

SUBURBS // CY-FAIR

## Couple fulfills dream with Café ZunZun opening in Cypress

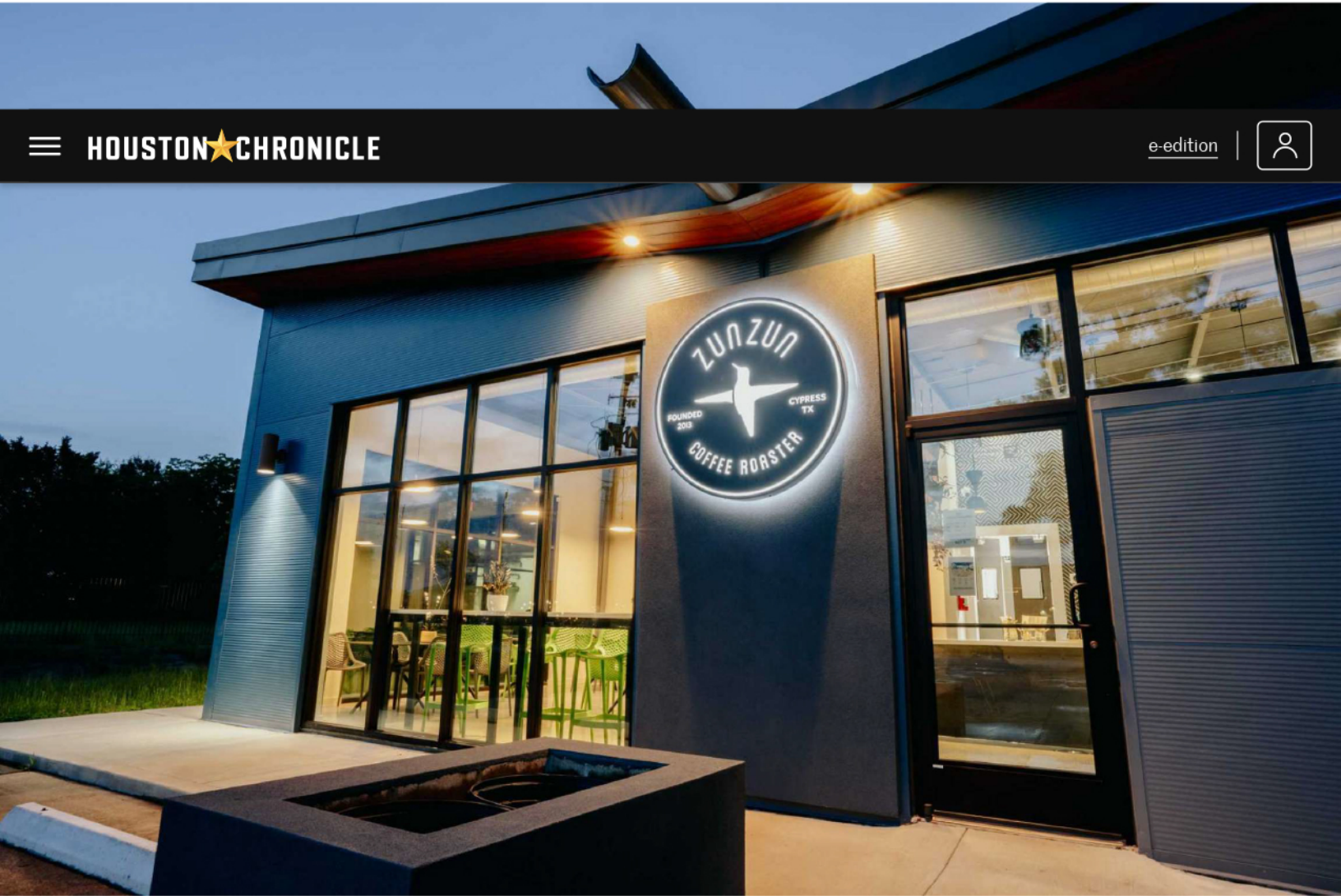
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The architect designed the building to simulate the wings of a ZunZun or the zunzuncito hummingbird with a gutter that protrudes from the roof like the bill of the bird. The gutter delivers water into a planter below.

Courtesy of MVP Photography / Submitted

Joel Castellanos and Pascale Petronin have taken their love of coffee from their kitchen at home to their own café in Cypress on 12716 Telge Road beside Creekwood Grill. It was that same love for the cup of joe that united the couple some 30 years ago in marital bliss and while the two are from different countries, their introduction came from java.

“We come from two cultures that socialize a lot around food,” Petronin said. “We’ve always been attracted by how we could keep this culture going. When we moved to the U.S. 20 years ago, that was the one thing we were missing the most.”

