

Orange Coast

O.C. AFTER DARK

Sunset doesn't just
end the day here.
It starts the fun!

HIPSTER BOWLING

LOBSTER DIVING

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LIVE MUSIC

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DANCE CLUBS

LATE-NIGHT BITES

WINE BARS

COFFEEHOUSES

ICE SKATING

**ARMY
STRONG**
One Gay
Soldier, Loud
and Clear

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Those Brave
New Boots



*Proof Bar in
Santa Ana,
home of a killer
Raspberry Lemon
Drop Martini.*

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Jonathan Munsayac & Michelle Phelps

Their Fullerton tea lounge offers a place to chill in an urban setting
by GRETCHEN KURZ

TRANQUIL TEA LOUNGE, which opened in June in Fullerton, is definitely not your grandmother's Victorian-style tearoom. Siblings Munsayac, 28, and Phelps, 31, are behind this sleek, urban hang where you can relax with a steaming pot of your choice from more than 80 loose-leaf teas.

A compact menu of breakfast and lunch items calms rumbling tummies, and the French-style macaroons make any day feel a bit more indulgent. It's a fine spot for a relaxing meet-up or a solo spell with a good book and a soothing cuppa.

TRANQUIL TEA LOUNGE
106 W. WILSHIRE AVE
FULLERTON
714-869-3577
WWW.TRANQUILTEALOUNGE.COM



Why traditional tea and not gelato, coffee, wine, or boba?

M.P.: We grew up with a passion for tea and found it was a challenge locating premium-quality loose-leaf tea in Orange County. Our love for entertaining, and our background in restaurants and marketing, inspired us to open the tea lounge and educate the community about the varieties of the drink and its health benefits.

So tea was a family tradition and part of your childhood?

M.P.: Definitely. I remember my mom giving me a cup of Celestial Seasonings Sleepytime Herbal Tea before going to bed.

Why a tea lounge in a neighborhood known as an after-dark destination?

J.M.: As graduates of Cal State Fullerton, we envisioned an alternative to the local bars and coffeehouses. The mix of independent retailers, theaters, and proximity to two colleges make this downtown different than any other in Orange County. Plus, we love that Fullerton residents support their local small businesses.

Which came first, the teas or the food?

J.M.: The whole tea concept started with my passion for food. I wanted to create fresh, good-tasting food, without dealing with a full-on restaurant. A tea lounge was perfect. My sister and I were able to match the style of food we serve with the beauty of the tea.

Favorite teas?

M.P.: Of our 86 varieties, my top four are: Road to Hana—a black and Rooibos blend with coconut, chocolate bits, and vanilla; Leilani's Garden—a Rooibos blend with lavender and coconut; Mauna Loa—a green tea blend with pistachios, macadamia nuts, and white chocolate; and Makena's Passion—a green tea blend with passion fruit, pineapple, and strawberries.

J.M.: My all-time favorite is a green tea called Jasmine Dragon Phoenix Pearls, a very light and flowery tea from China. I named my dog Jasmine after it.

Most exotic tea you serve?

J.M.: Pu-erh Toucha, an aged, compressed tea sometimes called "bird's nest tea" because of its unique shape. It's very strong, earthy, and woody—perfect for an early morning pick-me-up or great after a heavy meal because of its digestion benefits.

A common misconception about tea?

J.M.: That it's only drunk by old women with their pinkies pointed up. Spend

a day here and you'll see tea being enjoyed by every age and gender.

What should folks know about tea that they don't?

M.P.: It's the second most popular beverage in the world next to water. And that it's important to adjust steeping times and water temperature for each variety.

Do you like bottled teas?

M.P.: Overall, we want the tea industry to continue to grow so we do support bottled tea producers. We sell a non-alcoholic bottled tea that's an alternative to Champagne. Most events at our tea lounge use this for their toasts.

Favorite food-tea combination?

J.M.: Growing up, I loved going to Chinese restaurants and pairing a nice jasmine tea with my favorite dish, broccoli beef. I loved that drinking tea would help me not feel so stuffed after a heavy meal. Some teas aid digestion.

How do you stay current?

M.P.: We attend the annual World Tea Expo as a way to meet different tea importers and others in the industry. Tea

is similar to wine and can be very far-reaching. Since the industry continues to evolve, there's always more to learn.

Favorite reference book or Web site?

M.P.: "The New Tea Companion" [The National Trust of England, 2005] by Jane Pettigrew and Bruce Richardson is the ultimate tea bible. And www.teamap.com is the best Web site to search for tea establishments all over the United States.

A few gift ideas for tea lovers or tea neophytes?

M.P.: Either would appreciate a clear-glass pitcher with a stainless-steel infuser. I'd combine it with a trio of loose-leaf teas in sample tins, plus a Chocolatea Candy Bar made with hand-crushed organic tea.

Your typical customer?

M.P.: Mostly tea enthusiasts—college students to business professionals. They range in age from 10 to 80. The ratio is about 40 percent men, 60 percent women. We book a lot of baby showers and business meetings. ●

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