



ENTHUZE'S LISA CHAN, ERIC LEE, DAVID CHAN, MAGGIE LEE, AND JESSICA CHAN HELP BUSY URBANITES ENTERTAIN-AND EVEN DECORATE WITH VASES (OPPOSITE). JOHN CHONG PHOTOS.

HIP CUISINE SERVED UP WITH DISHES TO MATCH

by Guy Babineau

Some creative Vancouverites have cooked up a new concept for the growing number of foodies out there. Blending designer tableware, sit-down dining, catering, takeout, and delivery, Enthuze (871 Denman Street) is an innovative West End shop-restaurant capitalizing on the evolving eating and entertaining habits of young urban professionals.

"When we tell people what it is, they don't really understand," says interior and architectural designer Eric Lee over dinner in the upbeat establishment he co-owns along with sisters Amy Lee and Lisa Chan, cousin Maggie Lee, and brother-in-law David Chan. "That's why we chose an artichoke as our logo, because you have to peel away the layers."

When you peel away the layers of this family affair, there's more than meets the eye, starting with Lee's design. Lee, 32 (all of the owners are in their late 20s or early 30s), usually works for residential clients, designing both interiors and exteriors. He recently completed a 5,400-square-foot home and is currently working on the historical renovation of an East Side house built in 1908. Inspired by his parents, who were developers, Lee got into design and archi-



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handle doubles as a spoon holder. Enthuze also carries one of the most extensive collections of cookbooks (\$14.95 to \$29.95) downtown: Moroccan, Japanese, recipes from B.C. wineries—you name it.

Tableware is here for a good reason. "We are our own target market; young, busy professionals who don't always have a lot of time to cook but appreciate good food that's fresh," says Lisa Chan. "They can come in here to eat, or order items from the menu to take home, or call us to deliver." And they can buy the dishes if they need to.

The food is fresh and delicious, thanks to the combined efforts of three chefs. David Chan serves up Chinese dishes, Malai Olmstead takes care of Thai cuisine, and Cathy Dillon is responsible for Mediterranean courses. Dillon's experience as a nutritionist also informs the menu. Takeout and delivery

(or eat-in) items include Tataki Thai Salad (\$8.50), Piccolo Prawns (\$10.75), Samui Snapper (\$12.95), Shing Yang Shrimp Rolls (an appetizer, \$4.95), pumpkin crème brûlée, and plenty more.

The best part of Enthuze, however, is the attitude. There isn't any. The people who work here are encouraged to chat with customers and get to know them.

"We want to see lots of regulars coming in," says Jessica Blunte. Enthuze's young Brit manager used to manage some rocking restaurants in the other West End, including an eatery called Sticky Fingers, owned by Rolling Stone Bill Wyman. "You know, like that bar where everyone knows your name."

Is there anything like this in London?

"No, not really. But there are these kiosks in the subway where you can pick up all the uncooked ingredients for dinner and a recipe to take home with you."

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texture early. He designed his first house when he was 16—and what's more, it got built. His approach to design is passionate and holistic. This shows throughout Enthuze's décor, which is simultaneously warm and modernist—a very difficult balancing act—with subtle Asian and Mediterranean accents that make reference to the menu.

The hip, urban, and inviting ambiance can be summed up in one word: fresh. From a cranberry-red-fabric banquet with a texture that references the bamboo-grain tabletops to the apple-green ceiling over the food-service area to a feature wall that Lee says is inspired by a Zen garden to the stark contrast of white surfaces with black iron details, the design is both dramatic and organic.

"We really wanted to get away from that cold modernist look that's popular."

Lee's interior design also serves to set off the cool tableware on sale, most of which is exclusive to Enthuze. Lee went to Asia to source some items, cutting out the costs of a middleman. Contemporary ceramic designer vases from Thailand come in a variety of sizes at bargain prices, \$6.95 to \$38.50. Simply designed, gleaming-white porcelain serving plates and bowls are only \$9.95 to \$15.95. A basic 12-piece set of sleek white and off-white ceramic dinner plates, side plates, and bowls sells for \$36.80.

If you're fed up trying to juggle appetizers, wine or cocktails, and business cards at standup soirées and cheek-by-jowl buffets, the Cocktails at 5 cocktail plate (\$6 each or four for \$22) is an easy-to-hold minitray with plenty of room for edibles, plus a handy slot into which you can slip the stem of your glass to free up a hand. The lightweight little plate, which is designed and made in Vancouver, is 16 centimetres square. Made of high-quality acrylic, it comes in black, clear, copper, yellow, green, turquoise, violet, white, pearl, indigo, deep purple, and red. The mischievous WYSIWYG cappuccino/espresso cup and saucer (\$8.50) includes a cigarette holder, and the cup