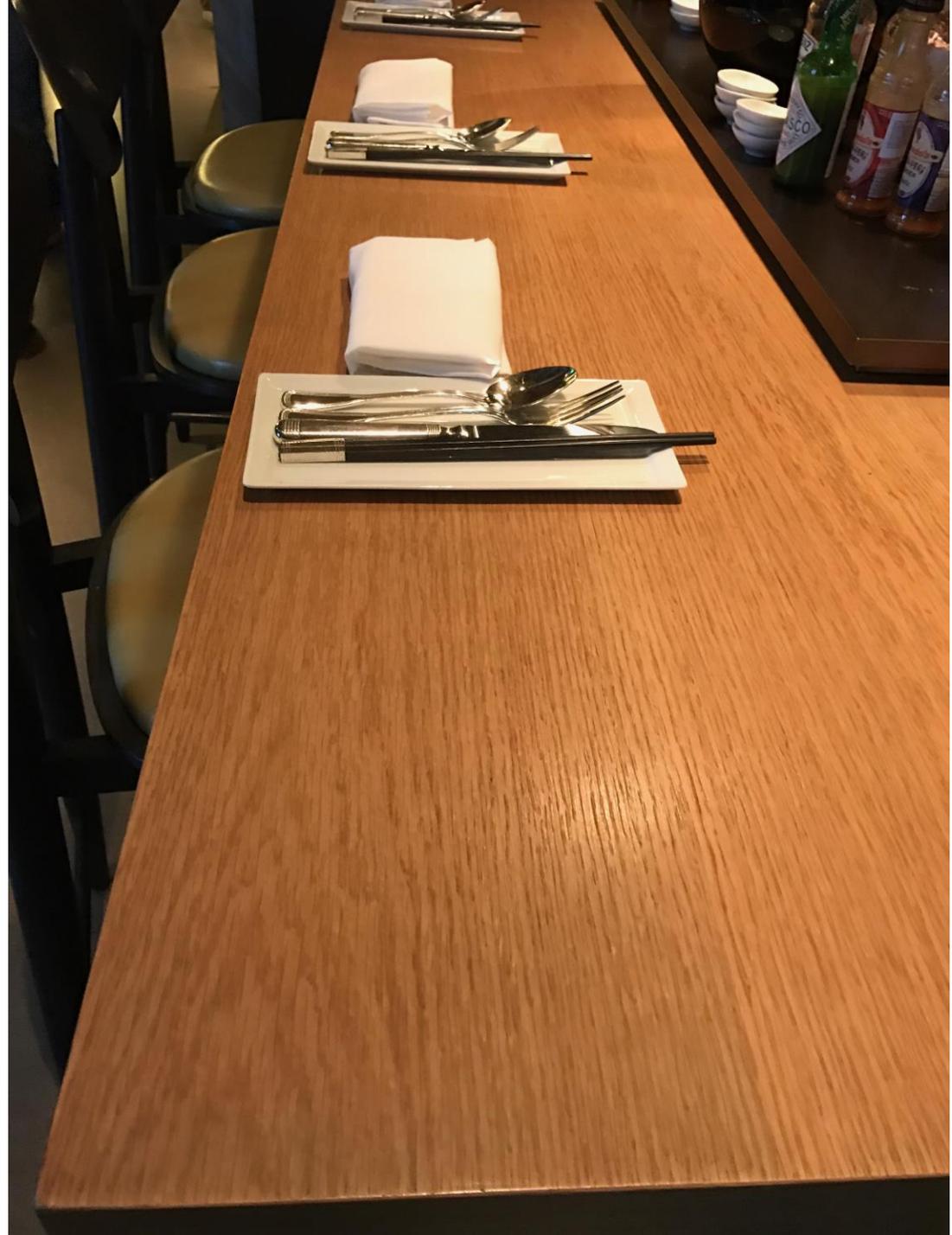
Mighty Oaks Consulting

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Is “red” oak red in color and “white” oak white in color?

- The simple answer is no.
- Each oak, *quercus rubra* (red) and *quercus alba* (white) have many subspecies within their respective groups and color can vary widely among each group.
- It is often difficult to distinguish between red and white oak.
- Both rank high on the Janka scale for hardness and the appearance of both is similar

