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## **IN REVIEW: TRANQUILITY TEA ROOM IN THOUSAND OAKS**

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Published Tuesday, June 16, 2009

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Tranquility Tea Room in Thousand Oaks offers customers a trip to the past, when women in fancy hats and gloves sipped tea and nibbled on cucumber sandwiches.

To help set the mood, the owner provides hats, gloves and feather boas for those so inclined, and even suggests that, if you aren't smitten by the tea cups and china plates on your designated table, you are welcome to switch them. The same goes for the hats.

The tea business is the brainchild of Candra Coogan, who seven years ago started using a small bakery to help a local charity. She donated 10 percent of her proceeds from making cheesecakes, then donning Victorian attire to deliver orders in 19th-century style.

The enterprise expanded to baking, catering and specializing in tea parties. Coogan opened Tranquility Tea Room in 2007, on the second floor of a small shopping center. A percentage of the proceeds still go to charity, specifically, The Lighthouse Women's and Children's Mission in Oxnard. (Our server told us a "dream spot" for the tea room would be a Victorian house in Ventura.)

Tea and crumpets (well, scones) as well as dainty sandwiches and delicate desserts are served in two rooms crowded with antiques and china, lace and memorabilia. Fresh roses are placed on each table; lace curtains soften the business-as-usual scene on the city streets below.

Tea service each month is distinguished by a theme. In late May we caught the finale of the Mother's Day set. The theme for June is White Weddings.

Each tea includes the steaming, titular beverage plus a scone or scones, sandwiches and dessert. The quantity is determined by ordering one of the three levels, beginning with Afternoon Tea, which includes a scone, two sandwiches and a dessert; High Tea, with a scone, three sandwiches and two desserts; and Deluxe High Tea, with two scones, five sandwiches and three desserts.

We ordered two Deluxe versions (now \$28.50 per person) so that we could sample everything available that day.

The featured tea in May was chai, an aromatic blend, but any of the multiple tea choices was available. I tried the chai, and my friend opted for an Irish combination in the more traditional mode. Both were fine,

though the chai was not as hot as tea is usually served.

The food tidbits, though, showed the touch of a good baker and food preparers. They come elegantly arranged on a three-tiered tray, starting at the top with the scones, then the sandwiches and finally desserts.

Though the (Mother's Day) scones were listed as cherries 'n' cream and mini-raspberry, a scone crammed with juicy blueberries subbed for the cherry. It had a good scone texture, with a crumbly interior and a crisp exterior. The other "scone" was a different type altogether, though also delectable in its small, heart-shaped way, highlighting raspberry and almond flavors. Both were served with tiny bowls of homemade lemon curd and Tranquility Cream, a soft British-style cream spread.

Tea sandwiches were varied according to fillings and breads:

Cucumber with herbes de Provence on white bread was the quintessential tea item (think of the tea scene in "The Importance of Being Earnest," for example).

Roast beef with goat cheese and horseradish sauce on potato bread was a zesty combination. The seafood salad on sourdough bread was our favorite with its creamy texture and scent-of-sea flavors.

I also liked the curried egg salad on raisin bread, but my friend said she prefers her egg salad untainted by other flavors. We both gave thumbs (or is it pinkies?) up on the hearty raisin bread. Caramel-apple brie with pecans on potato bread was the final entry.

Mom's Raspberry Cheesecake Triangle was the star of the desserts, cool and creamy with a dash of strong raspberry flavor. The lemon bars also were outstanding in their genre and the "Love" Ganache Dipped Strawberry, a berry encased in chocolate, scored well with the quality of the latter.

We didn't deck ourselves in hats and gloves. But the women at a nearby table entered into the spirit of things and put on two of the proffered straw hats, which we were told were decorated by Candra Coogan herself. The scene is transporting enough without the embellishments, but some may find it fun to "dress up" for such an unusual repast.

The menu for June includes a featured tea of chocolate currant (a choice from the menu is always an alternative), cranberry-orange scones, triple chocolate chip mini-scones, sandwiches of cucumber Provencal, ham with apricot honey, turkey and apple with walnut chutney and cream cheese, smoked salmon with lemon-dill and chicken almond salad hearts, and desserts of caramel almond cream puffs, blackberry-lemon tartlets and dark chocolate cheesecake triangles.

— Rita Moran visits restaurants unannounced and pays for her meals. To contact her, send e-mail to [ritamoran@earthlink.net](mailto:ritamoran@earthlink.net).

— Tranquility Tea Room is at 2527 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. Call 418-9939.

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