

MidWeek

A Cup Of Tea In Kailua Town

By Jo Mc Garry Wednesday - January 21, 2009



Jo McGarry Photo

Darlene Pahed

Whenever a new tea shop opens - and there have been more than you 'd think over the past 15 years - people e-mail me asking my opinion, no doubt because Scotland and tea drinking are synonymous. I 've told tales before, I 'm sure, about everything coming to a halt for tea in Scotland.

Once, when I was home a few years ago overseeing a property renovation, I was astounded by how much of the morning was taken up with carpenters and painters stopping for tea. Someone was either boiling water, heading to the store for more tea leaves or calling everyone over for a "brew." It was remarkable how much time was devoted to the art of making a perfect cup of tea - in the middle of an otherwise empty house.

But I love the ritual, too, and nothing stops me from religiously brewing my own pot of Earl Grey/Scottish Breakfast blend each morning.

So I headed over the hill to Kailua as soon as I heard that A Cup of Tea had been voted Best New Business of 2008 by Kailua Chamber of Commerce.

A Cup Of Tea is a serious tea shop. Owner Darlene Pahed has done an admirable job re-creating a Victorian ambience on the ground floor of the Kailua Medical Building, with some beautiful pieces of antique furniture, tables decorated with linens and flowers, and a huge collection of china teapots and cups. It really does look like an English tearoom.

"I always knew this would be my dream job," Darlene says, "and I 've loved every day since we opened."

Her life experiences helped pave the way for her dream job and for dealing with daily inquiries from a curious public. She owned a bridal salon previously, and she 's a real estate agent. "I just love, love, love people," she says enthusiastically.

Tea service comes in portions large, medium and small. Start with soup, then salad, then an assortment of tea sandwiches (those tiny ones with the crusts cut off), then move to freshly baked scones, desserts and a pot of tea.

Some of the homemade goodies are fabulous. There 's an excellent cilantro-based house salad dressing, really good scones and a (seasonal) lemon curd that 's freshly made and deliciously tart. There 's real clotted cream too; a true afternoon tea scone should be slathered with some sort of fresh preserve and then topped with layers of clotted cream. It 's one of the world 's great flavor combinations.

The day I went with my friend Nancy we had a potato soup that was so rich it was just like eating a pureed baked potato complete with bacon bits, green onion and sour cream - yummy, but much too much before tea. If you don 't want to leave full, you might want to go with one of the smaller sets.

The levels of tea service are named for Darlene 's daughters: Lady Tiffany (\$29.95), Princess Heather (\$24.95) and Nicki 's Afternoon Tea (\$19.95).

There are more than 30 teas to choose from, and a patient, helpful staff happy to explain them all to novice drinkers.

If you 're looking for a place for the ultimate girly get-together, then this is it - and it 's obviously perfect for bridal and baby showers, too.

The comfortable atmosphere is very conducive to conversation, and I 'd highly recommend an afternoon tea here to anyone wishing to reconnect with friends and catch up on news - or to anyone just in need of an excellent cup of tea.

Happy eating!

A Cup of Tea is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call 230-8832 for reservations