White oak table –
Grand Hyatt Hong Kong



White oak table – Coast
Coffee- Sydney airport



White oak stool –
Coast Coffee
Sydney airport



Red oak flooring— private residence





Red oak flooring— Private residence

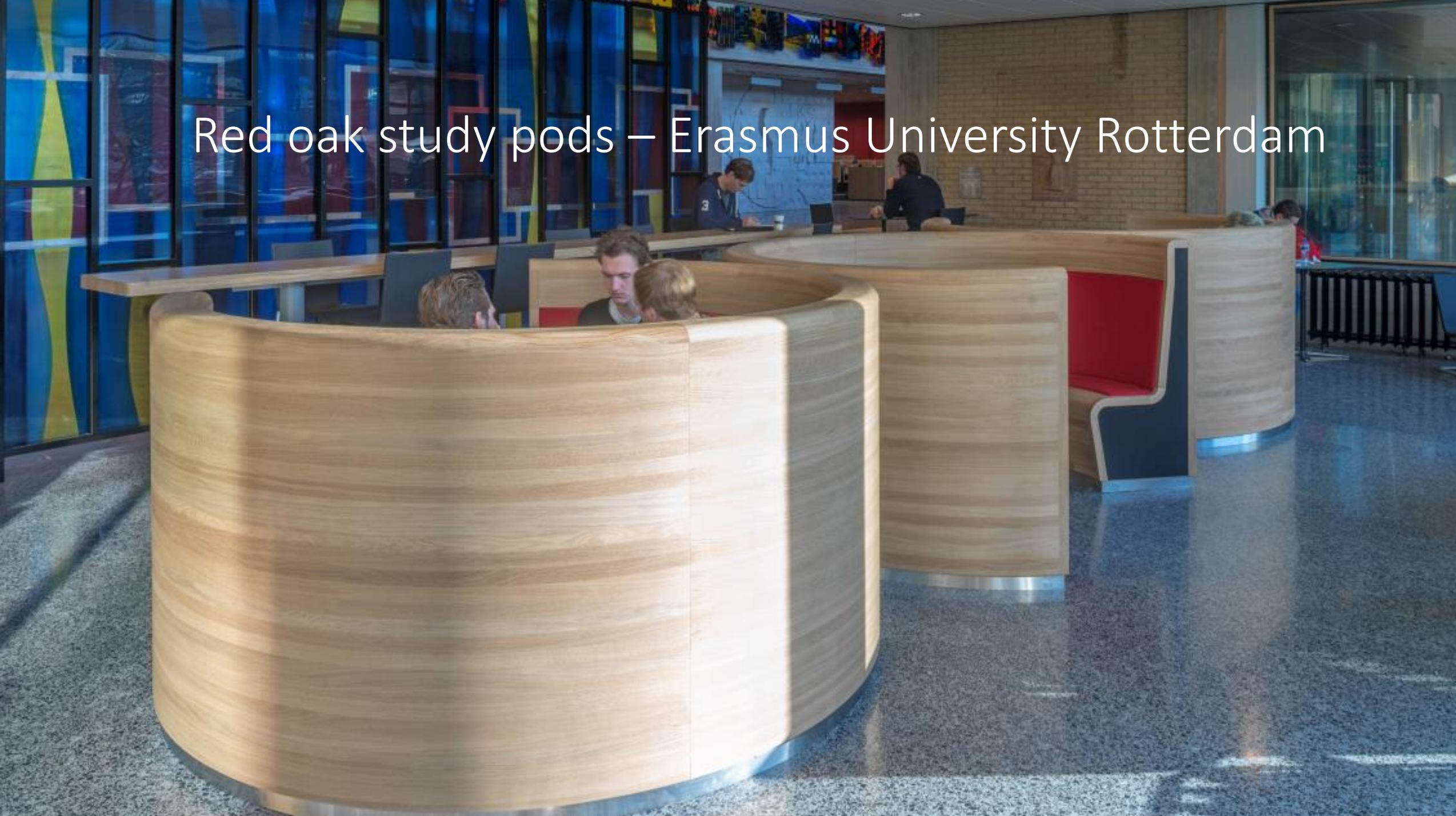


Red oak flooring— Saab dealership

White oak flooring– Auckland



Red oak study pods – Erasmus University Rotterdam



Red oak flooring – Heppner Hardwoods, Los Angeles





Red oak flooring – Heppner Hardwoods, Los Angeles



White oak oak fixtures— Queenstown, NZ airport coffee shop

White oak possesses a cell structure called “tyloses” that closes the pores, making it resistant to water and rot. One way to tell the difference between red and white oak is to look at the end grain. If you can see tiny pin holes in the pores, it is most likely red oak.

White oak log supply and price is affected by the demand for both wine and whisky barrels. These barrels can't be made from red oak, so red oak will always be plentiful and less subject to market fluctuations. Red oak represents approximately 35% of the American hardwood resource, while white oak is about 15%.

The next slide shows 4 pieces of quartersawn red oak and 4 pieces of quartersawn white oak with matching stains. Even experts would be challenged to distinguish between the two without very close inspection.



The bottom row is white oak and the top row is red oak

In the final analysis, one shouldn't count on a particular color palette from either red or white oak. Both groups of American oaks will perform extremely well in flooring, furniture and joinery. Both are sustainable, durable and beautiful.