

# CigarsLover MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2021



## Parings: the new way

- TOO FRESH! - AMERICAN FLAVOUR - CASDAGLI CIGARS - LISSETTE PEREZ-CARRILLO - KAAT - LICORICE AND CIGARS
- SÄNTIS MALT: THE INTERVIEW - DEPAZ RHUM - BAIJIU - THE PERFECT MATCH BETWEEN CIGARS & SPIRITS - THE PALOMA
- CAFFEINE - THE APERITIF BEFORE SMOKING - NOBLE OR PLEBEAN? FIRST CHOICE OR POOR CUTS



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## Editor's thoughts

*Summer is finally here, together with a big news from our side!*

In this Summer's issue, I am very pleased to announce a major change we decided to implement on our website. Given the volume of content is constantly growing, we believe that having two websites instead of one, could help navigate more easily, especially when searching for specific products. This is why we are happy to announce our move of everything related to spirits and beverage onto our new platform, SpiritsLover Magazine.

The new website, Spirits-Lover.com, is going to host content from the Spirits and the Taste sections of our current magazine. This means that all content related to whisky, rum, cognac and the other spirits, as well as wine and beer, will be found on the new platform. The new pairing section, launched in the Spring issue of CigarsLover Magazine, will be fully covered on both the websites.

Getting back the current issue, Summer is here and in this issue we featured some content that will give you nice suggestions about how to enjoy cigars and drinks the most this summer. Among them, a special on BBQ, bourbons and a different type of cigar to pair with these summer classics.

Summer 21 is full of insights and interviews: in the cigar section we have Casdagli and Lisette Carrillo; on the spirits side, you are going to find the Santis Malt, the famous Swiss whiskey producer, and Depaz, the notorious rum brand.

#refineyourtaste





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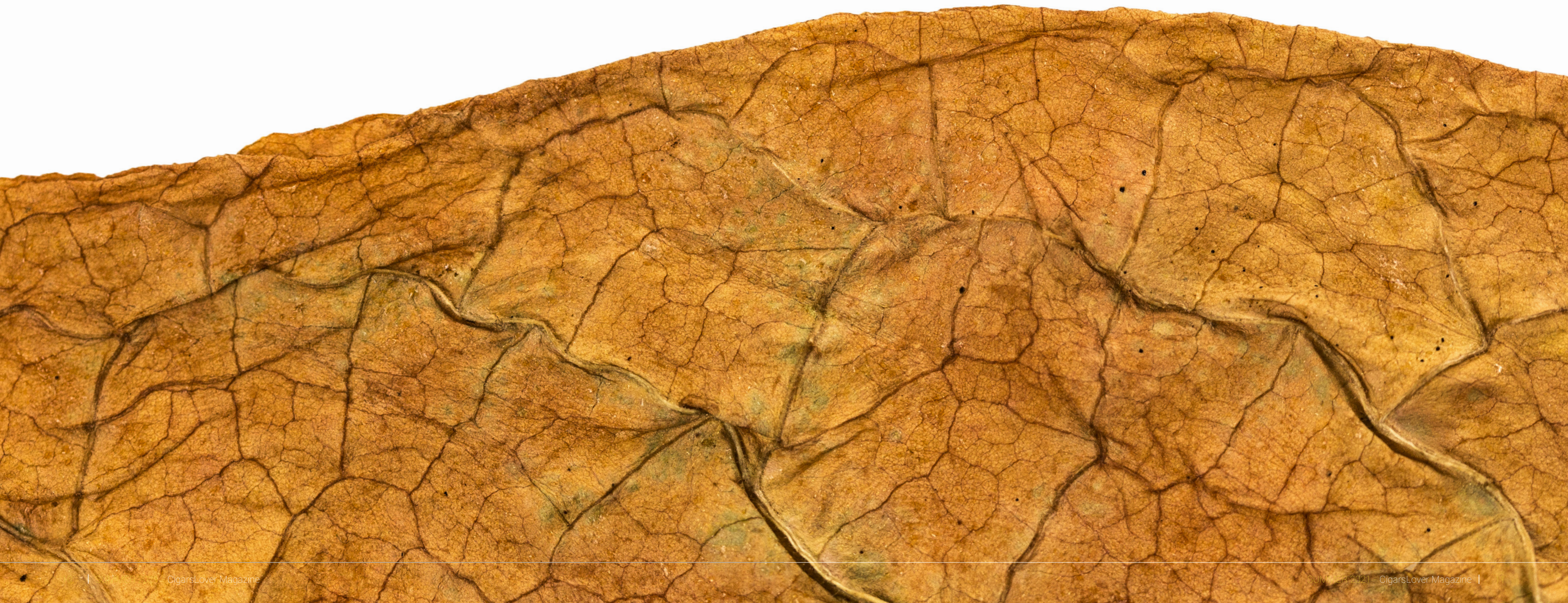
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# CIGARS

“Smoking cigars is like falling in love. First, you are attracted by its shape; you stay for its flavor, and you must always remember never, never to let the flame go out!”

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# Too fresh!

*Identifying a young cigar is not easy,  
yet some indicators can reveal whether it needs additional rest in the humidor*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

In the lifetime of a cigar smoker, it is not unusual to come across products, which are often referred to as "fresh". It might seem like a concept, perhaps a little abstract, related to the rigid valuation score criteria of tasters and reviewers, but in the reality of the smoking experience of any aficionado it is not such a rare occurrence, as it might seem. The focal point remains the identification of all those factors that, alone or in combination, alert us to the freshness of a product.

Before developing any thesis, two basic concepts need to be clarified. First, a fresh cigar, for the purposes of our definition, is not a bad or defective cigar. Of course, sometimes it could be the result of too hasty processing steps, but this does not automatically make it a bad cigar. The second clarification concerns the field of our research. We will restrict our analysis to products that follow the official, standard sales channels only (it goes without saying that a freshly rolled and immediately smoked cigar is fresh by definition) and to cigars that are properly stored (wet or dry cigars may have in common the same warning indications as a fresh cigar).

From an aromatic point of view, very often a young cigar has strong, evident vegetal notes, which recall herbaceous components such as hints of English lawn, freshly cut grass or lettuce. At other times, on the contrary, the cigar seems almost to possess no aromatic harmony, expressing

a smoke whose aromas are not outlined or easily recognizable. In these cases, it is very often the rest phase which takes place after the torcida (in Cuba defined as escaparaté, a name coming from the one of the room where the newly rolled products rest) that has been insufficient for that particular product. Tobacco leaves, especially the wrapper, before being manipulated by the torcedores must be moistened. This additional moisture is allowed to evaporate from cigars before they are boxed, for a time that varies depending on the size, quantity and type of tobacco used. This rest period, in addition to losing moisture, allows the oils of the leaves to harmonize with each other, according to the receta specifically designed by the master blender. The temporal contraction of this delicate phase also risks triggering small re-fermentations, immediately recognizable for their characteristic ammonia note, which can be perceived in the cold draw and even opening the box by anybody, even the non-experts. The ammonia scent is a clear signal of a cigar which is not ready for smoking.

However, this should not suggest, automatically, that the cigar is fresh from the work of the torcedor or that it has not spent the right time in the escaparaté. This characteristic scent, in fact, can alert us about a microfermentation in progress (such as the famous sick-period, that time frame of about 12-16 months after boxing). Micro fermentations are mostly present when the cigar is young and its tobacco has peculiar characteristics.

In conclusion, if the presence of ammonia only appears only during the finish, it is almost always a sign that the product just lit has spent the right rest time after the torcida. If such a scent can already be perceived in the cold draw, it can indicate either a hasty escaparaté or a microfermentation in progress.

Overcoming olfactory analysis, the palate can also become the indicator of a product that needs rest. Usually cigars not ready for smoking reveal an increased or very rough bitterness. This taste is particularly pungent and is very different from the bitterness that is sometimes present in a cigar, and also pleasant, during a smoke. This type of bitterness is latent and appears at about half point during the smoke. In this specific case, the problem is certainly related to the humidity of tobaccos and, without taking into account eventual storage problems, this can be due to a cigar that did not have enough time to lose the excessive moisture accumulated during the torcida or tobaccos which did not receive the right attention during the important phases of drying and/or fermentation. In the latter case, the rest in humidor will not work miracles, but if the bitterness is due only to a still damp cigar, the time and the correct value of relative humidity during storage will provide the right benefit to the cigar.

From a mechanical point of view, combustion can also reveal to us whether a cigar has reached the market too early.

In fact, if the stick tends to extinguish too easily, in particular at about halfway through its smoke, or if it burns more at the center than externally (where the wrapper is), we have a fresh cigar between our fingers, if we have not stored it at too high relative humidity. Furthermore, given that ash is the product of combustion, sometimes this difficult combustion is associated with a very crumbly ash, which breaks or with areas which are darker than others.

Each of the elements described above can be, as it has already been pointed out, a signal that can alert us that we are in presence of a fresh cigar. We need to be careful, however, since there are many different variables between the time of the end of the torcida and the moment we enjoy our favorite cigar, including undesired storage errors (for example, due to a defective hygrometer).

Of course, if more than one of the above mentioned conditions shall become apparent, the several alarms become one certainty, particularly when the cigar is already lighted up. In the latter case, nothing can now be done to improve the performance of that specific cigar, but if more samples belonging to the same box or a whole box has been purchased, we will spare the others a premature lighting and the sacrifice of one specimen will not have been in vain.



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*#CuriosityDrivesDiscovery*



# American Flavor

*BBQ, Bourbon, and the Kentucky  
taste of a Toscano cigar*

by John Jeremy

Summer is the perfect time for relaxation and smoking meats and cigars, which very often becomes the perfect setting for Lucullian lunches or dinners. What better time for an American barbecue to end with a bourbon and a cigar. However, after having spoiled the palate so much, choosing the right product to smoke becomes complex. It is necessary to opt for a bold product, with pronounced strength and a strong and intense palatal impact, perhaps with aromas that recall the delicacies just consumed. The choice may fall on a Toscano cigar which, with its characteristic smoky note, typical of the Fire Cured processing of tobacco, will best marry with the flavor of the BBQ and the woody nuances of the Bourbon. The CigarsLover Magazine Team has decided to combine Bourbon and a Toscano cigar with each of the dishes of the "Holy Trinity" of BBQ: Ribs, Pulled Pork, Brisket.

The Toscano cigar is made with Kentucky tobacco grown in Italy and North America. The curing process, as already highlighted, is entrusted to the fire of the combustion of precious and aromatic woods, such as oak and beech. Inside the curing barns, controlled fires are left to burn so that the heat (the temperature must always remain constant) and the smoke (never more than necessary), in combination with each other, can dry the leaves and give that essential flavor for a Toscano.

