



Following extensive renovations to its Market Street Cafe, Zumi's Espresso & Ice Cream is planning a three-day Café Open House Aug. 24-26 to celebrate its new look.

Zumi's owners Umesh and Zillie Bhuju anticipate a festive three days, including casual acoustic music and free samples of selected baked goods, desserts and espresso drinks, among other events.

Two years after launching Zumi's in the long, narrow space it first occupied, loyal customers were clamoring for more tables at which to sit and savor their coffee and ice cream. When the lease in the building adjacent to Zumi's expired, Umesh Bhuju negotiated with the landlord to break down the wall between the two spaces in order to double the size of his shop.

"We made an effort to keep it feeling down to earth, warm and inviting," said Zillie Bhuju of the renovations that feature an elegant copper backsplash, warm, earthy red and cream-colored walls and plenty of new seating. An inlaid compass is the focal point of the new, colorful tiled floor, and a world map has found a prominent spot on the wall, both a nod to the Bhujus' interest in the world as one interdependent community, Zillie Bhuju said.

"We kept saying we wanted this to be a big improvement, but we didn't want it to be a completely different place," she said. "We wanted to maintain the home-grown feeling Zumi's started out with and people grew to love."

Zumi's offers only Fair-Trade organic coffees, an aspect of the business that is integral to the Bhujus' worldview. A native of Nepal and a former guide for Mt. Everest climbers, as well as an entrepreneur with an MBA, Umesh Bhuju said he is deeply committed to the ethical principles that inspired the Fair-Trade movement.

"As citizens of the world — and consumers within it — it is vital that people understand where the products they buy come from, and that they help to ensure that the workers who produce those products are paid well enough that they can invest in their own communities," he said.

When that happens in the coffee bean industry, Bhuju explained, not only are the beans fresher and of better quality, but the standard of living is raised for the workers. When they are paid a living wage, as guaranteed by the Fair-Trade cooperatives that arrange for workers to sell their coffee beans directly to retailers, workers can invest in better farming techniques, which result in a healthier environment. They can also put money back into their communities by building health clinics and schools. That good cycle, created by the Fair-Trade movement, is simply better for the world, Bhuju said.

The Bhujus both say they view Zumi's "as more than just a coffee shop." They see it as a focal point for the community, said Zillie Bhuju (who, in addition to her work with her husband at Zumi's is a licensed social worker with an MBA), where issues such as Fair Trade, caring for and enjoying the environment, and local issues and politics all blend.

The two proprietors plan to continue their tradition of devoting a bulletin board to the adventures of their customers, posting photographs and postcards that customers send from their travels around the country and the world.

Zumi's summer hours are Mondays-Thursdays, 6 a.m.-6 p.m., Fridays, 6 a.m.-9 p.m., Saturdays, 7 a.m.-9 p.m., and Sundays and holidays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.