



Dining

by Shirley Firestone

The Tea Garden & Herbal Emporium

The Tea Garden and Herbal Emporium is not easy to describe with one word. You might compare it to mysticism in the sunlight, where one can clearly see five Buddha's while learning about Chinese Herbs and Macrobiotic cuisine. It's extremely interesting, and you may sit wherever you wish among three functional areas of herbs, high-grade teas and a tonic bar. One room is intimately cushioned in orange; another is groomed from the "Karma Che Khorling" Monastery, and the outside patio has a lifestyle of its own.

The restaurant is staffed by many graduates of Chinese Medical colleges

who, as professionally trained herbalists, are available for consultations. Their goal is to help people select the right herbs for personal good health and well-being. They gladly answer questions about food, and are dedicated to a diet of simple cuisine that relies on whole natural foods cooked according to the needs of each individual. In addition, a focus is on bringing newly updated cuisine to L.A. by creating an inviting atmosphere that complements the herbs and teas. (I learned a lot about tea that day.)

In previous times, monks of a small village in Northern China would train monkeys to scale the tops of mountainsides and climb wild trees to select the finest tea buds, hide them in a backpack, and bring them down the mountain. White tea is the most rare and least processed tea in the world, known for mild flavor and natural sweetness. It has less caffeine than green tea and is prized for its refreshing character.

However, although tea is a great

part of the adventure, there's more to know about the Tea Garden lifestyle. The food is macrobiotic. The word "makrobios" means long life, and was coined by Hippocrates, the "Father of Modern Medicine." He lived over 100 years and believed that we should "let food be thy medicine, and medicine thy food."

Wraps and sandwiches include hummus and falafel wraps, with many salads (\$7.95-\$14.95). It's important to know in advance that the bacon and salami are made of tofu, and although I haven't developed a taste for it many of my readers are highly developed in contemporary macrobiotic dining. Breakfast is popular (\$1.75-\$6.95). It's a showstopper!

The Tea Garden & Herbal Emporium is located at 9001 Beverly Blvd. in W. Hollywood. Call 310.205.0104 or 800.288.HERB for more information, or log on to www.teagarden.com. Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Sundays, noon - 6 p.m. Major credit cards accepted.