Another very important phase for the production of these Italian cigars is fermentation. All tobaccos are soaked for a period of time, depending on the final use of the leaves. After 45 minutes of bathing, the leaves intended for the filler are left in large containers (marnoni) for the subsequent natural fermentation phase. The leaves that will make up the wrapper, on the other hand, are left to soak for 20 minutes, to be then immediately used for manufacturing. For the filler, medium-filler tobacco is used rolled directly in the wrapper. The actual manufacturing is entrusted to the cigar makers or to the machines. Still, after a long aging, the final result will always produce a bi-truncated cone shape, with



sides that are not perfectly parallel, with each end narrower than the belly of the cigar. Let's start by looking for the best possible combination for Ribs; a must in a mixed barbecue tray. Given that the meat used can be pork or beef, giving a completely different taste, we decided to choose pork. The choice does not imply that they are better than beef, but we chose them for their fatness and their sweetness, thanks to the glaze of barbecue sauce. This also opens up another choice among the various types of sauce, but most popular barbecue sauces all share a sweetness that tends to slightly acidic peaks. Ribs, enriched with BBQ sauce that best matches your taste, will find the right combination in the versatility of an Antico Toscano. Made with fillers from Italian and North American Kentucky tobaccos and a North American wrapper, they rest for 12 months at controlled humidity and temperature prior to market. Their personality is characterized by a sustained strength and well-defined aromas, which develop notes of earth, leather, and nuts, enriched with peppery nuances halfway through the cigar.

This will also be the right time to savor a Reservoir Bourbon, made with a 100% corn mash bill and bottled at 50% ABV (100 proof). A bourbon characterized by interesting aromas of roasted chestnut, orange peel, and delicate notes of vanilla, which are transformed on the palate into notes of pecans, almonds, and a pinch of peanuts, with a velvety and sweet tactile experience. Perfect, if you like, with an ice cube; it will cool the distillate, also lowering the warmth in the mouth generated by the smoke, and dilute it to allow a longer enjoyment in combination with the Antico Toscano.

Another typical American BBQ preparation is pulled pork. For its preparation, we use the cut of the pork shoulder, the Capocollo, or the more suitable Boston Butt, i.e., shoulder with part of the pig's neck. hand-frayed, as per tradition, it is a tender and succulent cut, thanks to the mix of spices, the secret of each grill master. As per tradition, it is to be consumed in a sandwich, with the addition of coleslaw, cabbage salad, if you want to be faithful to the Texas style.





Depending on the seasoning and sauces, what better cigar to pair to it than a multifaceted Toscano Classico. The blend of this product uses Italian and North American Kentucky for the filler and a wrapper leaf grown in Italy. The cigar is then left to age for six months before reaching world markets. Its contained strength happily leaves room for aromas of earth, leather, and walnut, but also for herbal and walnut notes towards the middle of smoke.

The bourbon chosen to end our moment of culinary relaxation worthily is the American Eagle 12 y.o., obtained from a blend of corn, rye, and malt left to rest for 12 years in oak barrels and bottled at an ABV of 43%. The distillate, also thanks to its moderate alcoholic content, allows the nose to perceive all its aromas of vanilla, caramel, malt, and cereals (plus cereal biscuit), but also of ripe yellow fruit. In the mouth, the American Eagle returns aromas of wood and caramel, but also spices and balsamic herbs. Its medium-long persistence, added to a spicy finish, will be the right conclusion for a classic but not trivial dish, such as pulled pork.

No BBQ tray can be complete without His Majesty the brisket. The cut that will have to be used (and the imperative is a must) is the beef brisket. A tough part, very large and rich in fat and connective tissue. In this case, it is of fundamental importance that the cut is very marbled. That it, therefore, has a high amount of intramuscular fat and has been aged for a bit. Respect for cooking times and rules, as well

as the experience and secrets (especially the spiciness) of the pit-master, will make the difference in the end result. Without skipping the very important resting phase, which will allow the temperature to lower and the connective tissue to turn into melting jelly. It is served in thin slices with sauces and dressings. Such a generous and robust dish deserves a robust and sinewy cigar like the Toscano 1492 Anno Domini, for which only North American Kentucky tobacco is used. The cigar rests for 12 months before reaching the market. It is a very strong smoke, and sharp. Aromatically, it expresses notes of wood, leather, and black pepper, which are enriched with mineral nuances towards the center of the smoke.

If the pairing is not already sufficiently optimal, a bourbon, such as the Blanton's Gold Edition, will fill the slightest roughness of the smoke. To obtain the brand's flagship product, a mash bill of corn, rye, and barley is used and bottled at an ABV of 51.3%. The nose is very rich, with aromas of wood, vanilla, white pepper, and a mix of dried fruit. After a few moments of rest in the glass, hints of honey and balsamic herbs also emerge. On the palate, it is characterized by notes of cocoa, white pepper, dehydrated fruit (plum in particular), but also vanilla and maple syrup. With white pepper, wood, and vanilla, the medium-long finish will enrich both the post barbecue and the last chat with friends before turning off the pit and putting everything away for the next barbecue.



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- | CIGAR & CHAMPAGNE PAIRINGS - TRUFFLE - HIGHEST PROOF BEERS - THE MEDALS OF WINE - HOT CHILI

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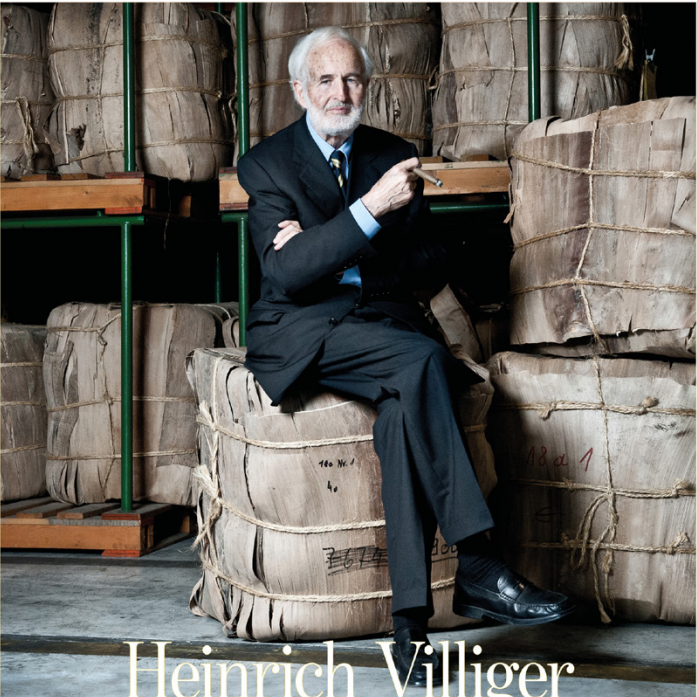


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- | LIANA FLUENTE - DOUBLE PUFF - PUNCH - ANDULLO - THE CIGAR RING - MICALLEF CIGARS - LOUNGE: LISBONA
- | GLENDALOUGH: THE IRISH DISTILLERY - DINING WITH WHISKY - TRIPPLE DISTILLATION - MORE THAN WINE
- | THE EVOLUTION OF THE BEER - A TEA WITH A CIGAR - T-BONE - INDIGENOUS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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Heinrich Villiger

- | RU IN SUMMER - THE "SAVING" BLOW - PACHUCHE CIGARS - KAREN BERGER - HULK WRAPPER - THE TREASURE CHEST
- | FLOR DE CAÑA - CUBAN SPIRIT: DRINKS & PAIRINGS - RESERVOIR: THE INTERVIEW - THE RETURN OF THE RYE
- | BEER & BBQ: PAIRING THE BARBECUE - MEAT: HOLY TRINITY - THE MATERIALS OF WINEMAKING - SALT TO TASTE

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MONTEZEMOLO

- | THE TOSCANO CIGAR - BOLIVAR - NICOTINE - LAURA CHAVIN - NIRKA REYES ESTRELLA - DOUBLE CUÑO - PAIRINGS
- | READY TO DRINK - FAIR, ORGANIC AND ETHICAL - AMRUT: THE INTERVIEW - MONONGAHELA RYE - CANCHANCARA
- | THE ACIDITY AND TANNICITY OF WINE - AGED BEERS - PIPPALI, THE INDONESIAN PEPPER - BBQ: SMOKY FLAVOUR

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Carlito Fuente

- | ADVENTURA CIGARS - SCISSORS - TASTING TECHNIQUES - 5 MUST HAVE CUBANS - SIGARAIE - BBQ & CIGARS
- | PROHIBITIONISM: A NEW BEGINNINGS - THE MOST ILLEGAL WHISKY IN HISTORY - TOP 10 DRINKS FOR SUMMER
- | TOBACCO & WHISKY IN SAUCE - COFFEE RECIPES FOR SUMMER - MEXICO: MOLE POBLANO - FRENCH WINES





# Casdagli Cigars

*A chat with  
Jeremy Casdagli*

by Michel Arlia



Casdagli Cigars (formerly known as Bespoke Cigars) has been a rising star in the cigar community over the past couple of years. While the name may be new to some, Jeremy Casdagli (founder and owner) has over twenty-five years of experience in the world of cigars, and the history of tobacco and the Casdagli family goes much deeper than that.

**The Casdagli family has a very complex history and has been in the trade business since the 1800s. Tobacco was among one of their trading goods. Can you share some of your family heritage involving tobacco, and what are your earliest memories with cigars?**

The tobacco initially traded by the family in the late 18th & 19th centuries was Turkish pipe tobacco. The Casdaglis became involved with Cuban premium cigars when my great uncle Emmanuel conducted secret negotiations on behalf of the British Board of Trade with the pre-revolutionary Cuban government in 1951. He managed to end the British empire's embargo on Cuban cigars that had been in place since 1941. The story became headline news in the newspapers at the time. Suffice to say that cigars were always widely smoked in the Casdagli family and I managed to inherit beautiful silver and gold cigar holders and accessories from our old family palace Villa Casdagli. My earliest memory of a cigar was when I was at the age of 13 and cigars were handed out at my boarding school's end of winter term dinner. Times have certainly changed since then!

**While the Casdagli Cigars brand is relatively young, the history of you producing cigars dates back much longer than one would think, and quite surprisingly, it started in Cuba. Can you tell us a little more?**

It started in 1996. I have been a keen scuba diver for over 30 years and planned out an adventure scuba trip taking me in the region around Kingston, Jamaica, and Maria La Gorda, in Cuba. The Morgan Harbour Hotel in Kingston asked me to bring back cigars from Cuba for them, and thus, the adventure began. Whilst in Havana in early 1997, I was introduced to one of the Cuban master blenders Carlos Valdez Mosquera. He then worked out of La Casa De la Amistad in Vedado, Havana. He could perfectly replicate the old Hoyo de Monterrey blends that he used to create in the late 1950s. As Hoyo de Monterrey was and still is my favorite Cuban brand, it became a natural partnership. The president of Cubatabaco, Oscar Basulto, at that time gave me full support, perhaps due to my family's support of Cuba in 1951, who knows. At that time, I was based in London, and the market in Europe in the mid-1990s was heavily Cuban, with perhaps just Davidoff competing. So if you wanted to work with cigars, Cuba was then the place to seek out.

