

COMINGS & GOINGS

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Tea bar opens at Four Corners

Kitchen T.L.C., the local crafter of artisan teas and chocolates, opened a Four Corners storefront and tea bar in October — just in time for the holidays. Owner Theresa Thielemann says she wanted a place to cater directly to locals who had fallen in love with the delicacies elsewhere.

Plonk has long served T.L.C. chocolates and truffles on its dessert boards, and both Sola Cafe and Nova Cafe serve T.L.C. tea blends. The Chocolate Moose serves the signature two-pound truffles along with the teas, and in fact, restaurants and stores across the Rocky Mountain region offer many select teas and chocolates.

Before the new tea bar, Kitchen T.L.C. had no storefront location and operated for three years in a leased commercial kitchen. Today, 80 percent of business comes from retailers buying in bulk and businesses ordering gift baskets and chocolate business cards

— thin bars of chocolate with logos and text printed in edible ink. The remaining sales come from the website and now the brick-and-mortar location.

Thielemann says she wants most people to experience Kitchen T.L.C.'s goodies at other more conveniently located retailers, and for that reason decided to set up her tea bar in a somewhat hidden location at 7710 Shedhorn Dr.

Customers not only have to know where to look, but when, as the tea bar is only open 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, with a holiday open house on Dec. 18 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

But those who seek out Kitchen T.L.C. will be rewarded with the full selection of over 70 locally-crafted tea blends, plus gourmet sipping chocolate, truffles of every kind, and an exhaustive list of tea-infused items like chocolates, jams, scones, shortbreads and baking mixes.

Thielemann says “T.L.C.” originally reflected her maiden name initials, but has come to stand for “Tea, life, and chocolate,” adding, “We infuse pleasure into everyday life.”

Most products at the tea bar are offered either in bulk, packaged-to-go or served on-the-spot so that customers can experience everything at their own

pace. Ultimately, though, she says, “I want this to be a place where people sit down, have a cup of tea and read the paper.”

Thielemann has created six tea blends specifically for the Central Asia Institute, and 50 percent of the proceeds from those teas go directly to building schools. In addition, every purchase from the online store comes with a request to donate to CAI, and Thielemann matches all voluntary donations. She says because of the CAI sponsorship, Kitchen T.L.C. gets orders from as far away as Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Soldiers will read Three Cups of Tea and search online for how they can help, and they find us,” she says.

A self-described “lifelong foodie,” Thielemann started experimenting with flavor when she was eight, doctoring up her macaroni and cheese. Today, her sophisticated palette is working on tea-infused sauces and marinades. She uses strong brews of her Misty Mountain Dragonwell blend to impart a smoky flavor to fish and poultry, calling it “organic smokeless smoking.” The head chef at Yellowstone National Park uses

her teas to the same effect on duck and pork, she says.

And even though Kitchen T.L.C. doesn't serve coffee, Thielemann does cater to coffee enthusiasts with her Coffee Lovers teas. The Coffee Lovers Vanilla tastes like Italian espresso with a shot of vanilla, while the Coffee Lovers Almond behaves more like a robust desert coffee.

Thielemann says Kitchen T.L.C. creates “big bold flavors for the American palette, so if it's a Jasmine tea-infused chocolate, you're going to taste the Jasmine. We're not subtle.”

Grandmother commemorates lost granddaughter with organic spa

Chez Kez, French for “House of Kez,” opened on November 13 in the Snowload Building at 8th Ave. and Main St. Kez, short for Kezley, was a baby girl born on October 13, 2008, with a rare

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The Bozeman 6

Comparing the sales months December 2009 to December 2010

To measure retail in Bozeman, the region's trade center, we survey six retail businesses. We ask how sales were last month, compared to a year ago last month. We report the average of the sales figures and the range — the high and low within the survey group.



Thanks to the businesses that participate in the survey:

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Kitchen T.L.C.'s tea bar is now open for business at Four Corners.