

THE MONTHLY

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Shop Talk

News about great shops in your neighborhood |

Shop Talk | *By Kate Madden Yee*

Tea trance at Téance

People across the globe have been drinking tea much longer than coffee, yet so few Americans seem to know their way around the teas of the world. **Téance Fine Teas** proprietor Winnie Yu plans to change that. Born in China, Yu spent her life cultivating an appreciation for tea, and for years has nurtured a mission of bringing pure, high-quality teas to the East Bay from boutique farms and farming collectives in China. Her first shop was Celadon Fine Teas on Solano Avenue; in November she renamed the shop Téance and opened on Fourth Street.

The space at Téance will help you appreciate unique tea selections and beg you to slow down. Take a seat at the smooth concrete tea bar—cast by Fu-Tung Cheng of Cheng Design in the shape of a *gaiwan*, or traditional Chinese tea-brewing vessel—and listen to water cascading from a nearby fountain into a goldfish-speckled pond. Try Lu Shan Clouds and Mist, a buttery, delicate green tea that's grown wild on a Chinese mountainside. Or sample some Pu-erh, a fermented black tea that is said to be good for digestion and lowering cholesterol. The older it is, the better, and Téance has Pu-erh that's from 4 to 15 years old. Or sip a cup of White Peony King, made from the premature buds of the tea plant and known for its antioxidant boost. Once you've made your tea selection, check out Téance's teaware, imported personally by Yu from China.

"We're really excited about our new location in the Fourth Street shopping area in Berkeley," says Yu. "We feature a tea bar that is twice as long as the old bar and emphasizes flights of tea for tasting."



Side up to the tea bar at Téance. Photo courtesy Téance.

*Téance Fine Tea, 1780 Fourth Street, Berkeley, (510) 524-2832;
www.teance.com.*

Frames, fabulous frames

When longtime painter and cus-tom-framing expert Michael Gumbert opened **Epoch Frameworks** in 2001, he thought he'd found a large enough space to launch his business. But the business grew fast and five years later he moved into a bigger space two doors down. His shop now includes an art gallery that highlights Northern California painters, printmakers and photographers and offers an extensive display of work by various California-based wood-turners.

In addition to art, Epoch offers a variety of custom-framing options: gilded, painted or hand-carved frames; on-site frame-milling and finishing; hand-painted or fancy-cut mats and custom-built display cases and shadowboxes. Gumbert, who holds master's degrees in fine arts and art restoration from the Art Institute of Chicago, can also restore antique frames and art pieces to their original glory.

But what's got him really excited is a new technology he's brought into his business: a laser cutter that can etch designs from the elegantly simple to the profoundly complex into materials ranging from marble, tile and glass to mirror, paper and wood. "There isn't anyone else in the Bay Area with this technology," Gumbert says. "We're able to make custom frames and portraits unlike any others."

*Epoch Frameworks, 2199 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, (510) 849-4595;
www.epochframeworks.com.*

Cardinal values

The only shopping experience better than finding a store with a fine selection of one-of-a-kind women's clothing is finding a store with the same clothes at bargain prices. Who needs the long drive to the outlet malls? **The Red Bird Outlet**, launched a few months ago by owner Karen Park, is right here in Berkeley. Park moved to Berkeley six years ago after working in the San Francisco fine apparel business for the likes of Neiman Marcus and I. Magnin for 20 years. In the East Bay, she found a narrow selection of clothing stock geared mostly to young, petite people.

She opened her main Red Bird store on Berkeley's Domingo Avenue so she could offer 30- to 50-somethings cool clothes that fit well. Park carries a solid collection of the basics—jeans and T-shirts—by

Red Engine Jeans, Stitch's, Three-Dot and James Perse as well as designer clothing by eskandar of London, Rozae Nichols and Bonnie Strauss.

The outlet store offers Red Bird fans discounted, end-of-season merchandise, including shoes and jewelry.

"Shopping has become so redundant lately," Park says. "The same stuff is everywhere. I try to find things that you just don't see."

Red Bird Outlet, 2918 Domingo Ave., Berkeley, (510) 848-5530. Open Thursdays through Sundays and by appointment.

Ooh la lingerie

San Francisco women may have a hipper reputation, but East Bay women don't just pick up some cotton bras at the mall and call it a day. Some enjoy a more continental lingerie experience—and are willing to accept the price—at **A La Folie** in Berkeley. Here you will find racy, lacy underthings just right for you (and thank God, sizes go up to 44G).

A La Folie carries an abundant variety of designers, from Nina Ricci to Simone Perele, Salomay, Jimmyjane and Prima Donna. The boutique is the exclusive Bay Area location for the designer wares of Dessous NYC, Christian Lacroix and Kenzo and the fabulous jewelry line of artist Jamie Joseph.

A La Folie recently moved from its Telegraph Avenue location to Fourth Street. "We're thrilled to be part of the Fourth Street community," says owner Nafissa Tayebi. "It has only been a month since our opening, but everyone is extremely welcoming."

A La Folie, 1816 Fourth Street, Berkeley, (510) 845-1616; www.visitlafolie.com.