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ILLUSTRATION BY MARK STIVERS



DRINK

# A mindful cup

BY JEREMY WINSLOW

**"I was traveling the world, trying to find myself. I didn't find me, but I found tea,"** says Leo Hickman, the founder of Classy Hippy Tea in the Oak Park neighborhood.

"I have over 27 countries now that I've hit, but the most exciting places for me are the places I haven't been," he says. "The next place is Curaçao." So how long will he stay?

"There's always something somewhere for you, and if you're not flexible, you'll never receive it," he says. In other words, until the quiet lull of American life calls him back.

Classy Hippy Tea isn't like many tea shops in Sacramento. In fact, it isn't really a tea shop at all, with classes such as tai chi, meditation and yoga listed on its website. Hickman refers to Classy Hippies as "a wellness center that specializes in tea."

A mixture of old-school funk and new-age R&B plays through the cafe and an intoxicating aroma leads to a wall where an assortment of loose-leaf teas are in large glass containers. Not all the names are traditional—Beautiful People, Nirvana, Yoga—but the practice is as traditional as it comes.

Hickman walks out holding a batch of Keep It Funky, a fruity herbal tea mixed with freeze-dried strawberries, freeze-dried mango cubes and marigold blossoms. For him, Classy Hippy is all about the experience of someone preparing and serving the tea to the customer.

Hickman sources herbal and caffeinated teas from places he's visited during his travels and beyond. China and Japan supply green tea, found in Jazzy, infused with jasmine blossoms and brown sugar. The house black tea hails from Kenya, India, Sri Lanka and China. He also uses herbs and spices, such as rooibos from South Africa in Late Nights, a caffeinated combination of lemongrass, mango, marigold and strawberries.

His go-to tea? Pu'er "because it cuts through the oils from cheeses and dairy."

Before Classy Hippy, Hickman served in the Air Force for nearly four years as a combat engineer. He planned on going back to school to become a biomedical engineer, but "dropped it all to gain it all."

The 9-to-5 didn't make sense to him. Tea—which, for Hickman, is an acronym: travel, events, activism—makes sense.

Still, there's balance in everything. For Hickman, and for Classy Hippy, tea adds both comfort and tension to that balance. And the options are plentiful, with some two dozen or so teas available to consume in to-go cups or take-home batches. But in the end, Hickman's business motto is all about loving and knowing oneself.

"You have to find the consistency with [tea] just like you have to find the consistency with yourself." □

Visit Classy Hippy Tea at 3226 Broadway, Suite A; [classyhippietea.com](http://classyhippietea.com).

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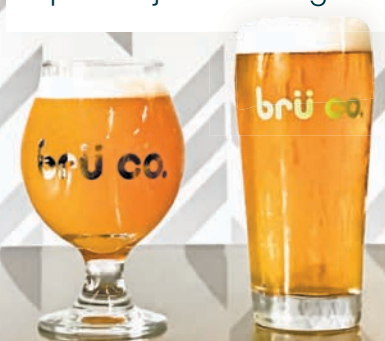
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