

HERE & There

Sno:la (pronounced "snow-la") is not involved in the current frozen yogurt wars because they have no competitors. Unlike the yogurt shops that proliferated during the 80s craze, the greatly improved modern versions offer mostly low- or non-fat products, although many are made from powdered mixes blended with milk. The basic flavor is "plain" or "original," which tastes like old-fashioned yogurt, only frozen. Many places offer green tea and a couple of fruit flavors, along with fruit or regular cereal toppings.

Such simple innovations barely impress Masako Kawashima, a successful business executive and entrepreneur who is president of JEC International, the largest concert promotion company in Japan, and Randy Phillips (who manages Justin Timberlake and Lionel Richie, et al), CEO of AEG Live, a subsidiary of the powerhouse Anschutz Entertainment Group, a world leader in live entertainment and sports (Staples Center is just one of many projects).

Both JEC and AEG Live are committed to the health and well being of people and the environment. Masako, who arranges concert tours of Japan for headliners such as Stevie Wonder, Rod Stewart, Prince, Tony Bennett and The Rolling Stones, put those concerns into play. When her clients lamented that they couldn't indulge in desserts without packing on the pounds, she bought a soft serve machine and started experimenting with yogurt recipes in her kitchen. She says, "After reading studies that suggest white sugar may cause hyperactivity and possibly even contribute to violent behavior, I decided to use natural, organic fruit purees in place of white or refined sugars for our yogurt and original sauce.

Working on her own and with a food developer, and using only organic dairy, the Italian aficionado, who brushes up on her language skills by reading opera librettos, came up with a seasonally rotating array of up to 10 flavors such as Italian Tart (unflavored), Dulce de Leche (a not overly sweet replacement for regular vanilla), Chocolate Cremita (intensely concentrated), Pomegranate, Sour Cherry, Mango and Espresso Chip, and swirls like Chocolate/Sour Cherry or Fig & Date with Italian Tart. An in-



house chef is developing new toppings and yogurt flavors, such as pumpkin pie; vitamin A-rich goji berry (used in Far East medicine to enhance the immune system, eyesight, and liver); sesame; and mint. A "produce hunter" procures the freshest, highest quality fruits available.

For a unique treat, try a verrine, a yogurt parfait served in a clear cup made from corn. Four rotating choices might include: Chocolate Opulence (chocolate cremita layered with sno:la original chocolate sauce and fresh strawberries, topped with flaky wafers); Prana Burst (pomegranate yogurt layered with fresh berries and topped with organic granola); Angel Symphony (sour cherry yogurt layered with sno:la original chocolate and sour cherry sauces, topped with hazelnut streusel);



Tropical Passion (tart yogurt layered with fresh pineapple and strawberries, topped with toasted coconut); Caramel Decadence: dulce de leche yogurt layered with flaky wafers and hazelnut streusel, topped with crunchy chocolate nibs; espresso; or just create your own.

Masako uses unusual ingredients and original recipes in her 35 or so gourmet toppings: Sno:la original sour cherry sauce is made from fresh fruit; chocolate sauce contains a mix of gourmet chocolates; nata-de-coco, made from coconut milk and popular in Japan since 1993, has been touted to reduce cholesterol; aloe vera, which tastes like grape, is rich in fiber; natural mochi in regular, green tea, and strawberry; and fat-free organic gummy bears that adults like as much as kids for flavors like hazelnut streusel, toasted coconut, and chocolate nibs.

She sources as much as possible locally and donates a portion of proceeds to Slow Food and the UN World Food Program. Further, the interior is constructed from recycled materials, including a counter made from recycled computer chips; wooden walls; table tops fashioned from the sustainable eucalyptus tree, hand-painted soy art and soy-stained concrete. A solar panel, scheduled for installation, will power some of the yogurt machines and there's not a plastic spoon in sight. Take-out and Party Packages for 6 or more come packaged in a specially designed reusable insulated bag (think NASA technology), which you can buy separately for \$8. Neighborhood delivery, using eco-friendly bicycles, will be available soon. Some women lust for designer clothes but Masako's ultimate goal is to have her own cow and make every last drop of dairy from scratch.

Hours: Open daily at noon, until 7PM Sunday-Thursday and 10PM Friday and Saturday; extended hours in the summer. Park on the street or a block north, in the city parking structure next to William-Sonoma. Info: 310/274-2435 or www.sno:layogurt.com