**Back then, you were known under Bespoke Cigars and produced "made to order" cigars for mainly the London market. How was business held back then to get a "made to order" cigar? And how does that differ from creating a blend nowadays?**







We were dealing with a much smaller production with as little as 50 cigars per month for a client and up to 1,000 cigars per month. As all the cigars were blended by Carlos Valdez Mosquera, our master blender and a legend in Cuba, we stayed with his classic blend on all our cigars and varied the vitola according to our client's preferences. So the "blending" process was very simple as it was settled, and the challenge in Cuba was coming up with interesting vitolas – such as our famous "Flying Pig", now known as the Cotton Tail. Nowadays, it can take up to 6 months to 1 year to settle on the blend for a new line of cigars. Firstly we have a huge range of premium tobaccos to choose from. Usually, I taste up to six differing blends, and these will be shortlisted to three. With these three blends, I will then age and taste over a six to eight-month period to find out which will be chosen. You see, the new world cigars are so much more complex, and hence there is more of a chance of getting it badly wrong. But when it goes well, it is very exciting to create a complex cigar that is something completely new in the marketplace.

**In 2013, you switched production to the Dominican Republic, to the Kelner Boutique Factory. How did you meet Hendrik Kelner Jr (son of Hendrik Kelner), and what made you decide to work with him?**

I was introduced to Jr by my dear friend Mike Murphy who had been making cigars in both Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic for many years under his Bellaterra Brand. He had befriended Jr and called me in 2012 that Jr had just opened the KBF factory, and I must get involved. So I managed to get there in February 2012. I handed Hendrik some of my original Cuban cigars, and he spun a wonderful piece of magic the first morning I met with him. Without using any Cuban tobacco, of course, but utilizing a blend of tobaccos from Peru, Brazil, Nicaragua, some of his father's Dominican hybrids, he produced a perfectly complex Lancero with almost Cuban notes. This was to become our signature cigar, the Grand Café, and a partnership was born.

**You developed the majority of your lines with him: the Traditional Line, the Club Mareva Line, the Basilica Line, and the Cabinet Selection. How did your approach with each line change, and where did you find your inspiration?**

The Traditional Line was born from that initial Grand Café Lancero, as described in the previous question. So, the Cotton Tail, Super Belicoso, and Robusto, along with the Lancero, were all vitolas I made in Cuba and all conform to the characteristics of my initial small Cuban bespoke production. The Basilica Line was created, and the blends were agreed upon with my Saudi Arabian distributor. The Middle East has always been an important market for us. We sought for a blend that would pair with the ginger teas and the citrus flavors favored in that region. The Cabinet Selection was inspired by the coffee lovers of Sweden. These were blended to pair particularly with coffee. The Club Mareva Line was put together as a joint project with my dear friend Marko Bilić, the Founder of the Cigar Smoking World Championship. He is based in Split, Croatia, where he found the Cigar Club Mareva. Based in a 1500s Venetian Palace, it is difficult to find a more beautiful location to smoke a cigar. Annually Marko selects the blend for the cigar that will be added to the Club Mareva Line.



**In 2018, you launched the Daughters of the Wind Line. Compared to the others, this line is made in Costa Rica at the IGM factory in San Jose. How did you come to work with the IGM factory?**

I was introduced to IGM by a close Cuban friend of mine who used to work with Habanos. The owners and managers at IGM are a Cuban family that managed to leave Havana and founded the company 20 years ago. They have the benefit of owning their own Costa Rican plantation 1000 m above sea level in the mountainous region of Puriscal. Here I have a completely free hand in selecting my tobaccos for the blend, and just like the KBF factory, they have access to some truly unique tobaccos, especially some of my favorite Peruvian tobacco. My basic approach though is the same, and that is to seek out rare tobaccos for medium-strength, full-bodied blends with truly unique exotic flavors. The process at both factories to get to the end result is the same: select the tobaccos that will deliver the character I am seeking and then vary the percentages, age, and then taste over a period of up to a year before release.

**Costa Rican and Peruvian tobaccos can be found in some of your blends. The use of both of those tobacco origins is not "popular". How did these specific tobaccos influence the blends that you were working on at the time?**

Peruvian tobaccos deliver a true sweetness to the palate, but more than that, they are excellent for blending with a tendency to take the edge off the other tobaccos selected

in the blend. I may actually say that these tobaccos provide the "glue" to the blend whilst also adding sweetness and wonderful aromas. I believe they are not widely used as they are rare and thus difficult to get hold of. By being partnered with IGM with the benefit of its own plantation at such a high elevation naturally I was intrigued to try this tobacco. The tobacco has a lovely aroma, but above all, it has a great combustion and makes for a perfect binder, especially when used in conjunction with the slower burning Ecuadorian Habano wrapper leaves. You will find this Puriscal Costa Rican binder embracing the fillers of our Daughters of the Wind Line.

**What does the near future hold for you? and what for Casdagli Cigars?**

The near future looks very exciting for us in spite of the current world problems. We are currently working with some truly amazing artisans to expand our Villa Casdagli accessories line. We are about to open new markets across the world, including Brazil, Ghana, and Australia, which you might already have read about by the time this article goes to press. Finally, this summer we are launching our new line of cigars: the Villa Casdagli Line. This is in collaboration with master blender Don Olman Guzman from Tobaccos de Costa Rica, a gifted blender that we have worked with before on small projects. So, we are very busy and grateful for all the support and encouragement we daily receive from the worldwide cigar community. Thank you to you all!





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# Licorice

*A completely natural method  
to reset the palate*

by **Luca Cominelli**

There are times when we are more likely to be less careful smoking, and other times when we concentrate and try to satisfy ourselves as much as possible with the cigar. However, sometimes the cigar happen to be after lunch, after a cocktail, or even after having just left another cigar. In order to fully appreciate the flavor profile that the tobacco will develop, we must be sure that our palate is as neutral as possible.

To do this, there are several palate cleansing methods. There are those who use a sparkling white wine to degrease the palate, those who prefer the classic slightly sparkling water, those who reset everything with coffee followed by water.

A less common, but very effective method, is to use licorice, and specifically in two possible variants: in the form of candy or herbal tea. In the first case, we refer to pure licorice candies (check the ingredients carefully), those of small size and hard.

Licorice has many positive qualities and has always been used as a natural remedy for inflammation of the mouth (and not only) for centuries. After taking licorice, you will have to rinse your palate with a glass of water and you can then light the cigar. Try it to believe it.

The licorice is then able to remove that sensation of "burnt palate", that is the sensation that you have in the mouth after having smoked more cigars or after overheating a cigar too much. Feeling is believing.

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**A MAN AND A CIGAR FOR ALL TIMES**



# Lisette Perez-Carrillo

*Without my family,  
I would not be doing cigars*

by Michel Arlia

Lisette Perez-Carrillo has been surrounded by tobacco and cigars since her childhood. She is co-owner of E.P. Carrillo Cigar and one of the driving forces behind the company's success. She's involved in almost all aspects of the business. From Finance to Marketing, she does it all.

**Tobacco has been a focal point in your family's history, dating back to your great grandfather. Can you tell us a little about some of your earliest family memories?**

Well, I remember very young going to the factory as young as four years old and running around the factory with my grandfather there, my mom there, and my dad there, and helping my mom put on the cigar bands. That was a wonderful experience for me because I would look forward to going there after school. It was almost like an arts and crafts class for me. At that point, I knew that we were doing something very special, but I was too young to really know exactly what that was. I would sit there and listen to all of the rollers talking about their experiences in Cuba and how being in Miami is so different from just everything they had experienced growing up and how they miss their home country. Then further on, I remember very much liking the art on the boxes of La Gloria Cubana, which is the company that we used to own, and wondering what that lady was thinking in the art. I would go into the humidor and just look at the boxes. I was so fascinated by them. Then finally, I remember when the computers started becoming more and

more popular, very young, probably 10 years old, going in and doing the customer list. So that was always something very fun for me to do.

**In 2009, your father, brother, and you founded the EPC Cigar Company. What did you do before, and how were your family conversations before taking such a big step?**

My brother was in New York, and I was in Miami. I had gone to law school in New York at Columbia Law School and spent several years there working for a big company, a big law firm called Paul Weiss. Then I went on to work legal aid with abused and neglected children in New York City, and I was defending those children. I was very happy to have that as an experience in my career. Our family conversations before that were mostly focused on what each of us was doing. Then my dad's time with the company that bought us, General Cigar Company, was coming up. We met with GCC and decided after that it was something that my dad's dream was always to possibly have a company of his own again with us too. I guess it was just the right moment. We took the steps necessary to move in that direction.

**You had to learn how to run a cigar business on the go. What were the biggest challenges in the early days?**

I guess the biggest challenges were learning how to run a company of that size. I had always had an entrepreneurial spirit. I worked at the factory most of my life until I left for law school. I stayed here for college just to be able to con-



tinue working in the factory. I guess in the early days, I had never had to focus on marketing or financials. I was an attorney. So the legal aspect was relatively simple, but there were many things to learn, sales, sales team, management, leadership, how to make others inspired to achieve the goals that we wanted to achieve as a family and as a company. So those were some of the biggest challenges. Then also working with the family as grownups and all of us having our own ideas. That was also somewhat challenging.

**You have had tremendous success with the brand over the years, was there a decisive point where you thought, "we are heading in the right way?"**

It was with La Historia. There was something about that cigar that really touched me on a personal level. Consumers really started to relate to who we are, telling the story of our family history and just everything that we've achieved through the years, and that my father has been able to achieve was a great story to tell. The basis of La Historia is the family history on the women's side of the family. So that was something that was very special to me. When we saw the consumer's reaction, we knew that we were going in the right direction.

**Did you have a Plan B if things wouldn't have worked out? Would you still be in the cigar business regardless?**

I did not have a plan B. But without my family, I would not be doing cigars. This was something that is tied to my father. If he were not a part of this, I would not be a part of this. Maybe I would have started my own company, but not with cigars. I would continue to be a lawyer as well, but probably that would have just been on the side. My main focus probably would've been to run my own company.

**What is the most intriguing thing about the cigar industry that you have learned over the years?**

There is a very true comradery amongst everyone in the industry. We look out for each other. I know when the FDA regulations were announced that everybody got together and did everything possible to overcome these obstacles that were being presented to us. It just meant a lot that people that were out there, even those that weren't as affected by the FDA as people who had started more recently, were there helping us along the way. It's wonderful to know other people in the cigars industries' family and to just be able to know that we're all friends.

