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Delicious, Healthy and Fun

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Sue Doster and Kamille Nixon enjoyed their first lunch at Graze on a hot summer day. Photo Andy Scheck

Moraga's latest addition to tasty and healthy eating, Graze, had its soft opening in mid-June and is now in full swing, with a full menu of tasty salads, soups, entrees and sandwiches, available for lunch and dinner Wednesdays through Saturdays. Owners Ted and Ingrid Fulmer are bringing a simple concept they first developed in Hawaii where they ran a restaurant for eight years. They also bring their passion for fresh ingredients, mixed with herbs and spices to create tasty, satisfying, yet healthy meals. Located in the Rheem Shopping Center, next to China Moon (where Shish Kabab Show and, for the old timers, Fudge Alley used to operate), they provide indoor and outdoor seating on the large patio.

The Fulmers met at Gordon Biersch in Palo Alto, where they both worked. Ted Fulmer has always worked in restaurants, cooking or serving since age 16. He later sought an accounting degree and became a CPA. The couple opened their first two restaurants in Chico: the Black Crow Grill and Rawbar, a sushi fusion restaurant. They decided to sell those restaurants and start again with a new restaurant in Hawaii, this time with two young boys in tow.

"That restaurant was Pau, which means 'all finished, all done, all good,'" says Fulmer. When one of their employees offered to buy that business, after eight years, they returned to the Bay Area and rented a kitchen space at Miglet's bakery in downtown Danville. They began preparing dine-in and to-go orders of salads and dressings. "We started getting a following for our salads. We have been looking for a place of our own for a while. Then we found the opportunity in Moraga," he says.

"My concept is simple: quick, fresh and delicious," says Fulmer. "The way I eat at home, I take a grain, mix in vegetables, I add a homemade sauce, and a protein on top. That's how I built my specials at Pau, and I found that everybody wanted to eat like that, too." Fulmer's sauces, salads and grains are filled with all kinds of different herbs and spices that make the difference. "In the couscous (large Israeli couscous) there is mint and parsley. In the Asian noodle, there is scallion, Thai basil, cilantro and a ginger sauce - all that fresh flavor that hits you. I could serve my tomato soup plain, but with a little fresh thyme, a little parmesan, and a little drop of extra virgin olive oil, it becomes 'Whoa! That tomato soup was so good!' That's the extra 10 percent that makes the difference."

Among the many full bowls on the menu, the Aloha Noodle salad has a Hawaiian influence with its buckwheat noodles. Fulmer says that is his boys' favorite. The Superfood with quinoa and brown rice can be topped with either chicken breast or salmon, grilled or sashimi style, or for those who do not eat animal protein, the salads can be ordered without it. The sandwiches are either fish or chicken with greens, tomatoes and sauce on La Brea bread. There is also a choice of braised short ribs. "The meals are served in a bowl and have to be satisfying for me or one of my boys (now 11 and 16, and very active). This is a place for everyone, including families," he adds. There is even a pepperoni cheese bread that, while not as healthy that the rest of the menu, young kids

love. Fulmer says that his menu is seasonal, but that the favorites will stay there year-round, like the Superfood or the Aloha Noodle, and he confirms that everything but the bread is made on site from scratch daily.

Graze

376 Park Street, Moraga

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Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays

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