Petronin works as an IT manager for a local corporation and always daydreamed that some day they would be able to connect people through their favorite drink—coffee.

She’s from France and he’s from Cuba and both have a rich tradition of coffee in their culture.

“There’s an interesting connection of coffee between our two countries,” she said.

“King Louis XIV of France brought gifts of coffee to the Caribbean Islands and a few of the plants are now considered the mother plants spread across South America including Cuba.”

The French immigrated from Haiti to Cuba where her husband Joel is from and the coffee plantations in Cuba, she said, were started by French colonists.

“We’ve had that historical connection with the coffee industry,” she said. “And everyone has a story to tell about their particular coffee and ancestry. We found it was a wonderful way to find peace and bring each other together.”

Just two years ago, they bought their first small roaster and spent their weekends selling their coffee at local farmers markets. It was a good way to test the market for their variety of blends.

“The response was very good at the local markets and we also made it educational explaining where we were coming from,” she explained, “and Joel told them why we were purchasing authentic coffee in natural, organic conditions with less fertilizer.”

They found that their customers’ reaction to the coffee and their mission spanned across all generations.

They’ve already been asked by a local church to set up on their property.

“That’s just way too early for us to think about right now,” she smiled saying they were flattered by the offer. “It’s been an interesting journey just to get where we are today. We’re still learning a lot and we don’t know what the future will hold. We’re not closing the doors on future opportunities,” she said.

In 2015 they put a down payment on their dream with the purchase of some land on Telge Road.

With their land bought, they researched a company that would help them build a sustainable building and fulfill their wishes for a uniquely designed space.

“Our building was designed and built by a company based in California called EcoSteel. We are one of their pet projects and probably one of their first for a small commercial space,” she added.

The space is approximately 2,000 square feet, 800 devoted to the roaster and kitchen space, while the remainder is built on a European café theme with a touch of industrial.

Pendant lights hang from the open ceiling revealing the maze of piping infrastructure that supports the café. The color palette sports a combination of pea green and gray chairs, with white quartz countertops, and light gray polished and sealed concrete floors.

Some walls with large windows open up to the outside with a beautiful seating area on the patio with views of plush, green grass.

The concept centered around sustainability and an eco-friendly environment.

“We prefabricate everything in the factory, and it’s bolted together onsite like an erector set,” said Joss Hudson, founder of EcoSteel.

“We specialize in steel structures and in pre-insulated roof and wall panels so that when these panels come from the factory, we just literally unwrap them, screw them to the frame of the building and the exterior is done,” he said.

The panels are composed of organic and inorganic materials.

The architect designed the building to simulate the wings of a ZunZun or the zunzuncito, often referred to as the “bee hummingbird”, the smallest species of bird on earth and found only in the jungles of Cuba.

“There’s a mid-century butterfly roof wing and the gutter that protrudes from the roof is the bill of the bird. It delivers water off the roof and into a planter below.

“With a roaster, it was important to have a non-combustible building system, so the building is fire resistant, and the insulated panels are super energy-efficient,” Hudson said.

The insulated panels are made of Polyiso foam that has been used by NASA on the space shuttle and used in floating commercial boat docks and commercial refrigeration buildings, so they do not absorb water.



“The building could be flooded for days, and you just rinse it out, rinse it off, and go back to work. I’s not going to rot away or warp. It could have stains, but it’s not going to ruin your building,” Hudson said.

They have steel manufacturing partners in Houston where the frame of the building was fabricated.

Construction began in 2020 and is now complete. The couple hired a design firm to help with the interior.

Joel travels often to Costa Rica and Guatemala and other countries of origin for their specialty green coffee beans. They also belong to the Specialty Roasting Association which has been helpful to them in their startup process.

Joel received some training, and the new S7 Nighthawk roaster is up and running in time for the soft opening.

Pascale said they would also include light fare such as tea, pastries and sandwiches.

“We won’t be a restaurant but have small bites to enjoy with the coffee,” she said.

Among their coffee offerings will be blends from around the world including the nations of Congo, Rwanda, New Guinea, Cuba, Costa Rica and other South American and African countries.

“As far as I know, we are the only coffee bean roasters in Cypress,” said Sara Richardson, business development manager for Café ZunZun.

Richardson said trips to those countries are not only for purchasing beans, but to assure workers are being treated fairly and paid a good wage.

“It’s more than just Fair Trade Practices, but something Joel and Pascale truly believe in,” she said.

The café has been in soft opening mode until their grand opening on Thursday when they celebrated a ribbon cutting ceremony with the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce.

Regular hours for the business will be from Tuesday through Sunday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For more information, visit their website at [www.cafezunzun.com](http://www.cafezunzun.com).

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