**With all there is to learn in a cigar company, getting to know tobacco is essential. In your case, you have probably one of the best teachers to learn from, your father, Ernesto Perez Carrillo. Have you ever thought about blending your own cigar? What kind of cigar would it be like?**

My father, along the years, has taught me a lot. Ever since I was a young child, he would teach me about cigar wrappers and the country of origin of a lot of these different fillers and binders and wrappers as well. I have thought about blending my own cigar many times, and my dad involves me intricately in all of the blends. He explains to me the different tobaccos that go in it and so forth. And I look forward to taking a trip to Nicaragua with him in the near future to



explore the different farms and see what blend we can work on together. I think La Historia is representative of the blend that I would aspire to achieve. It has certain characteristics that speak to me. So definitely, this is something that we have been talking about for a while. And there was a cigar that we had some time ago called E-Stunner. With that cigar, I was very involved in the blending process with my father. And that was a very fun experience, but I'd like to take it to a different level, possibly in the Perez-Carrillo series.

**EPC Cigars has put a lot of focus on marketing in the past couple of years. Most recently, you have involved customers with the Pledge line, as they decided on the name. With all the digitalization happening, how has the interaction with the consumer changed over the last decade?**

How valuable are social media to the brand involving customers in the marketing, as we did with the Pledge line, has been a great pleasure for me. I know we sit and talk about the different names of the cigars on a regular basis when we're thinking about releasing a line, and getting the consumer involved was a very special process, and I'm very proud to have come up with that idea. A few years ago, I realized that something that could distinguish different companies is digital marketing. I took several digital marketing courses and became as informed as possible as to what all of this meant. I started optimizing our social media. I also started thinking more about how our website should be optimized. Social media is a very, very important component of our brand. We constantly communicate and interact with our customers using these wonderful new resources, and we look forward to their growth.

**One of the many things social media has done over the years when it comes to cigars is giving much more visibility to women, encouraging more women to try cigars. Why do you think cigar smoking has such a macho stigma attached to it, and what, in your opinion, needs to change to get to an equal ground?**

More and more women are trying cigars, which I'm very happy to see. I think women have been trying cigars for a lot longer than we know, except that possibly they're being more exposed now, thanks to social media. The macho stigma I don't feel is as much present, possibly having grown up in this industry. I don't think that that has been an issue, at least for me and for a lot of other women. More and more, we see women involved with cigar companies, cigar bends, and obviously, as consumers, things will move along very rapidly as they have been.

**With more than a decade in the business for EPC Cigars, what is the vision for EPC Cigars and your future?**

The vision for EPC cigars in the future is the next generation. My children are becoming more and more involved in the company, and I hope that my brother's children will become more involved in the company going forward when they're older. And I think that the vision is just to continue on with this generational aspect. We're now at the fourth generation and looking for the fifth. So that's our future. The future remains amazing cigars and family.



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# Kaat

*Luxury ashtrays  
made in Italy*

by **John Jeremy**

Marble. By centuries, it is considered for its beauty and its texture. It has been used in the most famous sculptures and in the most known buildings. When you think about it, the David by Michelangelo, or the Doryphoros of Polykleitos are two remarkable examples. But there are other great ones, such as the Discobolus by Myron and the Taj Mahal.

The great characteristics of this material have been known for quite a long time. Now, this material is used also to let our precious cigar to rest.

KAAT is a design brand established in 2017 by an architect, Michele Cucchiara. The team is now made of 2 more people: Andrea Liguori and Silvia Petrucci. The mission is cre-







ating luxury decor with a special attention to materials. In one of their creations, a handmade ashtray, you can touch this with your hands. The product looks more like a piece of art and it is made of the finest marble. The design is clean and minimal, and the ashtray is correctly sized for all the cigars. A part of it is manufactured to have the cigar layed in it, the other to take the falling ash. Being made by rock, makes it resistant to heat, and this is another reason why it is perfect for cigars.

The ashtrays come in two sizes: to hold one cigar and another to be used when smoking with a friend. The latter is called "tandem". The size for the single cigar version is 6.69" x 2.76" x 1.18" (17 x 7 x 3 cm). The only difference in all the models for one cigar is about the depth of the ash bowl.

The first thing you notice when you have one of these in your hands, is how smooth they are and how heavy this ashtray is. This latter aspect comes handy if you accidentally bump it.

They are available in different colors, which reflect the different types of marbles. Regarding the raw materials, the marble used come mainly from Italy, and depending on the type of marble, the Italian place from where the marble is from changes.

Some of them are from the Ligurian region (Portovenere), others from Sicily (Palermo and Castellamare), and of course Tuscany (Alpi Apuane and Carrara) which is where the most famous marble in the world comes from. That said, there are also some marbles coming from Iran or Egypt.

The ashtrays also come with a leather tissue, created to be placed under the them in case you are going to use it on another hard material, in order to protect both ashtray and support surface.

Something special about them, is the fact that each one of them is different. Even if the size is the same, or they belong to the same line, which means the same raw materials, every single ashtray is a unique piece, with a texture that belongs only to that exact piece. This is one more reason for them to be so fascinating.

# KAAT

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around the factory rooms. The imperative for everyone is social distance: at least one and a half meters from the next person, or two meters, depending on the country (as in the Dominican Republic). Everywhere we will see signs that remind us to respect it, to wash our hands often with hydroalcoholic gels scattered around and in every room, to always keep the mask high to cover the nose and mouth, but also to contact the internal health unit in case of discomfort such as cough, fever, fatigue. If we visited the Plasencia factory (Nicaragua), we would be attracted by murals made specifically to continually remember the measures to contain the viral spread.

Also, in Plasencia, we would find ourselves following motivational courses because it is important for them to have high morale and not give in to the depression that blooms in places where life was very different before. Let us now go to the beating heart of every factory, the rolling room floor. Here, the measures vary according to the country and the choices of each company, but all aim to better protect their workers. They tell us that a year ago, in the most serious moments of the pandemic, when there was still no knowledge of how to work safely, the torcedores were very far apart (even one for each row).

At the Raices Cubanas factory (Honduras), it was preferred to space out as much as possible all the posts where previously they worked closely together. This involved extra

shifts and even work shifts on Saturdays.

In other factories, where it was not possible to increase the shifts and/or space of the workstations, dividers were installed in plexiglass (as at Joya de Nicaragua) or wood and plastic (Plasencia). Other companies such as Davidoff, to maintain production and quality standards while respecting the interpersonal distance of two meters, opted for spacing and increasing the number of shifts.

As we continue our visit, a gentleman with a white coat and a thermoscanner in his hand stops us. In the CLE Cigar Company, there is a doctor on-site around the clock to detect the body temperature of all workers. If the temperature exceeds the alert threshold, the worker would be directed to the internal health facility.

What happens, however, if a worker develops symptoms of being unwell? Here the practice followed is almost identical in each factory, differing only in some health measures dictated by the health authorities of each country. Each factory is equipped with a small infirmary, even if it was already present in factories of medium and large size. The worker who presents symptoms potentially attributable to a Covid-19 infection is immediately sent to this place, where he is subjected to a quick swab. In the case of a positive result, he is immediately sent home for a period of quarantine which varies according to local health provisions. In all

# Work and pandemic

*How the manufacturing work has changed following the pandemic, between entrance checks, gels, masks, and health care*

by **John Jeremy**

For over a year, the world has been forced to face a global challenge never so impactful in recent history. The pandemic has upset everyone's daily home and work life, in every corner of the globe, particularly regarding the measures to contain the virus. Hand sanitizers and temperature detection are tools that have become commonplace both in the workplace and in shops. Factories are no exception, especially for their workers who, until some time ago, worked "side by side". We wanted to investigate how the Coronavirus prevention and containment measures have affected the way the leading manufacturers in Central America work. We went virtually into many factories to have them explain how, every day, cigars can reach aficionados around the world while respecting local health regulations. We will try to imagine ourselves there to accompany you on an imaginary tour.

First of all, most of the measurements recognizable to Europeans and Americans are common to most factories in Central America. At the entrance, at the agreed time (accesses are staggered), and always respecting the interpersonal distance of at least 1.5 meters, we will have sanitizing gel, temperature detection and screening on our state of health at our entry. Obviously, the mask is mandatory in every environment (except for the lunch break), and if we do not have one, the company will provide it to us before entering.

If we work at C.L.E. Cigar Company (Honduras), where the Bayer-certified sanitation tunnel existed before the pandemic, we would cross an opening that nebulizes water and sanitizing substances all over our body, not before having wet the soles of the shoes in a sterilizing solution. Once we cross the threshold, we will find ourselves wandering







factories, the workplace occupied or frequented by the positive worker is immediately sanitized. In Joya de Nicaragua, they explain to us that, in the event of a high risk of exposure, even the colleagues closest to the sick worker are sent home for a seven-day preventive quarantine, even in the absence of symptoms. If the positive tested worker belonged to the CLE Cigar Company, he would be sent home from the infirmary with a "Maya treatment" kit, a mix of drugs including anticoagulants and anti-inflammatories widely used in Honduras, sufficient for the worker and his family.

When someone is ill and confined to their home, the national health system takes care of them. However, each company remains in contact with its employee to try to respond to their needs differently. At Plasencia and Raices Cubanas, they initiate a follow-up and monitoring program for each positive employee at home to understand the disease's progress and help with specific requests or needs. In Joya de Nicaragua, in case of special needs, an emergency fund has been specially activated. In Davidoff, on the other hand, after checking each case, an extension of health coverage is activated.

In conclusion, and not exhaustively, each company has been responding to the best of its ability to protect the most precious asset it possesses: the worker.

Towards the end of our informative tour in the factory, we ask the factory if the pandemic has generated delays in the procurement of raw materials and materials (boxes, bands, cellophane, etc.), not attributable to the management of the individual factory visited. No one has encountered delays in tobacco delivery, except that it does not have to come from a growing country other than the one where the manufacture is based. On the other hand, some have complained about delays in the delivery of materials (especially Alec Bradley and Joya de Nicaragua), particularly boxes and printed materials. They explain to us that this problem is not due to production delays of the respective companies but to continuous postponements of shipments. With the cancellation or thinning of international shipments, transportation logistics has paid the highest price. In fact, from Plasencia, we are informed that the costs of transporting goods have increased by about 15%.

At the end of our visit to CLE Cigar Company, they also tell us about a further problem encountered in recent months, that of the theft of manpower which, in addition to the fewer number of torcedores employed due to the pandemic, creates considerable burdens. Many small and unscrupulous companies hire more torcedores than necessary in order to increase their production volumes. On the other hand, no health or wage guarantee is offered to these workers.

We leave the factory, respecting the interpersonal distance, with another awareness: the tour was (and could have been) only virtual. In fact, many manufacturers have decided to deny visitors access to their businesses—another further measure to guarantee the health of all workers.

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# PAIRINGS

From the moment that CigarsLover Magazine defined its pay-off, "Refine Your Taste", starting to accompany the tastings of cigars to those of spirits such as Whisky, Rum, Armagnac and Cognac, we have set ourselves the problem of addressing the issue of cigar-spirits pairing. It is a thorny field, and often the results achieved are not what we expected and the pairing can give as much emotion as dissatisfaction if something goes wrong.

