



Published September 4th, 2019

## Squeeze smoothie bar opens in Rheem Center

By Vera Kochan

Bright white walls beckon thirsty customers into Squeeze - Moraga's new smoothie bar located just to the right of CVS Pharmacy at 578 Center St.

Owner and Moraga resident got his inspiration while on vacation: "Visiting Europe, I realized how the people love their food. What we were missing in Moraga was natural juices. When I saw this place (the storefront), it was the perfect size for what I wanted to do." He plans on purchasing fruit from locals, and in keeping with the natural theme the owner made sure all of the lights are LED and the kitchen is an open area where customers can watch their orders being prepared.

While the specialties are smoothies with catchy names such as Kaly Perry, Strawbrah and Pomma Mama, Squeeze also serves a variety of juices, Boba in smoothies or tea, hot coffee, herbal tea, ice cream in a cone, frozen yogurt and baked goods. Whenever possible Squeeze will use honey in place of sugar as a sweetener, although the customer will have the sugar option. The main philosophy at Squeeze is to provide customers what they want. With that in mind, there will most likely be an evolution of flavors to please any palate.

The name Squeeze came about when the owner asked friends what a good name for his new venture would be. "It's the idea of squeezing fruit," he explained. "I practiced at home with different flavor combinations and I've worked in juice bars before." Prior to opening, the owner placed a big blackboard outside asking passersby to write suggestions for flavor combinations. He also asked residents for interior design ideas and color schemes. One interior design touch involves blue panels where patrons can use various colored markers to write statements of expression.

"The goal is for this place to be a local hangout," he said.

Squeeze hours of operation are 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Monday through Saturday) and 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

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