

## Remedy Tea A Tea Drinker's Haven in Center City

by elizabeth walsh

Rarely is a coffee drinker out of luck when on the search for some joe, especially in a city like Philadelphia. The tea drinker, however, may have a harder time getting a cuppa—most of the time one must settle for the tea offered at coffee shops, where the bean obviously takes priority over the leaf.

“What does the tea drinker do, where do they go?” This question occurred to Kirsten Kammerer, 24, of Philadelphia, while in London a few summers ago, when she was surprised to find the coffee shops outnumbering the teashops, even in one of the most traditionally tea-friendly places in the world.

During a conversation with her sister, Kammerer realized there was a simple answer to this conundrum—start her own teashop. And she did. Welcoming tea drinkers of all kinds, Remedy Tea (1608 Sansom Street), now in its fifth month of business, offers fifty different kinds of tea, as well as a small menu

of scones, croissants, cookies and sandwiches. With its cool green interior, simple silver furniture and big orange chandelier, Remedy is not your grandmother's teashop.

“We were obviously inspired by places like Starbucks and also studied the business plans of other cafes we like,” says Kammerer who majored in marketing and had been working in marketing research before striking

out on her own entrepreneurial adventure. She and her younger sister, Courtney, 23, are now co-owners of Remedy, as well as its only employees.

“We didn't really know anything about tea when we started,” Kammerer explains. “We read a lot of books on tea to educate ourselves on tea in general, and from there learned about all the different categories of tea.”

Remedy offers a selection of black, green, white, oolong, herbal, rooibos, tisane, mate, and rare teas. The menu gives colorful descriptions of each tea's flavor as well as the health benefits of that particular brew.

“At first, we didn't want it to be too overwhelming, so we thought ten was a good number,” Kammerer says of the menu selection process. “But as we started researching, we realized that was too few, so we decided on fifty.”

Then the sisters did some shopping, which included sampling thousands of teas from different distributors, trying to find one they liked. “It was fun, but...so much tea!” Kammerer exclaims. The food menu was easier, because it is smaller, and the shop has no kitchen facilities, so the sisters knew it would have to be simple. In the end they modeled their selection on traditional cafe fare—with the addition of scones.

“We both definitely wanted scones, as kind of a tribute to the English tradition of tea, so we found a bakery we liked and came up with flavors we wanted which they bake especially for us, so our scones are exclusive to Remedy, you can't get them anywhere else.”

Of course, choosing teas and scones was the easy part of opening their own teashop. The sisters found that being young females can be a disadvantage when trying to get a business off the ground.

“Everyone loves to tell you how you should be running your business. Sometimes it was hard to keep believing in ourselves and not sidetracked,” says Kammerer. “And the contractors were so sneaky, they really try to take advantage of you. We worked with ten different ones and they were all the same—people assume because you're young and friendly, you don't know what you're doing.”

The contractors weren't the only frustrating people the sisters had to work with—they also had to deal with each other.

“We've always gotten along really well, and we balance each other,” says Kirsten. “Now that we're together all the time, we sometimes get irritated.”

The sisters got a feel for each other's strengths and weaknesses, and though at first they both were involved in every aspect of the shop they now break up the work between them. Facing a recent conflict has helped the sisters grow as business partners.

“There was a lot of tension, and we finally sat down and talked it out and our relationship has been better since then.”

All the work has certainly paid off. Open since October of 2005, Remedy has been doing well.

“I can tell it's picking up now,” said Kammerer in early February. “We had our best day last week. And we've been seeing new faces, so we know word is getting out.”

Word recently reached some Mawrtys who recommend Remedy Tea with high praises. “It's a fun place to hang, especially on a cold or rainy day after walking around in Philly. And the tea is good. So basically, I love Remedy like McAdams loves Gosling,” says Megan O'Brien '09.

“It has a very mod, classy setting and you can get four cups of tea for cheaper than most things at Starbucks. They have more selection than you know what to do with,; you can go a hundred times and have something new every time. And it's very cool that it's run by two sisters,” says Shannon Rose '09.

Like any entrepreneur, the Krammerers have plans for their budding business. First, they'd like to hire a few employees, open more stores in Philly, and eventually bring Remedy Tea to the rest of the country.

For now, this little shop on Sansom is a pretty nice little empire.

“I love living out my dream; I sit back and look at this—I created this. We have so many regular customers who love it, it feels good, educating them on tea, giving them a place of their own to come and enjoy it.”

More information can be found on the website [www.remedytea.com](http://www.remedytea.com), which includes the tea menu.



## Carol Muske-Dukes reads at Wyndham

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word “Mighty” with the words “newly-declared Creative Writing Majors.”)

Born in Minnesota in 1945, Carol Muske-Dukes is the recipient of several Pushcart Prizes and the National Book Award for the poetry anthology *Sparrow* (2003). Her three novels include *Dear Digby* (1989), *Saving St. Germ* (1993) and *Life After Death* (2001). She is also the author of six other collections of poetry (the earliest, *Camouflage*, was published in 1975) and two collections of essays: *Women & Poetry* (1997) and *Married to the Icepick Killer: A Poet in Hollywood* (2002).

Her other awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship, an Ingram-Merrill grant, and a Witter/Bynner Award from the Library of Congress. An accomplished writer, literary critic, and educator, Muske-Dukes is a regular contributor to the *New York Times Book Review* and works as a poetry columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, in addition to teaching at the University of Southern California, where she is the founding director of the Ph.D. Program in Creative Writing and Literature.

As the next instructor in Bryn Mawr's Poetry Master Class (a course featuring four three-week sessions, each taught by a different poet-in-residence), she plans to introduce students to the difference between “poems of fact” and “poems of aesthetic experience.” The former is created through ordinary language and the latter through ordinary language transformed into the language of poetry (what she refers to as “language come alive”) which in turn transforms an otherwise ordinary experience into

something more sublime. When I asked her the same question I posed to the previous visiting poet, Paul Muldoon—“How much of your poetry is about your experiences versus removed subjects?”—Muske-Dukes' reply was that everybody inevitably had to write about his/her own experience, but it becomes different when changed into art. She then said, rather cryptically, that she has used matters from her own life as a way to “see into reality” rather than “be overcome by it.” According to her, the worst position to be in is that of a news anchor, whose “allegiance to reality” results in “language [that] reduces experience.”

At the reading, Muske-Dukes read a number of poems from *Sparrow*, her most recent collection, as well as some of the poems from *Twin Cities*, an anthology still in progress. She also shared an excerpt from her new novel *Channeling Mark Twain*, due out in 2007.

Finally, I inquired what her initial impressions of Bryn Mawr were and was surprised to hear the answer. She informed me that this visit did not create an initial impression since she had been here before when her daughter was a prospective student. The young woman was accepted into Bryn Mawr but chose to attend a school closer to home. In any case, Muske-Dukes said that she was very pleased to be in a college run by women for women (without being exclusive of male students from Haverford). She describes the feel of Bryn Mawr as that of a “wonderful, safe, energetic, inspired community.” Of course, we can only wait and see how her poetic energy will inspire the students here in the weeks to follow.

the women of  
the college news  
wish you a relaxing  
spring break!