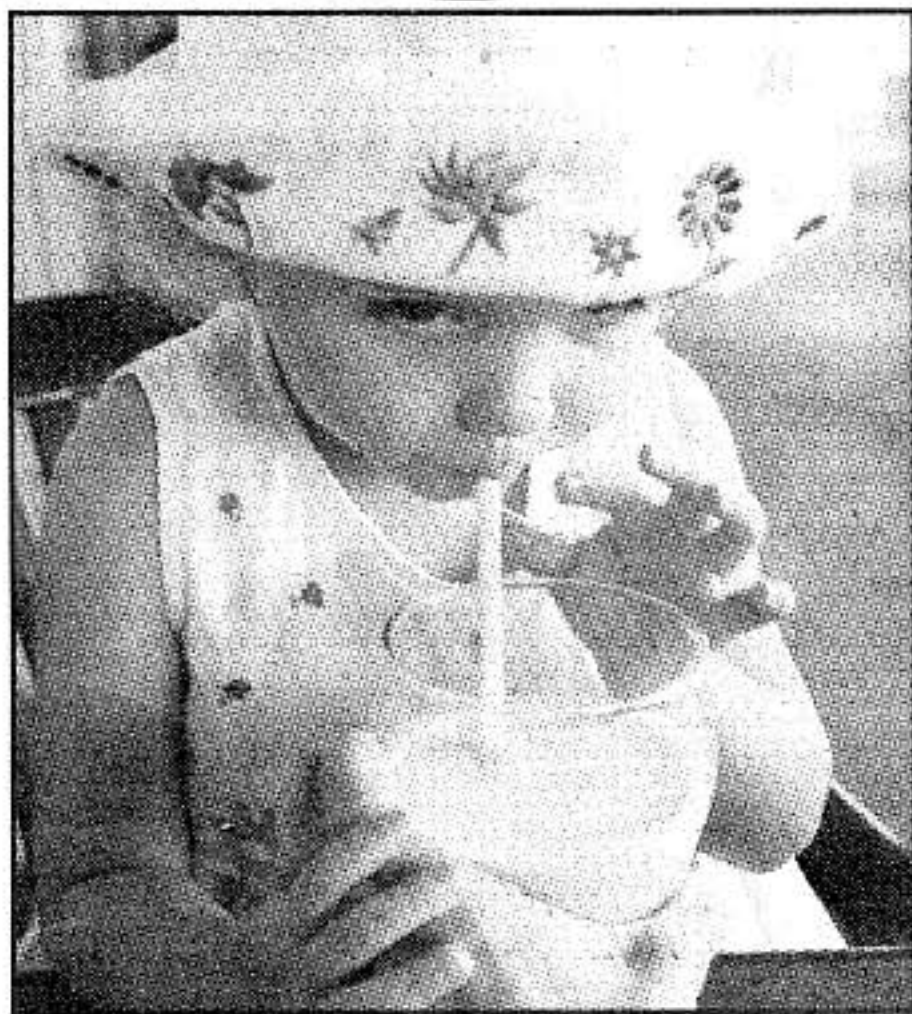


# the REP

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John L. White/The Arizona Republic  
Jasmine Alkek, 3, sips a cool smoothie at Tempe's Pita Jungle.

cream  
of the cup

## Blissfully bloated

"Gross," sighed the girl in the sundress standing next to me. "How can you drink that? It's, like, 100 degrees outside."

What? I shot back, confused and distracted by the blue velvet hat she wore. We were at Tempe's Pita Jungle, the good-vibes capital of the East Valley, and she's complaining about the smoothies?

"That . . . stuff. Yogurt and carob? *Peanut butter?*" She sighed again. "In half an hour, your stomach's going to feel like a milk jug left out on the patio all day — bloated and full. Do you know how hot it is?"

Of course I know how hot it is. Trudging across the asphalt sauna some people call a parking lot took care of that. That's why this smoothie sounded so good: cold mushy stuff hitting my body's core heat-zone.

But it wasn't smoothies in general that were the problem. It was *my* smoothie.

The guy behind the counter promised me that it tasted as good as it sounded bad. He seemed like a nice guy — a bit shady as he lowered his voice and looked around the room before recommending the concoction — but nice all the same.

**Yogurt, peanut butter and carob** (a caffeine-free chocolate substitute) blended forever. That stuff is good in a candy bar, but a drink?

With a heavy heart, I shuffled over to our table, drink in hand, expecting the worst. Sundress Girl snickered cruelly.

Half wishing I'd stuck to fruit like everybody else, I put lips to straw and sucked. In the words of Ewan MacGregor in *Trainspotting*, it was good. It was very good.

The yogurt's flat taste hit all at once. Like the first snowfall of winter (in other, colder climes), it reshaped my oral landscape with a big smack of pure chill. Then smooth, subtle hints of carob started to show through only to get shoved aside by the peanut butter that dropped like an atom bomb in the middle of my tongue and moved outward, getting stronger with every millimeter.

It was amazing.

Like some crazed smoothie junkie, I sucked down the whole thing in a matter of minutes waiting for my food to arrive.

When it was all over, Sundress Girl looked across the table with a condescending smile: "You are going to be sooo bloated in about five minutes."

Pita Jungle is at 1250 E. Apache Blvd. in Tempe. Get your own smoothie fix for \$3.25. Don't bother me — I'm bloated.

— David Proffitt