Cigar size: Robusto/Piramide/Toro. These are nowadays the standard formats of the market, offering a representative smoking experience for the various producers and terroirs. Technically speaking, they do not present particular challenges, yet they still offer a satisfying aromatic experience and allow to appreciate the evolution of the smoke in parallel to the tasting of the spirits.

The Rating Scale: 100 points. We have chosen to keep it in the pairings as well, to simplify the comparison of ratings. In this case, however, this scale only evaluates the pairing,

and not the individual qualities of cigars and spirits. If you have both excellent products, for example, but an unbalanced and inconsistent pairing, the rating will be low. On the contrary, the excellent marriage of two products of decent quality could give rise to a very positive evaluation.

The Tasting: Nose, Palate, Finale. Since our goal is to explore the complexity of a pairing, we thought it was appropriate to decline the experience in the three areas, following what is usual with spirits and that is also made in the cigar tasting, with pre-lit scents, aromas during the smoke and the persistence.

The Comparison: 1 Cigar with 2 Distillates. We decided to start from the selection of a cigar, and ask specific questions such as: perhaps with this cigar is preferable a lower alcohol gradation? Maybe the ex-sherry oloroso barrels marry better than those moscatel with this cigar blend? Perhaps the excessive peat hides the more sophisticated notes of cigar? In order to answer the questions, we selected two spirits to investigate which one is the best cigar partner and why.





# PAIRING

Cigars  
&  
Spirits



## ADVENTURA R. R. King's Gold Robusto

COMPLEX AND RICH

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●	\$ 13,5   € 13,8
DIMENSIONS	
50 x 133 mm	
COUNTRY	
DOMINICAN REP.	

It is a complex, structured, balanced, and pleasing cigar. On a honey background, it develops cacao and citrus, then earth, incense, and precious spices, above which stand out white pepper and a spicy edge. The aromatic palette is perfectly harmonized among sweet and salty tastes.

We chose two very different rums: an Agricole reserve of rustic elegance and a powerful Jamaican cask strength.



## BOLIVAR Belicoso Fino

BOLD AND FULFILLING

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	\$ NA   € 12,4
DIMENSIONS	
52 x 140 mm	
COUNTRY	
CUBA	

Cuban workhorse, with wood and spices alternating from the first puffs, becoming more and more pronounced in terms of strength during the fruition. Notes of earth and leather are soon added, but always in the background.

Two 18-year-old whiskies aged in barrel combinations are paired, one more delicate and refined, one more intense and "dirty", with also a peat note (although not too marked).



## CAVALIER GENÈVE Black Series II Robusto

INTENSE AND STRUCTURED

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	\$ 9   € 11
DIMENSIONS	
50 x 127 mm	
COUNTRY	
NICAGARUA	

Cigar with a wide aromatic palette: wood, black tea and spicy notes, enriched with vegetable tones, cocoa and nuts.

Two well-known OB are chosen, with a profoundly different character (intensely sherried the first, peated and fresh the second); both could marry well with the spices of the cigar, while more complex is the combination of the sophisticated notes of tea and wood.



## RUM DEPAZ

Grande Réserve XO

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	45% - 90	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Agricole	8/10 Years Old	-

This rum agricole is distilled from a special variety of blue sugarcane juice. It moves between dry and dusty scents and fresh and balsamic ones, notes of strong noble spices, nutmeg, red liquorice. The sip is rustic, but the finish is elegant with cinnamon, vanilla, and a subtle salty-bitter finish.

To the nose, the cigar's earthiness takes over the rum's freshness. On the palate, though, the Depaz XO offers an interesting contrast to the cigar's coffee and caramel creaminess. The match with the wild visou agricole opens to surprising spicy combinations elevating the white pepper and the more delicate notes of the cigar. The finish is quite dry, but long and splendidly developed along tones of bitter chocolate, dry fruit, and barnyard.

Pairing score 91

## RUM NATION

7yo Jamaica Cask Strength

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Italy/UK/Jamaica	61,2% - 122,4	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Pot Still Rum	7 Years Old	-

This is a limited edition by the independent bottler Rossi&Rossi of a selected cask strength spirit. Intense, powerful, with a triumph of glue, plantain and peppery veins to the nose, and a warm, spicy, salty, and herbal palate, dominated by green olives, aromatic herbs, and smoky scents.

The olfactory combination is satisfying with plenty of leathery and rubber notes to fill the nostrils. The gustative combination is more difficult: the cigar's honeyed background gets tested by the rum's salty and balsamic notes, as well as by the high alcohol proof that ends up taking over. In the finish there is a more satisfying match between the rum's smoky scents and the cigar's toasted one in a long aromatic persistence of leather.

Pairing score 88







BALBLAIR  
18 years old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46% - 92	\$\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt Whisky	18 Years Old	ex-bourbon, sherry f.

Distilled of good complexity, silky and elegant.

The nose is based on yellow fruit, honey and caramel. On the palate the creaminess is remarkable, with red apple, ripe apricot and figs. Caramel and mild cinnamon. On the nose the copious fruit of whisky, veiled with honey and vanilla, stands out well on the woody character of the cigar; the spices of the latter remain in the background. The palate is surprising: the smoke is much creamier, each rough aspect is softened by the addition of caramel and almost chewable toffee and a honey, as in certain meditation cigars. The finish is shorter than expected, with a certain dryness due to the toasting of the cigar, which prevails over the delicate texture of the distillate, together with an almost earthy note.

Pairing score	88
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LONGROW  
18 years old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46% - 92	\$\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt Whisky	18 Years Old	Bourbon, Rum, Sherry

Limited edition from Springbank, on the nose shows off at the beginning peat, honey and chocolate. Peach and orange. Good complexity also on the palate, slightly more bitter but pleasant, oily, with orange and custard. The finish is sweet and bitter, like sweet licorice.

On the nose the two products find a somehow good integration in the image of balsamic wood left on the embers. A very bitter cocoa aroma rises in the second place. On the palate the masculinity expected in the Bolivar explodes; compared to the mild character of the previous pairing, spices, cocoa, earth and an important roasting return. The sensations are more lasting and persistent, with a smoky and earthy finish, very satisfying.

Pairing score	90
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GLENFARCLAS  
15 years old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46 % - 92	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	15 Years Old	Ex-sherry

Creamy and intense spirit, whose red fruit accompanies notes of umami, malt and honey, with a slight smoke.

On the nose the robust black pepper of the cigar meets the honey of whisky, a strange and persuasive combination. Synchronous notes of raisins, from the background sweet notes of the cigar and from the sherry contribution. The palate is well integrated; the wood of the barrels supports the woody tones of the cigar making them more kaleidoscopic and precious. The earthy notes of the cigar are also pleasantly softened by the red fruit present in the spirit. Vanilla is also surprisingly centered. In the end the distillate returns with nuts and malt, strengthened by the cigar with notes of smoke and earth. A rediscovery of the nuts that the cigar can offer.

Pairing score	90
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ARDBEG  
Ten

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46 % - 92	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	10 Years Old	not declared

Soft but intense peat, combined with fresh lemon notes for this well-known classic of the Islay distillery.

The fresh citrus zest and the sea breeze of the spirit almost "prepare" for the cigar, which develops notes of black pepper supported by leather. Very different aromas but that seem to go well together, unexpectedly. On the palate the sweetness is less marked than the previous pairing, exacerbating sensations of pepper and lemon, which give the cigar a new dimension; the wood disappears and the fresh notes resonate, with a new acidity in the cigar. However the smoky peat seems to strengthen the "ash" and earth of the cigar in a maybe excessive way. Greater assonance in the leather. The ending is slightly more bitter than expected, perhaps less successful.

Pairing score	86
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# SPIRITS

“A man’s got to believe in something. I believe I’ll have another drink.”  
W.C. Fields





# Säntis Malt

*Beer Cask Aged Whisky and Much More*  
*CigarsLover Magazine Q&A with Kuno Mock, Brand Ambassador, Säntis Malt*

by **Luca Cominelli**

**K**arl Locher, heir to a century-old Swiss brewery, decided in 1999 to establish a whisky distillery using the barley from local alpine grassfields, the pure springwater of the Appenzell, and the ancient beer casks of his heritage cellar.

In the span of a few years, Säntis Malt has met with great successes, especially ever since Jim Murray's Whisky Bible crowned the peated Dreifaltigkeit as 2010 Best European Whisky.

Their core range consists of three main labels - Dreifaltigkeit, Himmelberg, Siegel; two yearly limited editions - Alpstein dedicated to unique cask finishes, Snow White dedicated to fruit spirit cask finishes; in addition to a variety of liquors, creams, and bitters inspired by the combination of whisky, beer, and alpine aromatic herbs.

**What is the production of Säntis Malt? How many bottles do you produce every year? How did you organize your core range and the release of special editions?**

We use the same barley malt for our Säntis Malt as we do for our beers, which our brewery has been brewing for over 130 years. The typical "Säntis Malt" maturation that defines our unmistakable style occurs in ancient 50-160-year-old beer barrels. Barrels such as those used by our brewery, but also by every other brewery in the world up to around 1960/70, were used to transport beer.

We distill on two Holstein stills and produce a little under 50,000 bottles per year. For a distillery that is relatively "tiny", but for our circumstances and given the fact that Swiss whiskey is more of a niche product, we are pretty satisfied. Strong growth is rather difficult for our traditio-

nal whiskeys, as the "beer barrel" resource is a perishable commodity that we can hardly procure when needed. With new products and the use of other barrels, we definitely see growth potential in Europe, but also in the rest of the world.

We are planning our annual growth of 2-6% for the standard brands. Our special editions are always limited. It depends more on selecting exceptional barrels, especially since, due to our size, we do not have unlimited similar barrels in large quantities.

**Säntis Malt is renowned for its beer-cask-aged whiskey. Some of your casks are from the 1900s. Could you tell us some more about the idea behind aging whiskey in beer casks?**

The original idea came from Karl Locher, who is the fifth generation to run the brewery. When in 1999, the law from the Second World War that prohibited the distilling of basic food (barley) was repealed, it was his idea to extract the beer extracts of his ancestors from the historical beer barrels. This is unique in the «whiskey world» in that beer kegs are used as a standard keg for storing the distillate. Those beer kegs were used by the breweries for decades and were able to soak up the aromas of several decades.

Our whiskeys are relatively young at 4-8 years, but our aromas are probably older than those of most other distilleries. Every sip is a witness of the past. Unique and ephemeral.

**Beer kegs are no longer made since they are no longer used to move beer as in the past, this means that their stock will eventually disappear. Where do you source new beer barrels, and how difficult is it to continue your tradition of aging whiskey in beer kegs? Finally, given their age and usage, how do you fix the barrels that are not in usable condition anymore?**

We have a very experienced cooper in our small team. He does everything to maintain and repair our beer kegs. Of course, we always have in the back of our minds that our beautiful story with the beer barrels will be finally over, and at some point in the distant future, there will be no more whiskey with beer aromas that our great-grandfathers enjoyed over a hundred years ago.

