

## Pussy & Pooch: High-Design In Excellent Taste

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by Judy & Kate

Long Beach's claim to be one of the pet-friendliest cities in the country is moved up a notch every time a new pet boutique or park opens, and we've covered a number of them this year. Most urban areas have their fancy districts, and Second Street is now the fur patrol fashionista's main stop for five-star service, accessories and goodies. Chuck and Toby's, a fresh bakery for dogs and cats, opened on Park Avenue. Just around the corner on Second Street, Pussy and Pooch, a high-level service store for pets and their people, has finally opened its doors at the former Wiskers site.



Before we go further, we can't ignore the Great Dane in the room. When the opening announcements were posted, there was some flap from pursed lips about the name: "This is a *family* street!" and "That's just *terrible*." If we can have Phuket Thai, who sells tongue-in-cheek (sorry) T-shirts that tell you how to pronounce the name, and the Rubber Tree, whose proprietors have always sent out a positive message about their products, and have no evidence of irreparable damage to young psyches, we can have Pussy and Pooch. Furthermore, it's a valiant attempt on the part of the shopkeepers to reclaim the term.

"There are people walking down the street near our L.A. store and they complain, but they're generally people who have problems with everything," said co-owner Rob Gaudio. "Most are huge fans and praise us."



*The Cat Climb, shown above, is made from nesting boxes with holes in the sides and top that even the most weight-challenged feline can poke through. It's made of particle board and comes in two color schemes: warm (above) and cool. Beats beige shag carpet on a stick in the living room.*

Pussy and Pooch is far from louche. The shop is billed as the “urban oasis for pets,” and it certainly resembles a high-design establishment than it does a boutique. Unique and mid- to higher-end items are placed in eye-appealing sections on walls or featured in modular arrangements on the floor. Everything they sell, Gaudio said, has a function. Different-size soft mannequin dogs model some of the outfits for sale; the mannequins can also be placed inside a carrier or bed to see if a live pet of a similar size will fit into them. There are collars of several designs and materials, ecofriendly toys (you’re asking for it if you put the Pawbreaker, a hard ball of pure catnip the size of a golf ball, on the floor if more than one cat is in the room), and stylish designer carriers and beds. There’s a grocery section with bags and cans of organic meals and several pet-safe products to deal with unpleasant odors. All products are biodegradable in order to reduce the “pet carbon paw print,” as the staff says. We found something with the intriguing and evocative name Urine Finder, made to track down the source of *that smell* like a bloodhound.



*Knowledgeable staff at P&P can explain the use and manufacture of any product. Here, Janet Peters discusses the nutritional merits of a pouched dog meal with client.*

Gaudio and his wife, Janene Zakrajsek, opened the first P & P in Los Angeles in 2007, patterning it on the Starbucks model of a “retail experience” in which a client could explore, shop and hang out.

“We were amazed by the tight pet community of Los Angeles,” Gaudio said. “When we looked for another urban location with a pet community, we found Belmont Shore.”

Hanging out at P&P is a trip for dogs, cats and their humans when they sit at the Paw Bar®. The bar has three cubbyhole “tables” and can seat up to three pets, with Long Beach’s famous water as a beverage, unless the dog wants to lap up a Bowser Beer (nonalcoholic). Manager Lisa Cone, who also owns [Alpha Pet Care pet-sitting service](#), serves up meaty meals, stews, yogurt treats and snacks for the dogs and washes her hands after every serving. Because it’s a family affair, the snacks are pleasing to the human palate as well as those of animals (we tried them—the oven-baked ginger bits and the cheddar cookies are yummy, with a soupçon of malt.).

“With a little coffee, it works,” Gaudio said.



*As soon as we got Thurston Howl to pose at the Paw Bar (it wasn't difficult), Kim Chi rushed in. Both dogs live with Lisa Cone; Kim Chi was a "failed foster" from a rescue that sent dogs over from Korea. Kim Chi was about to be a meal in a puppy mill where they breed dogs for such purposes. Now, she's enjoying one, and who cares about the angle!*

The shop will soon be installing their full-service trademarked Bath House® with pet bathing and spa services. They are looking into featuring pet adoptions and bringing in such services as dental cleaning. Be sure to watch for this week's grand opening celebration, with weeklong festivities kicking off Oct. 31 and running through Nov. 7. There will be free Pawbar tastings (1 per customer), daily raffles for a variety of products and services, and other treats for our pet community. Be sure to check out the Bulldog Kissing Booth at the upcoming Haute Dog Parade (see Pet Projects). P&P is sponsoring the booth. Makes sort of a poetic sense: Pussy & Pooch mentors a smooch.



*Judy and owner Rob Gaudio hold up one of the many designs and covers for the Eco-Mats, good for a snooze. If the dog won't get off the bed anyway, they're pretty comfy for people to curl up in.*

Pussy & Pooch is located at 4818 E Second St., Belmont Shore.