

the Rep

entertainment guide



Photos by Mark Haver/The Arizona Republic

Drs. Karsten Alexandria (left) and Lori Kimata, both naturopathic physicians, try out each other's smoothies — blueberry and strawberry-banana — at Pita Jungle in Tempe.

IF YOU GO

Pita Jungle

WHERE: 1250 E. Apache Blvd., Tempe.

OPEN: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

SCENERY: Tile-topped tables. Some wacky and some beautiful art on the walls. Watching humanity meander through is ultimately more fulfilling than the grunge-aesthetic-meets-bomb-shelter decor.

EMPLOYEES, SWEET OR SOUR?: Well-intentioned, appropriately hip.

ATM DAMAGE: Minimal. A \$2.85 smoothie can make a lovely lunch if you're light of appetite. And sodas get a free refill. But you may balk at paying \$3.50 for a big glass of "Jungle Juice" (fancy fruit juice).

WHAT TO WEAR: Body piercings. Lots of 'em. Accessorize with a touch of slacker ennui.

Pita Jungle: Good grub, mellow mood

By **Stefanie L. Pearson**
The Arizona Republic

You may get a bit fishtummeled when you walk into Pita Jungle, a juice bar and vegetarian eatery. In this land of chain restaurants, each offering its own not-exactly-unique spin on the Chicken Caesar Salad, Pita Jungle is, well, hip.

I mean it.

I tried and tried to sneer, to lament its poseurocity . . . but it's actually kinda cool.

It's a one-restaurant social intersection of black-turtleneck-clad, too-chic-pour-vous coeds, Volvo-with-kid-seat-driving yuppies and nature girls and boys just back from a water-reclaiming hike.

It probably even has some Republicans. The atmosphere is mellow. So mellow in fact that you may need to ask after your order once or twice before it miraculously appears.

But that's OK. Your server is so pleasant, so unbothered



that, well, you just don't mind.

The decor is neo-hippie industrialist. Air-conditioning vents jut out of the walls as though giant elephants are standing in the next room reaching their trunks over to cool the crowd. The walls and floor are distressed concrete and boast a changing display of artists' work.

Pita Jungle is primarily a restaurant — and a good one. The food is Mediterranean-inspired, largely vegetarian and relatively cheap. And the place delivers.

But rare pleasure though that may be in the Valley, the real experience to be savored is the slacker ambience and carnival of individuality.

Just sit, chill and watch the people go by. Best of all, it's mellow enough that you can sit there for a while and not feel conspicuous.

Twenty-ounce smoothies (\$2.85) can be made with fat-free yogurt or soy milk. Add supplements as you please: soy or egg protein, lecithin, bee pollen, wheat germ or ginseng.