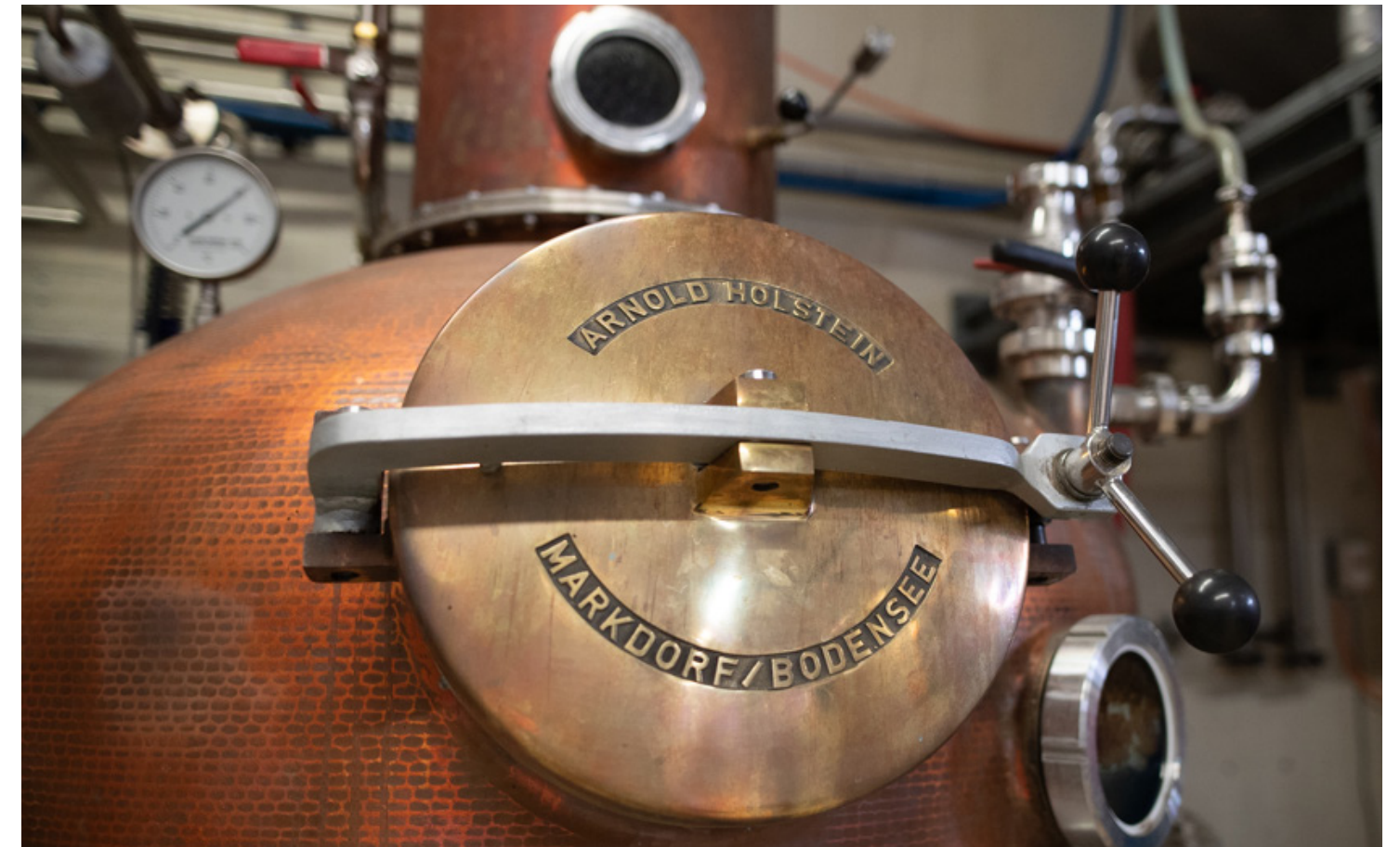
However, we started very early, first in Switzerland and then all over Europe, to buy up the beer barrels from old breweries. Since most of these barrels were no longer used after 1970 and we only started to store whiskey in them in 1999. Has the majority of all these barrels been destroyed or used as decorations or planters?

**What is your take on farm-to-bottle production and on the concept of terroir and organic whiskey? Do you think that they will mark the future of whiskey production, or will they remain niche trends?**

This is a very positive development. Here in Switzerland, in particular, we pay attention to local raw materials. For this







reason, we have been a major sponsor of the cultivation of brewing barley in Swiss alpine regions for 20 years and also the largest buyer of Swiss barley for our brewery and our distillery. Even the peat for our smoky whiskey comes from the region.

However, Switzerland still has a self-sufficiency rate of less than 5% in the barley sector, which means that most of the resources come from the EU, especially since there is no large commercial malt house in Switzerland. This is why we just bought our own small malt house last year, which is not yet in operation.

Unfortunately, we can only produce specialty beers and unique whiskeys in small batches with local barley. But if you see that single malt whiskey makes up around three percent of total whiskey production worldwide, we can already speak of a niche trend. However, the trend towards “specialties” and “small batch” products suits us.

We are confident about the future, but we see ourselves more as a niche product, mainly since we could not produce the whiskey in our style for a mass market.

**Recently, you have started experimenting with different cask finishings such as Oloroso, Port, Rum, and even Russian wood. What do these casks bring to your whiskeys in terms of complexity?**

The complexity of our special whiskey bottlings can be seen to a small extent from the number and type of different barrel types and their pre-allocations. But one must not forget that it is a natural product and there can always be surprises.

The use of different barrels is also used to appeal to different tastes, customer groups, and markets. To bring variety to the range and to keep our day-to-day work varied and exciting.

**Säntis Malt will soon be available in the US due to the recent change in regulation bottle sizing. Do you think the American market will have a big role in the upcoming years?**

With all the success we have had with our whiskeys in many countries one must, of course, not forget that Swiss whiskey is a niche product. But our whiskeys have a unique selling point with the beer barrel storage. This helps us a lot in the new markets.

The new regulations in the USA allow us to enter this market somewhat. We are ready to be in contact with some potential partners, but we cannot yet say for sure when we will be available across the Atlantic.

As a small producer, it is better to search a little longer to find the right partner than to try to penetrate a market at any cost.





**You created a program that allows whisky lovers to purchase their own cask and have it aged in your warehouse. When did you start this program? What is the advantage of having one's own cask?**

For about three years, we have been offering a program under the name "WhiskySafe" to help customers mature their own, very individual whiskey in our cellar. The customer chooses the barrel type, size, storage time, type of distillate and lets the whiskey mature in our duty-free warehouse.

No two whiskies are the same, and there is no "off the shelf". Every customer comes with their own ideas, and we do everything we can to implement them.

If we don't have the appropriate barrels, we'll get some. With the subsequent reduction to the desired strength, the filling in bottles with their very own labels, etc., we also relieve the customer of a lot of work so that he can enjoy his very own single malt whiskey as much as possible. Many of them come to Appenzell once a year with friends or barrel co-owners, taste the barrel and decide whether the whiskey should continue to be stored or whether it has reached its peak.

Unfortunately, we can only offer this to residents of Switzerland. As a non-Swiss, you have to take care of the logistics, taxation, and export yourself.

**What is next for Sántis Malt? What are we going to see in the near future?**

We have just launched the first Alpstein Edition with a rum finish. Edition Genesis No. 3 with PHOENIX finish will follow in late summer. Cuvée PHOENIX is the flagship wine from the Austrian winery Reumann. This wine rests in Barriques for 18 months. We received two fresh barrels for our Genesis range last year.

Last but not least, our winter edition Snow White is coming for the ninth time in late autumn. Here we have been experimenting for years with barrels that previously contained a fruit brandy.

Soon we would like to include a 10yo as a standard in our range and thus also make a certain age statement in Switzerland.

And hopefully also this year an 18yo, the oldest Swiss single malt that has ever been bottled. It's going to be a very exciting year.

www.saentismalt.com

# SÄNTIS MALT

## SWISS ALPINE WHISKY



### EDITION DREIFALTIGKEIT

#### SMOKY & INTENSE

Alc. 52% vol

Peat from the Appenzell moor gives our Sántis Malt «Edition Dreifaltigkeit» (Trinity) its typical smoky character during malting of the barley over the fire. This whisky was chosen by Jim Murray as the «European Whisky of the Year 2010» with the following words: «What we have here is of such a controlled immense extent and quality classification that one must enjoy this whisky.»

**HARD TO TAKE – EASY TO REMEMBER**



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available in  
**Europe:** Switzerland, Germany,  
Austria, Belgium, Netherlands,  
Italy, Poland  
**Asia:** Shanghai, Taiwan

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### LIMITED EDITION ALPSTEIN N°17

#### RUM CASK FINISH – 2421 BOTTLES

Alc. 48% vol · Aged 7 Years

The Sántis Malt «Edition Alpstein» acquires its award-winning quality when it is first laid down in the oak beer casks seeped in history. It gains its unmistakable aroma when it is finished in a barrel in which bourbon, port, sherry or other specialty slumbered. Every barrel is a rarity full of character. This whisky is produced as a continuous, limited edition. This year's bottling convinces with a finish in finest Caribbean Rum casks. The malty whiskey character is immediately recognizable, framed by vanilla, coconut and reminiscent of muffins with caramel pieces.





