

CRITIC'S CHOICE: THE LIVING TEMPLE

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www.thelivingtemple.com

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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Healthy products for the body and the mind are just one slice of what The Living Temple is all about. Information and education round out the arsenal of those who every day fight the good fight for health and well-being.

The shop is an unpretentious little place that even those who don't know a cacao bean from a coffee bean will find comfortable. You'll find Robin Arthur Jones, who opened the shop about 10 years ago, welcoming you with open arms and an offer to help. The shop is small but open, with seats for the many seminars and workshops held every week. Products are limited because they are, Jones will tell you, the best of the bunch. "We're not trying to compete with Whole Foods or Mother's. We offer the best of what's out there."

And this "best of" includes food and drinks, beauty and body care, books and videos that can be checked out, and even music. There are crystals and Himalayan salt lamps and, a big draw, the high-alkaline PH, oxygenated bottled water. A state-of-the-art TheraVibe machine is offered for use in the shop and, Jones says, helps with - among other things - longevity, total body wellness and joint pain and can improve athletic performance. And, in the organic category, the store carries raw energy bars, protein powders and beauty products, among other items.

The Living Temple speakers are what sets this shop apart. Speakers teach on topics as broad as taking charge of your health to the more specific, such as digestion or reversing heart disease. There is a raw food and natural health celebration monthly where participants can sample raw foods and new products, check out new technologies and meet friends.

It's a great little gem in a world where fast food all too often is the name of the game.

Best Organic Food Store

1. MOTHER'S MARKET & KITCHEN

Locations throughout Orange County;
www.mothersmarket.com

- Mother's Market sells several products, including: produce, food, homeopathic supplements, massage oils and lotions, juicers and greeting cards.
- The main goal of Mother's Market is to provide healthier alternatives to traditional foods, said Alex Widjaja, assistant manager of Mother's Market in Irvine.
- Mother's claims the county's largest selection of organic produce, and many organic products are served in the stores' restaurants.

Why they are No. 1: Mother's Market is known for consistently bringing healthy food to Orange County, Widjaja said. "We focus on trying to provide certain products that are ... not provided at general grocery stores." Organic produce is selected by the produce director, who has been with Mother's for more than 20 years.

Claim to fame: "Mother's Market is the icon of all the health foods stores in Orange County," said Alejandro Martinez, who manages the Mother's in Santa Ana. "Once you become a Mother's customer, you will find that it is not only a market ... it is a trustful environment." And produce isn't the only organic thing at Mother's; look for organic personal-care items along with nut butters, juices, cookies, crackers and chips.

Fan favorite: "Great selection of local, organic, fair trade and natural products. Mother's is not an imitation, they're the real deal!" - Christy Bannister, Laguna Niguel

Fun fact: Mother's started as a juice



Mother's Market & Kitchen

bar in Costa Mesa more than 30 years ago. Now the markets have deli bars with juice-bar sections where customers can create their own drinks using any organic food Mother's offers.

2. WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Huntington Beach, Laguna Beach, Tustin;
www.wholefoodsmarket.com

- Whole Foods tries to ensure it has the freshest and healthiest products by maintaining a list of unacceptable ingredients. Its goal is to "change the way the world eats," Tustin Whole Foods manager Chris Cintula said.
- Organic chicken sold here has been certified by the Global Animal Partnership, which has a five-step rating program.

Claim to fame: "Not only have we been the pioneer of the national food industry, we have been ... at the forefront of modern organic production," Cintula said. The company says it's done more "to promote and build organics than any other retailer" and boasts of its status as the first certified organic retailer under the USDA's organic standards.

Fan favorite: "It has a large selection of prepared food so you can shop and have a delicious and healthy takeout snack or meal at the same time." - Irene Oka, Norwalk

Fun fact: According to Cintula, Whole Foods Market in Tustin is working with a local group known as Backyard Bees to meet the company's goal of harvesting honey safely while ensuring the survival of the honey bee population.

3. TRADER JOE'S

Locations throughout Orange County;
www.traderjoes.com

- Trader Joe's offers up to 15 new products every week. Symbols are included on the product packaging so customers can easily identify products that meet dietary needs.

Claim to fame: "As a retailer that has been offering organics for more than 25 years and (has been) certified by Quality Assurance International as an organic trader since the inception of the USDA National Organic Program, we actually consider ourselves a neighborhood store," said Alison Mochizuki, national director of public relations.

Fan favorite: "Friendliest staff, great bags, awesome food ... and, of course, the monkey!" - Monica Durazo of Rancho Santa Margarita, about how the Trader Joe's there hides a stuffed animal monkey somewhere in the store to keep her daughter entertained as she shops.

Fun fact: Trader Joe's first private-label organic item - unfiltered apple juice - was introduced in 1978.

- David Cross



A shopper passes a colorful aisle of produce at Whole Foods Market in Tustin.