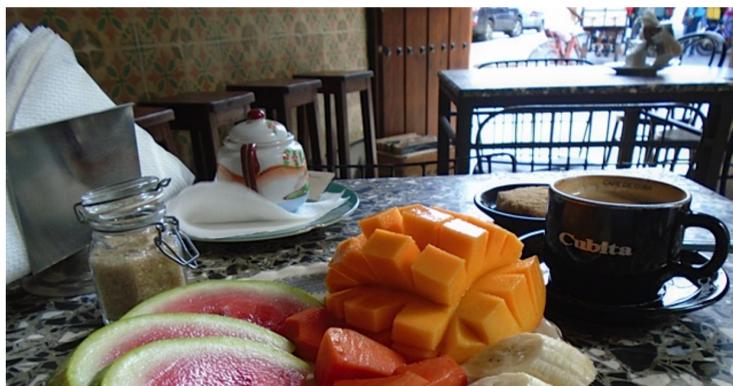


NEWS



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INTRODUCING DANDY'S CAFE AT BRASIL AND VILLEGAS

BY AJ TWIST / POSTED AUGUST 22, 2016

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Strolling down the burgeoning Brasil (a street also known as Teniente Rey, just to confuse the tourists it seems) the other day, I was beckoned by a street hawker with a menu in hand to enter an attractive cafe at the corner of Villegas. Not normally one to fall for that come-on approach, I did pause to have a quick peek inside as a large photograph had caught my eye.

As I crossed the threshold I saw a familiar face peering down at me from the wall. It was Everett! Everett, an older gentleman that I would often photograph on my early trips to Havana. He would dress up in vintage suits and bow ties then spend his days walking throughout Old Havana in the hopes tourists would take his photo (for a CUC or two, if you don't mind, mi amigo). What I did not know, at that time, was that his nickname was "Dandy" as in "a man unduly devoted to style, neatness, and fashion in dress and appearance." And he certainly fit the bill!



Evidently the owners of this cafe (photographers themselves, I understand) were so taken with Dandy that they named their cafe after him and have dedicated a fair amount of wall space not only to photographs of him but also to other colourful scenes and personalities of Old Havana. The whole ambience of Dandy's had a certain charm, complete with antique furniture and a collector's item fridge in the corner, so I resolved to return the next morning for a coffee and breakfast.

Dandy's sits on the edge of a lively city square, Plaza del Cristo so it is a great spot to catch the daily activities of a busy Old Havana neighbourhood. Across the way, a cobbler has set up his sewing machine and anvil to repair shoes that come his way, a beautiful Roman Catholic Church sits half a block away, kids are escorted to school in their adorable uniforms, and the rickshaw bikes are dispensed from a small garage next door to toil for the day.

Inside the Dandy, one of the city's best lattes in the city is being prepared and the request for a fruit salad and soft boiled eggs has been relayed to the cook by my charming waitress, Angelique. Soon afterwards, one of the finest displays of fresh fruit I have ever seen offered up in Cuba arrives perfectly sliced and diced. A feast for the eyes as well as the palate.

Next up a plate of toasted baguette is presented along with my two egg cups. Bravo! A perfect breakfast in a town where those words are not often used in the same sentence!

Well, that first coffee was simply so good, I must have another. With the jet fuel kicking in I look around and take in my surroundings.

At the back of the cafe is a small couch and chairs that may have been lifted from your grandmother's house. Over to the side, is a small souvenir stand offering clutch bags, photography books and key chains. In a corner is a glassed in cabinet displaying china plates and tea cups from another era.



Throughout the cafe are shelves of kitschy items such as little statuettes, salt and pepper shakers and the like. Through a side door lies the kitchen and the makings of a bar that may be opened in the coming months.

In the meantime, if you are looking for some friendly faces, an excellent breakfast or light lunch or afternoon snacks, and a mighty fine cup of coffee, head over to Dandy's and take refuge from the hustle and bustle. It's a great place to start another wonderful day in Havana!



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