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## SPIRITS

### 威士忌標籤

怎麼找出來  
你喝的是什麼

Federico Bosco

所有威士忌飲用名經常進行激烈分析，偶爾或熱情，幾乎一直是購買的主要吸引力。但足有一個更精確的細節，必須加深，能夠揭示許多有用的新聞，標量。

無論是大的還是小的，有時用玻璃瓶裝，有時是雙面（正面和背面），有時在瓶蓋的信息，有時更簡單，標量應該給我們所有的信息，以了解更多的東西，而不僅僅是內容。它並不總是正確的，但一般的一些事情總是有效的。

雙面單生產商以威士忌命名為威士忌這同樣適用於美國世界。相反，在蘇格蘭和世界其他地方，我們談論沒有“e”的威士忌：在蘇格蘭的情況下，名稱擴大了蘇格蘭區，單一麥芽蘇格蘭威士忌保留了單一釀酒廠的標識。一些蘇格蘭釀酒廠增加了生產區域，以強調產品的地域性。

\*歲片之後經常出現的數字對產品的最低年齡有標。最低年齡因為，與標量不同標飲混合相比，最年輕的數字是相低的。示例：使用三個標分別標建8年，12年和29年的威士忌將顯示“0

歲”字樣，無論標桶的老年化情況如何。公司有責任報告其他桶的年齡，但這不是強制性的。有時，您可以找到沒有年齡的威士忌：沒有恐懼，沒有修改後假單產品，它們是所謂的NAS（無年齡聲明），其中適用於最低3年威士忌的標量上。製片人選擇不標年齡，這仍然是未知的：它將由我們的口味來驗證味道和愉悅。

在標量上，始終報告酒精含量，必須至少為40%。在這個數字下我們不能說威士忌，如果等級更高，有時公司會標告“Cask Strength”（英國世界）或“Full Proof”（美國世界）：我們在沒有用水稀釋的產品存在。因此，好像它們只是從桶中直接。然而，幫助您也可以使用用水稀釋的威士忌的較低等級的木桶強度威士忌



忌，特別是如單前者俱有一定的年齡。

\*Un Chilled“這個詞讓我們知道威士忌沒有被“冷過”，以及“沒有顏色”，或“沒有添加防腐”（或其他類似的詞），解釋說沒有添加防腐劑正顏色。

在特殊情況下，我們還可以找到所用桶的指示，甚至標桶的數量。這種情況經常發生在非常有趣的版本中，這是在獨立裝瓶商的情況下使其成為購物的來源。此外，我們可以找到Single Cask或Single Barrel這兩種詞，它們強調了它的獨特性。另一個選擇是Small Batch，它仍然是一個更廣泛的概念：您可以從兩桶中取出，但仍然比前小一些（但一些例子：獨立桶Cadenhead的更標為自己的小批量結合了兩個或三個桶，而與

本小灣沒有宣布使用的桶數量，但他們肯定會把更多的桶放在一起）。

在特殊情況下，它總是發現精神和強烈的日期，特別是當涉及到單個桶時：生產者想要強調精神在桶中花費的時間。

桶的組合符合精確的標準：您可以將來自同一釀酒廠，不同釀酒廠，甚至麥芽（大麥）和小麥（穀物）桶的麥芽威士忌混合在一起。在第一種情況下，沒有標籤（這是一種常見做法）。在第二種情況下，我們將有混合麥芽威士忌（今年將以標桶為Vatted），第三種情況是混合威士忌（或混合），還有Grain Whiskies：這個術語是指由各種穀物生產的威士忌。在美國世界，我們經常遇到與流行飲料相關的名稱詞語，或者使用的唯一穀物（黑麥威士忌，玉米威士忌）。

我們試圖解釋各種標量上最常用術語，沒有絕對的紀錄。每個標量與標自己的事情。但是，遵循這些指導原則，在這個廣闊而獨特的世界中，它將更容易自找。



# Depaz

*The Strength  
of the cask*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

Depaz is an historical distillery on the isle of Martinique. Its origins dates to the 17th century, but its history is marked by the devastating earthquake that destroyed the island in 1902. In 1917, Victor Depaz, the only surviving heir, reestablished the estate and the distillery flourished until another devastating accident in 1998. From 2006 on, a novel modernization has brought Depaz to the fore as one of the most interesting and sustainable producers of AOC Martinique rhum agricole. Famous for their precious fields of blue sugarcane, Depaz's production was blessed by the amazing expertise of the master distiller Nora Carrion-Martinez. Their range is well structured and covers all niches of price and interest, but their true treasures are the more recent single cask strength bottlings that met with astounding success of sales and critics. Their 2005 Single Cask Strength N° 503 came second in the 2020 CigarsLover Best Rum Awards.

**Depaz's estate covers an amazing natural area on Mount Pelée in Martinique. How does the local micro-climate influence your rhums? Which varieties of sugar canes do you grow to make the most out of your territory? Do you experiment with many varieties or do you stick to traditional ones?**

Our 1.300 acres estate would not be what it is today and more importantly would not produce the rhums we produce without this micro-climate we have. It starts with the soils which contain a lot of micro-elements from the eruption of the Mont Pelée volcano back in 1902. Those elements are good for the sugarcane plants and you cannot find that kind of land anywhere else on the island. A second speciality of our location is the fact that we're on the North-Caribbean side of the island, on which we don't have as much rain compared to the North-Atlantic side. The so called « Föhn Effect » makes the clouds rain before and while hitting the mountain chain in the middle of the island and leaves our side dryer, so our sugarcanes contain less water, and the sugars get more concentrated inside of the plant. Finally, we are on a windy part of the island, which creates heavy winds from March to April every year called « Alizés ». These winds have micro-influences on our plantations too and bring specific elements to the plant during this pe-







riod. Concerning the varieties we use, the main one is the B 69.566, better known as Canne Bleue (+/- 80%), but we also use other varieties like B 82.0333 (Canne Cannelle) or R.579 (Canne Rouge), and experiment 2 or 3 other varieties each year. Of course, because of the AOC, we are limited by only using varieties approved by our regulations.

**What do you think of the concept of terroir applied to spirits? Whisky producers are investing a lot of money into building farm-to-bottle productions and in supporting mass media campaigns. Do you see rum producers going in the same direction? Are you already working on those premises?**

Agricole Rhum from the French West Indies, including Depaz, are one of the best examples of how important terroir is to spirits. Since agricole rum is made out of sugarcane juice, instead of molasses, we control the products from the field to the bottle and we can clearly see what differences a

piece of land can make compared to another, or a variety of sugarcane to another, in our final product, just like in wine.

Depaz is using and preserving its terroir since the very beginning of our distillery, back at the beginning of the 20th century. Ever since, and especially over the last ten years, Depaz has been doing as much as possible to make its distillery and its production sustainable to help and preserve the environment of the island. Therefore, we put in place several things like special planting techniques, allowing us to use almost no more herbicides, we decided to put solar panels on the roofs of some of our buildings to produce green energy for our facilities, we set up a methanizer to transform natural gas from the leftovers of our distillation through, and these are only few examples. For the last couple of years, Depaz distillery has been creating more green energy that it has consumed, and it has therefore provided a lot of green energy to the town of St Pierre, where it is located.

**You were among the firsts to use bread yeast for sugarcane fermentation. Did you develop an original process for the sugarcane varieties you use? Do you use a special type of vesou (sugar solution added to the must)? What are the differences in distilling such a particular wash?**

So, vesou is the French creole word for sugarcane juice, which is freshly pressed at the distillery and put into fermentation right after extraction. If we would not do this, the fermentation process would start wildly on the cut sugarcane pieces. Compared to molasses, sugarcane juice cannot be stored, it has to be used straight after the harvest of the sugarcane. At Depaz, the sugarcane is pressed, and the juice is put into fermentation in about a couple of hours after the harvest.

**Your range is quite diversified and complex. Can you explain to our readers how you have developed your core range releases and what is the rationale behind your special ones?**

Our core-range is built on the premises of the local regulation « AOC Rhum de Martinique » which is nowadays the strictest regulation for rum in the world. So, we have several white unaged rums with different proof levels and different aged rums going from our regular aged rum, which is minimum 3 years old, to the VSOP (minimum 4 years) and XO (minimum 6 years). Besides them, we also have different batches of a vintage 2002 and a single cask 2003, a port cask finish and finally our Cuvée XO Prestige, which is an all-time classic of our range. All these products are conceived to give customers the occasion to find a product in our range that fits them. Now about our special releases, we recently started bottling some Cask Strength rums (Brut de Fût) a couple years ago and more recently 2 white unaged rums, a « parcellaire » (single plot) rum called Papa'o and the « Cuvée des Alizés » which is produced from sugarcane only harvested during the Alizé season. All these are limited editions to delight our biggest fans.





As many aficionados, we fell in love with your Brut de Fût bottlings. Can you tell us more about the process that led your master distiller Nora Carrion-Martinez to develop your most famous releases?

I am not sure if these are our most famous releases, but they have been gone quickly after each release indeed. The idea behind it was to show how flavorful an aged agricole rhum could be after almost two decades of tropical aging under the sun of Martinique. That was when we released our vintage 2000 a couple of years ago. It was a huge success which brought us to create more bottlings of this type with different old vintages and profiles to showcase once again the creativity and terroir of our brand.

Given the vast success your Brut de Fût had, are you running the risk to run out of your oldest stocks? How are you going to proceed with future releases? Will you try to increase stocks and production of new makes?

Right now, we are building a new warehouse which will allow us to increase our aging capacity with 4.000 more barrels. This should help us to not run out of stock at some point and indeed we still have some very old barrels in our other warehouses. About the Brut de Fût, as explained, they are single cask limited editions. We do not necessarily plan to release them all the time. They are meant to be limited, so we will only release them once they are ready, and we feel like it.

In a similar way to whisky production, over the past decade cask strength has become a dominating trend in rum production. Do you deem this to an important development for rum lovers and the market alike? Are consumers and producers actually benefitting from this trend or is it mainly a matter of marketing?

The trend of cask strength rums clearly comes from the whisky industry and right now it is a big trend from which consumers and producers are benefitting, even if there might be a part of marketing behind it too. Unfortunately, since you produce less bottles out of a cask strength bottling, some smaller distilleries might run out of stock quickly if they do it too often, so it might be a good decision to release some bottlings as a marketing tool and to show what a distillery can produce in that category, but the main focus of a distillery should stay on their core range from which it lives.

How did Depaz react to the Covid crisis? Have you been severely impacted by the forced limitations to the hospitality industry and the mixology world? Did you develop alternative sales channels to reach your customers?

Depaz has been mainly impacted on two ways from COVID-19. The first one is the fact that we couldn't sell to the hospitality industry and this created a huge loss for the brand of course. Secondly, since travelling got more complicated, we've seen less tourists coming to visit our distillery, and this also created some losses in our local shop. We didn't specifically create new selling channels, since we're distributed by other companies around the globe, which managed to sell to their clients and even online and online shops have almost doubled their sales over the last year compared to the previous, which is good news for us.

# Spirits Lover MAGAZINE

*coming soon..!*





# Baijiu

*The most popular Chinese spirit, obtained from the fermentation and distillation of solid raw materials, looking for visibility on international markets*

by **Vincenzo Scivetti**

The joyful scream that resounds with every raising of a glass at the Chinese table is "Ganbei!". It is a small porcelain glass of a few ml that is raised to the sky and emptied in one gulp without leaving a drop because they would take it badly. Ganbei corresponds to our "Cheers!", but in reality, it means "finish it all". Any moment is good for the Chinese to scream this word and empty shots in industrial quantities. I remember a splendid evening on the occasion of the Spirits Selection 2019 in Fengxiang with a typical dinner with over 500 participants where the raising of glasses of baijiu followed one another uninterrupted.

Baijiu, whose literal translation would be "white alcohol", is the national and traditional Chinese drink, unknown or not understood all over the world due to its difficult interpreta-

tion on the nose and palate. It must be accepted for what it is, and only after several approaches can one get used to and appreciate it. The almost total absence on the world market greatly limits the knowledge of this distillate, but the Chinese government is funding and encouraging spread of knowledge and culture beyond their borders. After all, this is one of the quantitatively most important spirit in the world, with almost 18 billion liters produced annually; almost entirely consumed within national borders.

