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# yoga madre

by amy maloo

## a community of healing

Stepping into a room full of experienced yogis clad in well-worn ensembles and practicing various stages of complicated postures can be intimidating to beginners looking for a little relaxation and a fun alternative to the elliptical machine. But yoga needn't be reserved for the elite or the impressively flexible and svelte. Yoga Madre, located in Arcadia and nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, is just the place to find that comfortable, community feel craved by so many who are curious about starting a yoga practice.

Owner and founder Rene Quenell recalls one of her first visits to a yoga class shortly after having a baby. Surrounded by students practicing advanced postures - handstands and backbends - she left, feeling incompetent and frustrated. Inspired to create a yogic atmosphere that would be safe and unthreatening to everyone, Quenell began teaching yoga her way at a small dance studio, home to a number of other teachers. Eventually, as her following expanded, she outgrew the tiny building and decided to open her own studio. She moved into the building next door and named the new space Yoga Madre. "My hope was to bring in that sense of mother energy while helping and healing the community," she says.

Yoga Madre isn't just about the asanas or the strict physical work, it's about the "lessons

we learn on the mat that can be taken to the outside world." If your computer crashes or you burn dinner, how can you take your practice and apply it to life's crises, both big and small? As a teacher, Quenell takes care to explain the relationship between what she's teaching and how it pertains to the real world.

There's a strong feeling of community present at Yoga Madre. Students choose from Kundalini, Vinyasa Flow, Pilates, Restorative Yoga and Pre/Post Natal Yoga classes, many at beginner's level. Classes are usually small and intimate, allowing for personalized instruction. The vibe is laidback and communal; students chat and giggle, the instructors are down-to-earth and approachable. The studio itself is open and airy and the walls are painted soothing shades of green and cream. An illustrated portrait of George Harrison presides over each class, as does the lingering scent of lavender. Yoga mats, blankets and blocks are all provided, adding further to Yoga Madre's philosophy that anyone can step in off the street, unprepared, and have a satisfying yoga experience.

Yoga Madre also maintains a Wellness Center comprising two peaceful rooms where a wide array of services are offered. In the back room, Quenell performs Structural Yoga Therapy (SYT), a methodology she learned from mentor Mukunda Stiles and a philosophy she implements into both her private and

communal instruction. Schooled in anatomy, biomechanics, meditation and the basic teachings of ayurvedic principles, Quenell adapts her SYT knowledge to each individual's specific needs; her specialties include depression, lower back pain and autoimmune diseases. After assessing the source of pain, she devises a "prescription" of physical exercises, Ayurveda, spirituality and yoga. Each client is different - some spend the majority of their sessions talking on the cozy floor mats, while others are focused more on the physical, looking for specific structural adjustments. Quenell's hands-on counseling focuses on ensuring that her clients have the tools they need to return home and help heal themselves. Quenell has seen amazing changes occur in the people she advises. "Often we're a client's last hope."

David Wells, Yoga Madre's resident Ayurvedic specialist, offers private consultations to the studio's clients. He thoroughly assesses a client's imbalances before recommending individualized prescriptions of diet, herbs, yoga and other Ayurvedic treatments.

The front room, equipped with a massage table, is used for the more hands-on, physical services. Quenell's partner, Mike Nalick, employs a technique called Structural Integration, known to some as Rolfing, which consists of a multi-session package combining intense deep tissue manipulation with movement re-education. In addition, the Wellness Center also offers traditional massage therapy and aromatherapy facials.

Whether you're looking for an invigorating but laid-back yoga class, a cure for that nagging knee pain or just a friendly place to drop in and chat with some like-minded people, Yoga Madre has a little something for everyone.

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