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Holiday Shopping Spree in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Nate Bradley, Shana Gilman, and Mira Beyeler at Amphora Nueva.

Diablo Boulevard next to Wine Thieves. The space is inviting, clean and odor free. Dogs of all sizes run around and interact gently in the open space. Downstairs a garden area is also available. When this reporter visited, three small pooches were relaxing in dog baskets under the reception desk, undisturbed by their more boisterous mates who greeted us joyfully. There is a separate space for timid dogs. "I'm a dog trainer first," adds Ronnow, "so if a dog comes here and we notice some behavior problems, we'll recommend training actions to its parents." In addition to the day lounge, Ronnow offers boarding, training and adoptions.

With your best friend happily occupied, head over to Fiesta Lane and visit Amphora Nueva, a new business that sells olive oils freshly pressed from all over the world. In the beautiful store set as an elegant tasting room, patrons can taste each of the oils available that day, in their natural form or as delicate blends often obtained by pressing the added ingredients - such as lemon, rosemary, garlic or cayenne - with the olives. "This is the only place where you can buy olive oil that was pressed 10 days ago year round, and where you can see the chemical analysis of the oil," explains owner Nate Bradley. Why bother? Because it is those polyphenols (anti-oxidant substances found only in very good olive oils), and oleic acids (the good fat in olive oil) that are highly touted for their health benefits. "The higher the polyphenol content the more benefit," says Bradley, a third generation olive oil dealer. The young man opened Amphora Nueva in Berkeley a few years ago - it was his grandfather who first brought his love for olive oil from Italy. The business expanded and now includes Veronica's Food that distributes to 650 specialty stores, and an olive farm in Tunisia. "We also sell vinegars," says Bradley, pointing to a display of dark and white balsamic vinegars. Plan to spend some time here, challenge your taste buds and take the time to sample before you choose the size container you want and purchase it at a quite reasonable rate.

Men can be pampered at the 18/8 salon that also just opened on Fiesta Lane - get a facial, haircut with shoulder massage, a shave, manicure, or even a waxing. 18/8 refers to a grade of stainless steel, the idea being that the salon will turn 'rough' men into polished gentlemen. 18/8 is a franchise that originated in Southern California, and Kara Davidson and her husband Samer Alami decided to open the first one in Northern California. The young Lafayette mom hired a staff of competent beauticians and greets clients with a glass of wine or beer.

Finally, spruce up your home for the holiday entertaining season at Indigo & Poppy, where

Downtown Lafayette boasts the perfect setting for a shopping spree this season; the city that is already known for the variety of its restaurants is brimming with opportunities for high-end shopping. In addition to existing favorites, a few new businesses recently opened that add color to the experience.

Your first stop may be The Tail Haven Hotel and Day Lounge - that is unless your pooch prefers mingling with crowds of shoppers over frolicking with its peers. Local dog trainer Emily Ronnow, a third generation Lafayette entrepreneur, opened her doggie day care in Lafayette this autumn. The young professional, who lost her software sales job a few years ago, decided to develop her passion for dogs as a business and became a trainer. "My clients kept asking me if I knew of a place in Lamorinda where they could leave their dog during the day while at work, or when they go away," she says, so she looked for a site and found it on Mt.

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The Tail Haven's Emily Ronnow (right) and staff member Amber Plumley have fun with their clients. Photos Sophie Braccini

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[back](#)

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