

Food Destination: Casa De Cha



Mafalda Moutinho and **Bradley Cahill**, both passionate tea drinkers, come from backgrounds where tea has a special place in everyday life. They met while living in London and have travelled the world together.

Through Casa De Cha, they're bringing this passion to the Central Coast, by combining and creating the best quality organic and wildcrafted tea and ingredients from Australia and abroad.

In doing so, they aim to enhance connection and create community, helping people from all walks of life to establish common ground, through the ancient ritual of taking tea.

Q. What's the inspiration behind Casa De Cha, and how did it come to be?

MM: On our honeymoon we were walking through the tea fields in the Azores (Portuguese Islands), which is home to the only tea plantation that still exists in Europe since the 1800s. I felt a deep connection to the Cha Gorreana Plantation, as this was the tea my mother had always drunk. It got me thinking about the rituals, connections and common ground tea offers and it was at this point we decided to make tea our lives.

BC: Upon returning to Australia and after obtaining the Tea Master and Blender Certificate through Australian Tea Masters, we began to curate our range of teas and tisanes. We've worked hard to put together a collection of sustainably sourced teas that would appeal to a broad spectrum of tastes, from the pure tea drinking connoisseur to the everyday breakfast blend lover - all without sacrificing quality, which is paramount for us.

Q. What's involved in an average day at Casa De Cha?

MM: Every day we are constantly seeking inspiration to create new blends. As well as the creating, blending and packing of tea, we are also looking to educate people about the world of tea, its many benefits and the processes involved. Once you scratch the surface, there is so much to know!

BC: We believe tea brings people together and we're committed to providing awareness and understanding around the rituals and impacts tea can have on our daily lives - our ability to slow down, reflect and make genuine connections. We completed our first [Casa De Cha YouTube 'Beyond Tea' clip](#) on this recently.

Q. What have you found have been the main advantages or disadvantages in being a Central Coast-based business?

BC: We've found so many advantages to basing our business on the Central Coast. I grew up on the Coast, but after returning to Australia, we'd been living in Sydney and there was too much distraction. We didn't have the space or clarity there to realise our vision and found it hard to concentrate and prioritise.

We're really excited by the emerging café and cultural scene on the Central Coast, where people are bringing their ideas and experiences from around the world to create an incredible and enlightened community. We're seeing so many people with similar ideas and philosophies and have found it's a very supportive business environment. There's a great spirit of momentum and connection on the Coast now.

MM: We have been back on the Central Coast for three years now and outside of Portugal, this is the first place that has felt like home.

INTERESTING TEA FACT...

Tea is one of only two naturally-occurring ingredients in the world containing l-theanine, which has a similar chemical structure as serotonin and the unique ability to cross the blood brain barrier. This incredible ingredient triggers calm and perspective - proving that taking tea really is a therapeutic exercise!

Q. What do you see as the future for tea on the Central Coast?

MM: Our vision is to create a community. We would love to create a communal space shared with other likeminded entrepreneurs that would be home to diverse interests such as a design, art, yoga, food and other creatives - and of course a beautiful tea house.

Our main aim in creating this space would be to re-establish some of the rituals and connections we have lost in our constantly overloaded and overwhelming Western culture. In many cases, we no longer know how to create connections with people different to us. This space would be a point of connection and community.

BC: We'll also continue to find inspiration to create new teas and tisanes - continuing to evolve in their sophistication and maturity.

We'll look at new ways to work with small, independent and biodiverse tea farmers across Australasia to source the highest quality teas and botanicals - and we'll continue to provide education and awareness - so that as many people as possible can understand, appreciate and love tea as much as we do!

Q. How does Casa De Cha support the Coast in becoming a premier food and beverage destination?

MM: We are giving locals and visitors to the Central Coast access to teas and blends not available anywhere else in Australia. We're providing a unique offering that aims to enhance our community, as well as bringing people together through awareness, education and shared experiences.

BC: We're also representing the Central Coast in the international food and beverage arena. Mafalda has been asked to sit on the judging panel for the prestigious Golden Leaf Awards as part of the Australian and New Zealand Tea Masters' Cup in September in Melbourne.

Q. Of all the Casa De Cha creations, which blend are you most proud of?

MM: Definitely our Porto Mist. This is a black tea with hints of hazelnuts, vanilla, cinnamon, and yellow calendula flowers. It's one of our most popular blends and every time I smell or taste it, it evokes strong memories of walking under the yellow lights of the cobbled streets of Porto, as a young girl.

BC: I am torn between Porto Mist and Central Coast Breakfast. Those two are regulars in my tea-flask first thing in the morning.



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