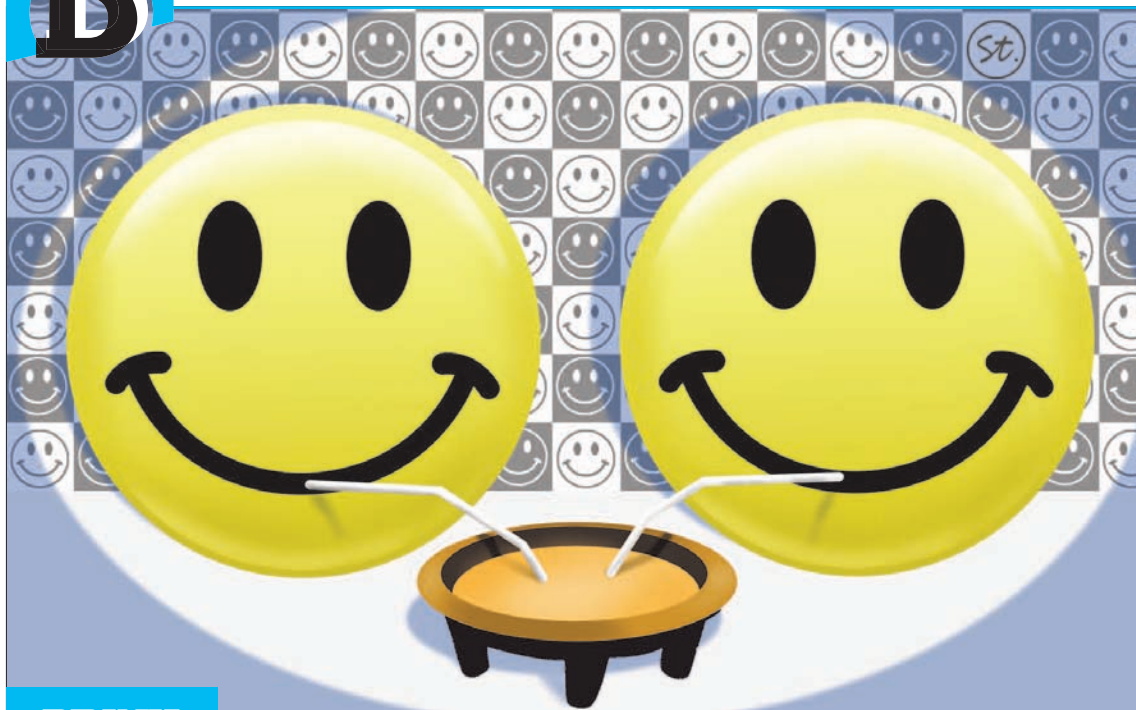


D

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MARK STIVERS



DRINK

# Cosmic kava

BY AMY BEE

**My friend places two paper cups on the table. One** has a murky, dishwater-like liquid. The other is a glistening yellow-white, like milk. Chunks of pineapple pierced by a large toothpick perilously hang like a tightrope walker atop the two cups.

He points to the dishwater. "This one you sip," he says. "And this one," he motions to the milk, "You chug fast, to feel *it*. The pineapples are chasers."

What feeling *it* means will be a recurring question as I visit the Root of Happiness in Rancho Cordova several times to drink its traditional kava. Kava, translated as "bitter," is a shrub found in Polynesia, whose root has been used within Pacific Island cultures for more than 3,000 years to make a drink with sedative, anesthetic and euphoric effects. Or, as far as what I could get the bartender at RoH to commit to, "It relaxes you."

Kava has traditionally been a drink for special occasions but is on the rise in the South Pacific and beyond for recreational use.

We first try the murky one, called a High Tide. It tastes like cucumbers that have been sliced and left to wither in the refrigerator for several days. We grimace through a few sips and move on to the milky one. The Cloudbreaker tastes like actual root—earthy, ashy, bitter. We down our portions and quickly grab pineapple chunks to suck on. Kava is so caustic it instantly neutralizes the tart citrusy goodness of pineapple and renders it moot.

We sit back and wait to be relaxed. My tongue goes numb in a way that reminds me of smoking cloves in high school. I say this to my friend and

realize I can't get the words out without a goofy grin. Am I relaxed? The background music that made me roll my eyes when we walked in now hits me in all the right feels. My head gets a little tingly. My friend says he might be feeling kinda like, spacey, dude.

"But are you relaxed?" I ask. He shrugs.

We leave, unsure whether we had, in fact, felt *it*. RoH goes out of its way to emphasize that kava is not an intoxicant nor a stimulant. It acknowledges mood-altering effects, but hedges on actual descriptions of said alterations, instead sticking with vague references to relaxation and a sense of well-being. Obviously, if I want to feel *it*, for certain, I need to go big, so I vow to one day gulp down the strongest drink. For Science!

On our last visit, the bartender knows what I want, even though we talk in a weird code to get there.

"You know," I say, "Whatever is gonna get me there. Whatever is gonna make me feel *it*." He sets us up with the Outrigger: a Cloudbreaker, a High Tide and a kava concentrate flavored with lemon-honey. Chug the first, dissolve the concentrate under the tongue and sip the High Tide at leisure.

This time, there's no doubt we're feeling something. My head spins and ambles as it does on weed, but with none of the mental foggy. My words escape slower like on liquor, but with no slurs. My face feels flushed and mentholated, but not like on cloves. And as my friend and I go from talky to quiet contemplation, I finally feel *it*, like *it* has been there all along: a great sense of well-being. □

## Ciao Pizza Now Open!

An authentic Italian pizza restaurant from those who brought you Ciao Restaurant



390 N Sunrise Ave • Roseville, CA 95661 • (916) 784-2426

## COMING SOON

To encourage local spending while giving small, independent businesses a fighting chance, the SN&R is launching our **"BUY LOCAL!" SECTION** featuring smaller ads to fit your small business budget.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT  
(916) 498-1234

**SN&R**  
Sacramento News & Review



**THAI**  
THE HOUSE OF AUTHENTIC INGREDIENTS

4701 H ST. EAST SAC  
THAIATSAC.COM  
SUN-THU:  
11AM-9.30PM  
FRI-SAT:  
11AM-11PM  
916-942-9008

Follow us  
f i  
@thaiatsac



EXTRAORDINARY THAI

## Vegan Meals from All Over the World



\$5 off purchase of \$25 or more with this ad

ONLY VALID ON TUESDAY | EXP. 03.31.19 | CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS

1821 DOUGLAS BLVD ROSEVILLE, CA 95661 | (916) 953-7033 | f