



DON'T FRET, MY PET

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Pups saddle up to the Pawbar at Belmont Shore's Pussy & Pooch



PHOTO by ROSHEILA ROBLES

The Belmont Shore retail nook that was once occupied by Wiskers now belongs to Pussy & Pooch, but the two shops' shared affinity for cats and dogs is purely coincidental: P&P was already looking to expand from its flagship location in downtown LA to our renowned pet-friendly blocks when a friend tipped off co-owner Rob Gaudio about the quaint space at 4818 E. Second St.

After opening to the public during Justin Rudd's Haute Dog Howl'oween Parade just a few weeks ago, the sleek boutique is settling nicely into its freshly-painted lime-green-and-black digs, replete with a simply adorable PETaPOTTY stationed by the entrance. (The portable 3'x3' box of grass—\$280—is joined outside by a fire hydrant—\$120—but, as Gaudio points out, is most popular indoors among loft-dwellers who struggle to find space for their pets to roam and relieve themselves, and also with homeowners looking to curb unseemly lawn-killing habits.)

Moving inside the store, we're met by a wall of dog and cat beds, from West Paw Design's "Eco Nap" beds—85% of the fabric comprises IntelliLoft fibers, which were plastic soda bottles in a former life—in sizes that range from extra small (\$28; 9.9 bottles used) to large (\$94; 40.9 bottles used); to neon-colored Fatboy beds (\$110-\$155) and, with more swatches than even a Real Housewife would know what to do with, Jax & Bones lounge beds (\$99-\$249), available in such fabrics as "candystripe" (pink/green/white/black stripes) and "kaleidoscope" (orange and brown).

“Everything we have here serves some kind of function—not just to look good,” says Gaudio, although it’s clear from just about every item showcased on the floor that form is regarded pretty highly, too (note the \$144 Wowo wood feeders or the \$175 Sleepypod dome-shaped pet carriers, both bound for a mention on designspongeonline.com or notcot.org, if they haven’t nabbed one already). Still, Gaudio notes, not everything comes at such a high price: “We’ll have scratchers that are \$300 and ones that are \$25. We have dog bowls that are \$6 and double bowls that are \$100. We try to fit the range, but we don’t go for the stuff you can find anywhere.”

But lest you think that P&P is all about “froo-froo fancy stuff,” as Gaudio puts it, head to the chew-treat station, where everything from lamb twists (\$3.50) to enormous stuffed hoofs (\$6.50) to whole cow Achilles tendons (ick, ew, ow, \$3.75) can be purchased alongside bulk cookies (\$.75/oz.) and pumpkin spice cookies (\$.35).

There are plans to open an in-store salon—there’s already a spa wall with shampoos for just about every type of coat imaginable—but by far P&P’s standout attraction is its Pawbar, which resembles very much a juice bar or a wine bar—but with raw meat treats for dogs. And cats—their snacks arrive on a shark-shaped plate.

“We invented the Pawbar. It’s our in-store cafe,” says Gaudio. “Order off the menu, we prepare it in the kitchen.”

Served with “gourmet hound sauce,” the Pawbar’s raw meat nuggets—beef, lamb, venison, chicken—are from pet-food companies Nature’s Variety and Primal, and they can also be found packaged in bulk elsewhere inside the store. Prices for nuggets range from \$4 to \$7.50 (\$4-\$7 for burgers), but there are also bowls featuring dehydrated raw meats, veggies and fruit (\$3.50-\$5.50); stews (\$3.50-\$5); low-fat chicken-and-rice soup (\$4); and assorted treats like \$2 “Woofy pops.”

“We use the Pawbar as a nutritional tool,” Gaudio explains. “When a dog’s out in the wild, it doesn’t say, ‘Excuse me, Mr. Bunny Rabbit, may I put you in the microwave?’ We teach customers about some of the different ingredients in [raw] foods and help them have exposure to something else that’s out there instead of just buying dry food all the time.”

Sound ridiculous? Just wait until you observe your mutt attack a nugget and devour it in nearly one bite. It’s thrilling to see a dog so happy. And afterward, why not reward him with some \$3 beef-flavored vitamin water, aka “dog beer”? Or some Yöghund frozen yogurt? Just don’t forget to treat yourself: Yogurtland is right next door.

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