

Moon over Wilton Manors

Nostalgic candies and gay gag gifts are just a few of the fun items on the shelves at a new gay business in Wilton Manors

By **ANDY ZEFFER**
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In the cluster of pastel colored shops on Wilton Drive, across the street from the Shoppes at Wilton Manors, awaits a taste of international goodies.

The store is called “To the Moon,” and owner Antonio Dumas says the international flavor on his shelves reflects his love of travel and enthusiasm for discovering new products.

“I traveled a lot before I owned this store,” Dumas explains. “I lived outside the country every year for at least two months.”

Those countries: Brazil, Mexico, England, Austria, Spain, and Italy.

Every year, Dumas tried to go somewhere new. While in those countries, he would search for products and bring them back with him, whether exporting it or packing it in duffel bags; that’s why stepping into “To the Moon” is like being in an international market.

“Around the world and back in time.”

For starters, there is the extensive array of chocolates and sweets.

Whether they are from Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Austrian or England, they are not the kind of thing you are likely to find at the regular grocery store.

For instance, his selection of Cadbury, originally a British brand, is all imported from Great Britain and South Africa. In America, Hershey owns the rights to the Cadbury you find at the supermarket, which Dumas says is nothing like the original.

In addition to unusual and imported candies, Dumas stocks what you might call nostalgic candies.

The ‘70s staple Fruit Stripe gum, with the Zebra on the packaging, is a perfect example. Dumas says he wants people to see things that they remember from their childhood.

But the merchandise stretches way beyond candy. There are delicious baked goods from Israel. Giant wafers from Norway. Beverages from Brazil. Rare cheeses and wines. Even tantalizing orange vanilla candles and sage.

As is befitting the neighborhood, the store has a gay appeal.

For lesbians, there is the funky Chick Chocolates line of goodies, that feature far-out packaging with pictures of a strong chick, extreme chick and nutty chick. There also are Girlfriend chocolates and cookies, with packaging that resembles clutch purses and cell phones.

And an adult section features cushy testicles to squeeze called Stressticles, Big Willy jigsaw puzzles and candles, and wind up Nunzilla that actually shoots sparks out of her mouth.

“Following the gay migration.”

Dumas, who is of French, Italian, and Puerto Rican heritage, first came to Florida from his native Brooklyn ten years ago. “I was running a business called Compass Market in South Beach for ten years, working for absentee owners,” Dumas says. “It was the same people who used to own the Palace.

And then I thought, ‘I live up here now. My friends are here. This is a mile from my house.’ It was time to stay home and try to bring this wonderful stuff I have to the community here.”

Dumas also believes the gay migration is from Miami to Fort Lauderdale. “It just seems that everyone is doing it,” he says. “The beach is changing a whole lot down there. It’s not as a gay friendly as it used to be. As much as they are putting up expensive places, the class of people coming to visit has gone down hill. The people coming in high season are just tearing it apart. I was on Ocean Drive for ten years, and it’s changed from what it used to be. It’s a lot more hip-hop than it is gay.”

Dumas opened his store on February 15. Because the hours are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday, work takes up most of his time.

But when he’s not working, Dumas can be found traveling, at the beach or at the gym. If you run into him, you’re going to have a conversation, he warns. “I’m a talker,” he admits. “I go on and on and on. Probably because I’m a New Yorker.”

Andy Zeffer can be reached at azeffer@expressgaynews.com