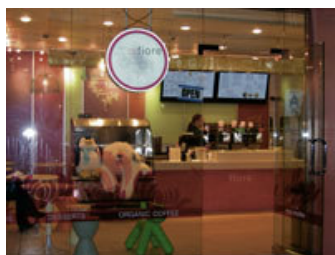


The Beach Gourmet

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Frozen yogurt has been the trend du jour for quite a while now and looks set to increase in popularity as a healthy option to ice cream, as a treat, snack, or form of comfort sustenance as more and more

specialty stores open for business.

Southern California's very own start-up chain of Cefiore has recently established its own cool spot with a storefront on Colorado Avenue close to Ocean Avenue and the entrance to the Santa Monica Pier.

A colleague and I recently paid a visit to this "chilly" abode and were rather impressed with the healthy and fun approach that Cefiore gives to frozen yogurt, ice blended yogurt drinks called "Snow Ices," frozen yogurt-topped waffles, and deliciously fresh organic coffees.

Although Cefiore is more of a to-go store, one can always choose to stay and watch the world go by, both in reality and virtually, as they offer free wi-fi in this compact Colorado cabin, and this we did, albeit sans laptop.

The décor here is colorful to say the least, like a cross between a Star Trek set and a 1960s go-go disco-thèque, and, with furniture that includes weaving spindle shaped stools that owe more to eye candy value than creature comforts, long and lazy stays are the exception to the rule.

But the real attractions here are the vitality laced specialty teas, healthy ice blended drinks, and of course frozen yogurts with such nutritious flavors as green tea and Acai (pronounced AH-sci-EE) berry, as well as more traditional strawberry-banana, pineapple, and mango-coconut amongst others.

The green tea and regular yogurts we tasted were smooth and light, with a refreshing quality that was as satisfying as ice cream, but without any of the post-consumption guilt or bloatedness that can all so often be the case. The organic Acai berry was absolutely delicious, and with the outstanding nutritious quality of this fruit being explained to us by our host, Dana, we both felt a sense of healthy pride as we enjoyed it.

Acai is something of a prescription of smart food. With 30 times the antioxidants of red wine and an essential fatty acid profile similar to olive oil, it provides a powerful combination that had me saying, "More, please," without any regrets whatsoever. Cefiore cleverly claims that its Acai-flavored frozen yogurt "may not add years to your life, but it will add life to your years." No doubt.

We also enjoyed one of Cefiore's superb Snow Ice specials. Subtle, fruit syrup flavored crushed ice, with a choice of frozen yogurt and garnished with raspberries, kiwi fruit, strawberries, and blackberries, this was like a national health plan in a bucket.

Super low calorie, super fresh and healthy, and super value at just \$6.25 for a whopping 13 oz. serving, these little beauties make for a sensible sojourn away from your average fast food smoothie.

We had a lot of fun at Cefiore, and I must not close without mention of the delightful Organic Coffee Latte that I enjoyed. Robust, smooth, and flavorful, but without any of the bitterness that has become prevalent in so many star chains these days, it is refreshing to see some smaller establishments bucking this trend.

This summer I think I will make Colorado my preferred avenue of access to the pier and chill out a while at Cefiore's on the way.

Cefiore, 1551 Ocean Avenue #145 (entrance on Colorado), 310.319.6260.