



Culinary Corner

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REVIEW



Bobby Cochran/CW photo

The Yovana Café, a test market concept store opened in Charlotte by the makers of TCBY, is located in the main food court at Charlotte Douglas International Airport by security checkpoint C.

YOVANA YOGURT CAFÉ

★★★★ out of 5

Location: Main food court at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, 5501 Josh Birmingham Parkway.

Price range: \$2.49-\$4.49.

Hours: 6:45 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

For more information: visit www.yovana-yogurt.com.

dard candy toppings, a selection of Mrs. Field's freshly baked cookies and a small assortment of bottled juices and soft drinks.

Location, location, location

The only negative is that fresh yogurt lovers can't stop by unless they are ticketed airline passengers. Dunn hinted that the shop might start packing pints of fresh yogurt for airport employees and for those whose final destination is Charlotte. The product is best when eaten fresh but does keep well in the refrigerator for several days.

Currently there are four Yovana stores in the United States. The Charlotte location is the only Yovana east of the Mississippi River and the first of the four to be situated in an airport.

Only ticketed travelers are allowed past security gates and into the food court and terminal eateries. "This is a strong airport and while any loss of business hurts a bit, we still have a steady stream of travelers



Photo courtesy of TCBY and Yovana Yogurt Café

The Yovana fresh yogurt paradise parfait is a favorite among regular Charlotte Douglas travelers.

Bliss by the bowlful

Hungry travelers get healthy airport food alternative

by Heidi Billotto
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Travelers passing through Charlotte Douglas International Airport now have a healthier choice when looking for something to eat – the Yovana Yogurt Café, a new test concept store from the makers of TCBY. While TCBY is famous for its varieties of frozen yogurt, Yovana offers fresh yogurt served in a range of creations from smoothies to parfaits, accompanied by fresh berries and tasty granola combinations.

Truth be told, I'd opt for real ice cream in lieu of frozen yogurt any day, but I love real yogurt and was pleased and surprised to find Yovana's two fresh yogurt offerings – one fat-free with no sugar added and both lightly flavored with vanilla – absolutely delicious.

Culture change

The Yovana concept centers on premium yogurt, prepared fresh in the store several times a day. Production in small batches allows Yovana to serve the freshest product possible.

Sandy Dunn and Judy Ewing own the Yovana store here in Charlotte. Dunn, who has been in the concession and restaurant business at the Charlotte airport for the past 20 years, has seen fads come and go. Currently she owns the Yovana and Mrs. Field's Cookies franchises but before that had a TCBY in the food court in the spot where Yovana now stands.

"The idea here is to offer a healthy alternative for travelers who don't want a fast-food breakfast sand-

wich, sticky cinnamon bun, muffin or bagel," said Dunn. "We've been very well received and have a lot of repeat customers." Word is spreading among frequent travelers. "We just had a woman from Florida who said her friend told her to be sure and stop in for yogurt while she was here between flights," Dunn said.

Fresh and flavorful

The menu at Yovana is a small but tasty one. The fresh yogurt is stored in large metal bowls and kept on ice. Travelers may choose from large or small cups of fresh yogurt or waffle granola cones topped with a choice of fresh blueberries, blackberries, raspberries or strawberries or any one of four varieties of granola including French-vanilla almond, low-fat strawberry or raspberry, honey toasted and organic pomegranate with dried cherries. The berries are ripe and flavorful and the granola has a pleasant textural crunch.

Either variety of Yovana's fresh yogurt may be blended with fresh fruit and juice into dozens of smoothie flavors such as pina colada, raspberry peach or others, depending on what creative travelers dream up. Yovana even offers a dairy-free combo made with yogurt, fresh fruit and soy milk. Supplements for a healthy boost of energy, fiber, protein and more may be added to any smoothie.

For those wanting something more substantial, fresh yogurt is served parfait-style in what Yovana calls fresh yogurt paradise. Here the yogurt is layered with a choice of berries and/or granola.

The Charlotte location of Yovana also offers two varieties of soft-serve frozen TCBY yogurt with stan-

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ordering at the counter,” Dunn explained.

Studies suggest that the live, active cultures found in both the fresh yogurt and the frozen TCBY products may help strengthen the immune system and provide other benefits such as improved digestion and better absorption of nutrients. Studies also show that calcium may help promote weight loss and plays a role in strengthening bones. In addition, Yovana yogurt provides a healthy dose of calcium, protein and vitamin D. □


Travelers at Charlotte Douglas International Airport can now enjoy a cup of fresh yogurt topped with berries and crunchy organic granola.



Photo courtesy of TCBY and Yovana Yogurt Café

What's cookin'

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 May is strawberry month in North Carolina, and the crop reportedly is the sweetest one in years, despite concerns over the great “Easter freeze.” Most growers sell pick-your-own or ready-picked berries at their farms and at roadside stands and local farmers’ markets. Some grocery stores also stock North Carolina berries in season. To find a nearby strawberry farm, visit www.ncstrawberry.com for a list searchable by county.



City Range Steakhouse Grill will celebrate Mother’s Day, May 13, with a fund-raiser for United Family Services, a Charlotte-based organization that restores security, self-sufficiency and shelter to individuals and families in need. City Range, which will serve lunch and dinner from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m., will donate proceeds from all dessert sales that day to UFS. With two locations in South Carolina, the restaurant opened its third location on Johnston Road. For more information, contact the restaurant at 704-248-9999 or visit their Web site at www.cityrange.com. □