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## Lifestyle FAMILY

### Party with panache New business caters to women and little girls

By Jennifer K. Morita -- Bee Staff Writer  
*Published 2:15 am PST Sunday, October 30, 2005*  
*Story appeared in South placer roseville section, Page N1*

As Brynne Burrows walked through a curtain of beads with a tiara perched atop her head, her entrance at her fifth birthday bash struck a fine balance between dignified and splashy.

"Introducing Princess Brynne from the Kingdom of Soccer," announced the official host.

It was like MTV's Super Sweet 16 - the reality show that chronicles over-the-top birthday parties - only younger and minus the big bucks.



Victoria Macres, 5, dresses to the nines during a birthday party at A Dash of Panache. The Roseville shop offers lavish birthday parties, teas and luncheons.

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A Dash of Panache, the newest business to hit Vernon Street in downtown Roseville, has found an unusual niche - lavish birthday parties, afternoon teas and luncheons that cater to women and little girls.

The cafe, owned by Roseville residents Scott and Karen Alvord, serves gourmet lunches and ice cream. The Alvords also offer high tea three days a week, with scones, finger sandwiches and petit fours.

Then there's the parties.

With themes such as teddy bear picnics, princess parties and crazy hair salon bashes, kids and grown-ups can delve into the cafe's vanity closet and don feather boas, hats and funky jewelry or paint their nails and fix wild hairdos.

The Alvords got the idea to open an afternoon tea shop after Karen visited a friend in Nebraska.

"It was a place out in the middle of nowhere, but you had to make reservations months ahead of time," Scott Alvord said. "The women got dressed up and had tea and a very simple meal.

"It sounded kind of boring to me, (but) the women laughed and talked and had a great time."

So when the Alvords decided to invest in a commercial venture, they picked an afternoon tea place that catered to women.

Their idea kept growing.

As the parents of seven children, the Alvords had a lot of experience throwing birthday parties, so it was a natural fit for their business plan.

"My friends and I used to stay up at all hours to bake and decorate elaborate cakes for our kids," Karen Alvord said. "When it was over, we'd start planning birthday parties for the next year."

In the months it took to renovate the vacant building, the Alvords' idea had morphed to include a lunchtime cafe and old-fashioned ice cream parlor. So the family had to launch a search for the perfect caramel and fudge sauces "so thick you have to serve hot," Scott Alvord said.

Janette Moynier, vice president and area manager for First Bank in downtown Roseville, has taken her staff to A Dash of Panache for lunch, held meetings there and a baby shower ice cream party.

"It's a nice place to go because it's quaint and their lunches are absolutely wonderful," Moynier said.

Moynier, who also plans regular get-togethers with her friends and female relatives, said one of their favorite activities is afternoon teas.



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"We have traveled to a variety of different locations for afternoon teas," Moynier said. "We look for these different, little spots and spend a couple of hours reminiscing and enjoying each other's company.

"You know how busy women are. They're moms who are working and volunteering and have so much going on that they need a place to go to have two hours to themselves."

That's why Karen Alvord wanted A Dash of Panache to cater to women - and little girls. "A lot of teahouses don't cater to little girls, they aren't as child-friendly," she said.

Tea at the Ritz Carlton in Half Moon Bay, for instance, probably isn't the best place for a dozen girls to dress up in hats and boas, especially at \$39 per person.

A Dash of Panache charges between \$6.95 per person for tea and scones to \$18.95 each for high tea.

The Roseville cafe appeals to busy moms in other ways.

Parties at A Dash of Panache include food, cleanup, invitations, thank-you cards and favors. The Alvords will also plan activities that include crafts.

For Julia Burrows - who juggles her full-time job as Roseville's deputy city manager and being the mother of three children - having the party at A Dash of Panache was ideal.

"Having a place to go, where they just do everything for you, was worth the check that I wrote," Burrows said.

A Dash of Panache, at 217 Vernon St. in downtown Roseville, charges \$225 for up to eight party guests and \$15 for each additional guest. For more information, call (916) 788-4386.

#### **ABOUT THE WRITER:**

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The count is up to five as Brynne Burrows blows out the candles on her birthday cake during a party thrown in her honor at A Dash of Panache. For the grown-ups, the shop offers high teas three days a week.

**Sacramento Bee/Lezlie Sterling**

Sevim Bianchi, 4, has her face painted by Chrissi Alvord as Victoria Macres, 5, waits her turn.

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Birthday girl Brynne Burrows enters through a curtain of beads as she is introduced as "Princess Brynne from the Kingdom of Soccer." This particular party had a princess theme.

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