

A cup to Peace

Café Pushkin, founded by **César Jerez** in 2019, has worked towards creating an enduring peace, whether it is through locally sourced food, arts and literature, an artisanal beer or a cup of coffee.

By: Camila Rojas

How would I describe Pushkin in one phrase? Where countryside meets urban communities"

Pushkin Café stands like a breath of fresh air in La Candelaria historical neighborhood, in Bogotá, with walls covered with paintings and a sidewalk filled with plants. César Jerez has dedicated most of his life's work to providing locally sourced products, directly from the hands of the peasants who harvested them to the heart of the city.

This place is truly a representation of who César is: open, colorful and fascinating to look at. Perhaps it is this way thanks to his time in Soviet Union studying Geology. He lived in Azerbaijan, a mostly Muslim community that was filled with students from all over the world, some who, like César, happily embraced the mixture of cultures and customs.

As if catching up with an old friend, almost laying on the couch, he reminisced about the life he lived when was a 19 year-old, the impact of the little things that we've grown up to.

"You see these boots? These were way too fancy compared to what we had there. The small-scale

industry wasn't as developed as today, so we didn't have many options when it came to clothes or, even, stationery. Although, I actually really like the worker style".

"HOW WOULD I DESCRIBE PUSHKIN IN ONE PHRASE? WHERE COUNTRYSIDE MEETS URBAN COMMUNITIES"

Nonetheless, it wasn't as somber as we've been led to believe. One of the things he highlights the most during his time as a foreign student is the culture. Unlike occidental artistic expressions, in the Soviet Union the culture was pure, sublime. Whether it was opera or a concert, art remained free from commercial interests, making it so much more powerful to the viewer.

As a result of being deeply involved with agrarian communities in the countryside, seeing how they struggled selling the results of their harvests, being excluded from political, economic and social spheres



of the country, he decided to take matters into his own hands. Like Alexander Pushkin, his café is rebellious in the way it breaks structure, it's an opportunity to create a direct relationship between coffee growers and consumers without the imperative need of an intermediary.

Its philosophy transcends consumption. It offers a space for dialogue, reflection and creation. This was one of the things César looked for when searching a location: he wanted people to have multiple scenarios, to feel at ease in such a crowded city. When he came into this building, owned by a member of Aterciopelados rock band, he knew it was perfect; from the wide sidewalk to the open structure on the second floor, perfect to talk for hours; either on the small stage or the couches that fill the space... It's easy to feel home.

Home to poets, artists, the working class and bohemians, students and teachers, beer or coffee lovers, rural or city people. To party with friends after class or to have lunch while talking to César about everything and nothing.

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It's not just another business for the locals and tourists that look for an artsy place, Pushkin is a way to continue resisting. César defends the idea that we can't sit around and wait for things to change; if we don't take matters into our hands and do what we can, we're doomed.

Through debates, conferences, culinary and cultural fests, art or book exhibitions, enjoying craft beers brewed by former guerrilla fighters in reinsertion process or simple talks, such as this interview, resistance can emerge from knowledge. Only when we open our eyes to the situation that a marginalized majority in Colombia has been going through for years, only then we can fight alongside to make things better.

César embodies Alexander Pushkin. Like the Russian author, he has rebelled through art, in creating new spaces. Like César, Pushkin Café's walls invite whoever enters to rebel, to resist for a better country.■

Fotografías donadas por:
César Jerez

