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LEAVE IT TO US

ROSES

coming up

LA ARCADA'S NEWEST GEM FEATURES HATS, BOHEMIAN CHARM,
AND HOPE CURATED BY MARLENE TAYLOR

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"Welcome to my dream closet!" You might catch this greeting upon stepping foot in La Arcada's newest hidden gem, a neutrals-drenched oasis reminiscent of sun-soaked horse rides, dusty desert road trips, and beachside relaxation. Accordingly named Desert Rose Hat Co., owned and operated by Marlene Taylor, is a one-stop-shop for quintessential Santa Barbara beach equestrian style. The storefront opened in December and is focused around one-of-a-kind artisan hats grounded in unwavering devotion to community, family, and healing. Comb the shelves and you'll find a wooden hat block carved by Marlene's father, or spot the unfinished wood gnawed on by horses (her father's a cowboy). Family and community are the veins running through Desert Rose, and it's tied up into a neat bohemian box with ribbons of passion, strength, and hope. "It's driven by so much more than business. It's passion, it's my life, it's my whole story wrapped into one." In dreamy neutrals and soft denim, Marlene's prized hat collection adorns the walls on unfinished horseshoe mounts, a tribute to the mountains of Santa Barbara and their western aesthetic—sophisticating the craze for a beach bum lifestyle.

Marlene is the first to admit that she's not, and never has been, a hat wearer—the shop, rather than a hat shrine, is an ode to her father (and superhero), who every day throughout her childhood donned the curved-brim

cattleman hat of an authentic cowboy. "I think that's how my style came to be...it was taking his style but putting my own twist on it, and that's what the hats are." Continuing his tradition in her own way, Marlene prefers a centuries-old hat-making technique as opposed to technologically-based methods and chemicals, needing only "a jiffy steamer, my blocks, and my muscles," she explains with a wink. Every detail of each hat, from the color and style to the band preference, is customizable, requiring a multi-week-long process to yield that perfectly crisp brim. They're completely one-of-a-kind. Draw up the hat of your wildest dreams, and Marlene will accomplish it. Less a mere piece of headwear, these hats symbolize art and refined talent in wearable form.

As a self-taught artisan, Marlene opened Desert Rose only a year after beginning her trial-and-error journey down the road of

headwear craftsmanship. When I ask how she refined her skills to create a foolproof process, she smirks: "I made a lot of bad hats." The importance of local industry has been woven into Desert Rose's foundation from the very first photoshoot; locally-made leather bags, jewelry, and accessories soon adorned the website. This curation of lifestyle goods naturally segued to a storefront, less a business and more a labor of love where elevated bohemian dreams meet vibrant passion. A store was never a question; she thought, "I'm going to open a store and I'm going to offer the hats and the whole look, and I'm going to feature other small businesses in the

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box "inspiring" within five minutes of me walking through the door. With misty eyes I listened as she described her experience at La Arcada just six years ago: "I sat at that turtle fountain with my five-year-old completely a mess, with \$6 to my name, looking around in this plaza and thinking to myself 'one day.'" Today, Desert Rose Hat Co. is born along with dreams realized in the form of wide brims and braided bands. The phrase "We make quality goods for a higher purpose" rests above the shop mirror, and now I understand what that purpose means.

Marlene's parting words for any potential customers? She wants you to know that you can buy designs from local artisans, in a one-stop-shop to create the perfect western-Santa Barbara aesthetic. Her words for anyone in general? "You're worthy." This phrase remained plastered in my mind the whole drive home, along with a genuine smile on my face and in my heart, as I pondered the uplifting fact that people like Marlene exist, adding light and hope into spaces where nobody knew it was needed. *

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community. It was just obvious." Styling and careful attention to detail is just as key to Desert Rose as the headwear. Every aspect from a shirt tuck to a cuff fold plays a role in achieving the coveted look, and to top it off just throw on a signature Panama or San Ysidro! Desert Rose captures the beautiful simplicity of nonchalant accessorizing. Marlene describes the shop as herself manifested in physical form, every item intentionally curated and every nook revealing a hidden tie to family—it's her very own 210 square-foot slice of heaven. "It feels like my own little art gallery. It's exciting, it's humbling, it's everything. And it means so much to me beyond business, and that's the motive to keep going."

Perhaps most special of all is Marlene's dedication to healing in the community—five percent of proceeds are donated to CALM and Domestic Violence Solutions of Santa Barbara, carefully selected organizations to which she holds personal ties. An outspoken survivor herself, her greatest hope regarding the choice to share her experience publicly is to act, in her words, as a beacon of light for anyone struggling in darkness. Luckily for Marlene, she checked off the

