

# SO SOUTHERN VOICE VO

DINING

## Havana Sandwich Shop

2905 Buford Highway

404-636-4094

www.havanasandwichshop.com

## Las Palmeras

368 Fifth St.

404-872-0846

## Coco Loco Cuban & Caribbean Café

2625 Piedmont Road

404-364.0212

www.cocolocoatlanta.com

# Castro be damned

We may not agree with its politics, but Atlanta loves the tastes of Havana

By HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Cuba's Cigars may be embargoed, but thanks to these restaurants, Atlanta diners have full access to the country's cuisine.

## HAVANA SANDWICH SHOP:

This may be the most authentic Cuban restaurant in Atlanta, from its barred windows to its savory dishes. An eclectic crowd dressed in anything from flip-flops and torn T-shirts to business suits commonly waits in line during lunch hour, but progress up to the counter is fast. The menu features sandwiches, combination plates and sides all priced under \$10.

Specialties include the pressed Cuban sandwich with marinated and smoked pork, ham, Swiss cheese, dill pickles, mustard and mayo between toasted Cuban bread; the Boliche sandwich of roast beef, grilled onion and bell peppers; tamale topped with ham and a special sauce; empanadas served with black bean soup and yellow rice; and Garbanzo bean soup. Flan and rice pudding are featured

desserts, or try a Batido milkshake flavored with guanabana, mango or papaya juice.

To make it easy to try cooking Cuban at home, shelves stock Cuban sauces and dry goods.

## LAS PALMERAS:

This tiny spot can be hard to find, but it's

worth the search. Owned and operated by Felipe Alvarez and his wife, Maida, who left Cuba in 1972, the authentic menu at Las Palmeras is affordable with most entrées under \$12.

Specialties include a classic Spanish potato omelet; Boliche, a chorizo-stuffed rolled eye of beef; Pisto Manchego, which is made of eggs, ham and vegetables; Ropa Vieja tender skirt steak; and Lechón Asado pork roast marinated in mojo sauce.

Standards like Empanadas, rotisserie chicken and burritos also make an appearance. Entrées are served in generous portions and come with a choice of two sides, with options like black beans, rice, yucca and plantains.

The interior features photographs, framed historic postcards, Cuban-themed posters and romantic candlelight. But the outdoor patio is most popular this time of year.

## COCO LOCO:

Whenever an ethnic restaurant attracts hordes of folks from its own ethnic group,



The pressed sandwich staple at area Cuban restaurants gives a whole new meaning to Ham & Cheese.

odds are it's a winner. This place is in that category, drawing an eclectic mix of diners. The ambience of old Havana is captured in upbeat music and colorful wall murals painted by local Latin American artist Ann Guzman.

The menu features a range of options from tapas to soup and salad, sandwiches, entrées and desserts with most priced under \$15.

Specialties include the Cuban sandwich with roast pork, ham, cheese, pickle and mustard in Cuban bread; Pollo en Salsa Verde, marinated chicken strips sautéed with spicy green sauce; the Picadillo sandwich with flavored ground beef on Cuban bread; Enchilado de Camarones shrimp in Cuban creole sauce; and Ropa Vieja shredded flank steak simmered in tomato sauce with onions & green peppers.

Finish with the Tarta Tres Leches cake made of three milks.