



Knox Lounge sets a contemporary and cosy vibe

A 45-year legacy kneaded in a small Kandyan bakery today flows through the contemporary Knox Lounge, The Pub and relaxed History restaurant. Set in a heritage city, each embrace unique characteristics of the citadel's colonial identity while serving delicious local and international fare.

Words Keshini de Silva | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda

The Kandy Lake flowed with a sense of stillness, its soft lulls attempting to sooth the hustle and bustle in the heritage citadel. Amidst the lively clutter of Dalada Veediya, The Bake House Kandy stood as calmly and elegantly as it had during its inception in 1970. Except for the red sunshades added recently it was a picture of the sepia toned photograph taken of the establishment during its beginnings.

A display of freshly baked delicacies occupied the entrance, infusing the air with the warm scent of a 45-year legacy.

The Pub

We went up the staircase to The Pub, housed on the second floor (above the original Bake House Restaurant), passing walls scribbled with the commendations of both Sri Lankan and

foreign customers. The teak flooring, dim lighting and wrought iron and cane furniture worked seamlessly to create a rustic Scottish pub feel. Victorian panelled French doors of what was once the home of a British government agent, opened out to the balcony. Here guests lounged on wicker chairs enjoying a brew of Arabica grown in Sri Lanka or a spirited beverage at night while enjoying the cool climes and lively chatter on the streets.

The menu too reflects The Pub's European identity serving grilled and baked dishes and pasta meals in abundance. Understanding the city's tourist appeal, Nadija Weeraratne, Managing Director of the Bake House Kandy, wanted to offer a gastronomic experience closer to home while providing Sri Lankans quality international cuisine. The Pub also aims to offer healthy meals, with a minimal use of oil and the introduction of additional steamed dishes. It is with this in mind that the Bake House kitchen, which introduced the first dough kneader in Kandy decades ago, has been transformed into a modern facility furnished with state-of-the-art equipment and utensils.

Knox Lounge

Adjoining the protected colonial building is the vibrant Knox Lounge. The interior glowed with the warmth of yellow lights. Bar stools under an orange canopy verandah that overlooks the street are favourites amongst nightlife enthusiasts who start after dusk festivities here. The setting is bright yet comfortable, with a large portrait of Robert Knox, prisoner of Kandyan King Rajasinghe II. The English ship captain's words describing life in the Kandyan Kingdom have been brought to life by the colourful paintings, an attempt to showcase the glory of Kandy before British conquest.

Knox Lounge boasts of a carefully selected wine degustation that compliments the delicious fusion cuisine served. Diners themselves can browse through to select their desired grape. Just beyond the winery is a private room with music facilities to set a light and romantic mood. Here, tourists and Sri Lankans alike enjoy their first date, while some have elected it as the venue to "pop the question". An intriguing cabinet holds glass mugs; Knox Lounge regulars receive their very own mug in appreciation of their patronage.

Yet, what customers of The Pub and Knox Lounge love is the flexibility of the menu. If you choose to dine at the Knox Lounge, yet crave a pub meal the restaurant will make your wish come true.



The colonial façade of The Bake House, Kandy

History

The Bake House Kandy's European-style restaurant 'History' sits quietly along Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha. It's a cosy third-floor restaurant above a bakery. The open kitchen that balances on the mezzanine floor sizzles as it creates tantalising dishes. Our climb to the third floor was a journey through the past, where sepia toned photographs of bygone times held our attention.

History, sets a comfortable bistro atmosphere, with winds blowing from the mountains cooling the atmosphere. Photographs of ancient Ceylonese families, colonial Colombo streets and Kandyan aristocrats dressed in regalia adorn the walls. Pages from the Times of Ceylon and vintage memorabilia, even a gramophone, from the times of our ancestors decorated the interior. In line with the new concept of 'Edutainment', Nadija Weeraratne envisioned that the walls would inspire and transport diners on a journey through colonial Sri Lanka as they waited for their dishes to be served. To keep things interesting the display changes from time to time. Each item is borrowed from the carefully preserved Weeraratne family collection.

The menu, of course, includes a range of European and Asian inspired simple bistro meals, prepared with quality ingredients. Each dish, grilled, fried or baked, has been carefully created to compliment the restaurant's snug ambience and be paired with a delightful selection of wine.

The Pub, Knox Lounge and History celebrate the Island's colonial and Kandyan heritage, a period pivotal to the manifestation of the present Sri Lankan identity. Yet these stories are not just told by classical interiors, but are also lived through the delicious flavours and heartfelt service enjoyed centuries ago.

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