The consumption of alcohol in China dates back to the origins of its own civilization: archaeological finds in the province of Henan attest to the presence of alcoholic beverages made with grapes, hawthorn, honey, and rice, dating from between 7000 and 5800 BC. C., probably the oldest alcoholic beverage production discovery in history. The Chi-

nese have had a very ancient relationship with alcohol: they produced a kind of low-quality beer with the available cereals, which integrated the primary tea consumption, creating at the same difficulty in terms of the availability of grains which was rationalized with appropriate laws. The invention of Qu (pronounced "ciuw"), between the second century BC and the second century AD, has raised the quality of the product thanks to creating a stable and constant yeast that significantly improved the final result. Thus was born Huangjiu (yellow alcohol), a precious product intended for consumption by the noble and wealthy classes.

Distillation techniques began to spread in China only around 1000-1200 AD, which allowed the use of raw materials such as sorghum, capable of returning less pleasant but appreciable fermentation results in distillation, with greater availability of cereals and lower costs. In this historical moment Baijiu was born, which in the various Chinese provinces diversifies in terms of raw materials and production styles, becoming the most popular alcoholic beverage.

The improvement of production techniques in the twentieth century, the various actions of governments, and the creation of private companies have brought about an increase in production and the aim of looking at the foreign market with ever greater ambitions. The first participation in international competitions began to make the Baijiu known to the world, particularly the Kweichow Moutai. After the nationa-

lizations and subsequent privatizations, there are currently about 10,000 distilleries in China, many with the ambition of internationalization. In fact, major players on the international market such as LVMH, Pernod Ricard, Diageo, have created partnerships for commercialization around the world.

It is simple to tell its story and more challenging to define the characteristics of Baijiu. Different according to the various styles, with atypical organoleptic characteristics, it shows its differences not in the common processes of fermentation and distillation but in the observation that solid matter is fermented and distilled and not a fermentable sugary liquid. The technical actions are carried out on cereals in solid form, a decidedly unconventional technique. Surely the secret of its characteristics lies in the fermentation agent, Qu, which differs on a regional basis, in addition to the less used cereals in the Western world, such as sorghum, rice, and glutinous rice. Water is always an essential ingredient, to the point that distilleries always reside in close proximity to important supplies of good quality water (in particular along the Yellow River, the Yangtze). Small differences in materials and the production process create many categories and sub-categories called aroma.

The most used cereal is certainly sorghum, gluten-free, and rich in starch and proteins. Steamed, it gels quickly, making sugars more readily available for fermentation. It has a bitter taste and transmits a slight astringency, cha-







racters that are lost in distillation where the result evokes fresh fruit and nuts. Rice is the oldest cereal used for fermentation in China and, although it is the most used in the production of Huangjiu, it is the second most used for baijiu. Richer in starch and less in proteins, it gives aromas of cooked rice similar to sake and a delicate yellowish color, clean and fragrant on the palate. Sticky rice, on the other hand, produces a sweetish taste. Its stickiness prevents its exclusive use for which it is added in combination with other cereals. Wheat is mainly used in the "strong aroma" versions for its contribution of honey and pasty tones, resulting in the most profitable ingredient in preparing the fermentation agent, Qu. If you add corn, you will get spicy notes and sweetness, and in some areas, they also use buckwheat, millet, and Job's tears (used in India for the production of Zhu, a kind of local beer). The husks and the bran are secondary ingredients, with technical actions that are more flavorful but still very useful in the production process.

Cereals contribute to the creation of the mythical Qu, a mass of grains, yeasts, molds, and bacteria, generally assembled in the shape of a large brick, which has the action of degrading starches and activating alcoholic fermentation: each company has its own recipe for the fermentation of sorghum, while different recipes are used for rice; they typically reuse some of the old Qu to inoculate new productions. The Qu intended for Baijiu from sorghum is obtained by mixing wheat and its chaff, but also barley, peas, and bran. The mi-

crobiological process of forming the fermentative mother produces heat, and according to the recipe, you can opt for a Qu at a high temperature (about 63 °) or medium (about 46 °). The ingredients are first soaked for a few hours and then coarsely ground, then water is added, and the old Qu. At this point, the dough is pressed with the feet in special molds (a technique now industrially modernized), and the bricks are exposed to sunlight to dry them externally and then stacked like actual walls in shaded but ventilated rooms (the incubation). In these rooms, the straw, arranged around the bricks, acts as a humidity and temperature regulator, and at least once a week, the bricks are turned over. After a period of temperature rise, the bricks will gradually cool and will be left to mature for months before being pulverized for use. When preparing the Qu for the Rice Baijiu, rice and glutinous rice are used as the basic ingredient which, soaked in water for hours, create a pulp which is then worked into balls that are covered in the old Qu, then matured for five days and then reduced to powder for use. Medicinal ingredients such as ginseng, goji berries, deer antlers are sometimes added.

Once the Qu is ready, and with the raw material available, the work for fermentation begins. According to the recipe, the cereals are ground into small pieces or into powder, to be then bathed in hot water, then steamed to allow the gelling of the starch, which produces the depolymerization of sugars avoiding contact with bran and chaff to avoid bad smells. Everything is dried to also reduce the temperature.

At this point, it is mixed with the Qu, which activates the fermentation on a solid and non-liquid raw material, a phase that takes place in pits dug into the ground or in terracotta pots for the necessary time.

Once the fermentation is complete, it is necessary to immediately pass into distillation to avoid unpleasant degeneration of the fermented product. A kind of Chinese pot still is used for this phase, for operation similar to the concept of discontinuous stills: a sealable pot in which the solid fermented product is introduced placed over a boiler of boiling water, such as a bain-marie. With the increase in temperature, the alcoholic vapors will rise and will be conveyed to the condenser. The spirit withdrawn is cut from the head fraction to be discarded and from the tail, fraction to be redistilled. Each distillation cycle is collected and stored separately. At the end of this phase, the distillate called Yuanjiu was obtained, which must mature and age to smooth out its roughness and acquire complexity. Most Baijiu age for at least six months but, more and more often, we come across products with four or five years of age. What differentiates Baijiu in aging from western spirits are the containers: suggestive clay amphorae which, with their porous surface, allow the micro-oxygenation of the Yuanjiu also depending on the temperature and humidity levels of the environment. The amphorae are stored in very humid underground cellars, but amphorae exposed outdoors under the sun or even partially buried in the ground are not rare. Generally,

fermentation and distillation are repeated several times with the same integrated husk material.

As with cognac or whiskey, Baijiu, once ready, undergoes blending to avoid the discontinuity of characteristics of the various batches. A work of extreme attention that requires excellent sensory skills to exactly replicate the product as desired. The blend is completed with the addition of purified water to reach the desired alcohol percentage, which can fluctuate between 36 and 65%. This is followed by a phase of refinement in stainless steel and bottling. The bottles used are very different according to the product to be introduced on the market: they are often small works of art in porcelain rather than glass.

As reported at the beginning, the history, culture, and traditions of the various Chinese territories have allowed a significant differentiation of the production styles (aroma), which for the sake of brevity, we will classify in (primary Baijiu):

-Strong Aroma: the most common, with Baijiu aged in buried amphorae, produced from sorghum in the Danliang type or from sorghum and other cereals in the Zaliang. The use of Qu rich in amounts of fermentation residues even ten thousand years old (legend) induces the formation of very complex aromas, such as the use of pits in the mud with a very particular stratification technique, which act to multiply the flora bacterial. Aging typically lasts for at least three ye-





ars, and the final product is very aromatic, with very evident fruity and latex tones, rather difficult at the first approach.

-Light Aroma: is the second most-produced category and is made with sorghum and rice husk, fermented in ceramic amphorae. Two types are produced: "Erguotou" from Beijing, an economical product often obtained with more bran and mixed with neutral alcohol, and "Fenjiu" from Fenyang, aromatic and complex, of medium level. The Qu has a base of barley and dried peas which guarantees sweetish floral notes. The sorghum is fermented in underground amphorae and is generally bottled up to 65% alcohol.

-Sauce aroma: obtained from sorghum with wheat Qu, it is fermented and distilled in eight cycles, a one-year process. The fermentation pits are lined with stone bricks and filled after the sorghum begins to ferment in piles up to two meters high, turned several times. The fermentation and distillation operation is repeated seven times, and after the last distillation, a Baijiu is obtained with different, fruity, and smoky scents, with a sometimes bitter taste. It is bottled at 53% alcoholic strength.

-Rice aroma: typical of south-eastern China, it is a derivative of the ancient tradition of producing local rice wine, therefore closer to Huangjiu: sweet and floral, different from other Baijiu. The rice is dried and steamed three times, then cooled and added with powdered Qu (small Qu); saccharification occurs in stubby cylindrical ceramic amphorae, closed with bamboo. Everything is then poured into larger amphorae, where water is added to activate the fermentation, which lasts 5-6 days. Rice aroma production processes have undergone more innovation, to the point that they often use continuous stills. Aged at least one year in large amphorae in limestone caves, it is blended and bottled at 58%.

In being very ancient, Baijiu represents an absolutely new world for spirits lovers, which combines history and tradition with a powerful expressive personality.

The list of styles is completed with the sub-categories that arise for the distinct territorial traditions such as:

- Fengxiang's Phoenix Aroma, similar to a strong aroma when tasted;
- Mixed Aroma, a blend of two different categories of Baijiu;
- Sesame Aroma, from Shandong, with sorghum, wheat, millet, and barley, similar to a sauce aroma;
- Extra Strong Aroma which combines the characters of at least three categories;
- the Special Aroma, very earthy and obtained from rice;
- Chi Aroma from Guangdong, aged with a pork fat infusion;
- the Lao-Baigan Aroma similar to a light aroma but with Qu only made of wheat;
- the Small-Qu Aroma, obtained from sorghum with Qu of rice, very floral;
- the Medicine Aroma from Guizhou, with the use of Chinese medicinal herbs with a sweet-salty final taste.





# The perfect match

*For its physical components, the cocktail turns out to be the best pairing with cigars*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**



The pairing sector, being it related to food, cigars or spirits, despite the innovations in the food sector, is a not fully explored area. The reasons are many but, among all, it must be taken into account that the risk of letting oneself be influenced by subjective experiences and personal tastes is high. To give some examples, think of all those who appreciate smoking a cigar with a high-proof distillate or with a fizzy drink. Many others are unable to enjoy an aperitif cocktail together with a sandwich, just as many smokers do not like to eat while their cigar is lit. Yet, despite everything, CigarsLover Magazine team on several occasions has offered, and continues to do so, proposals for pairing between spirits and cigars. However, we have often been lured by a question: is there a technically perfect alcoholic pairing? Before attempting to answer the question, it is necessary to understand it better.

We would immediately like to specify that perfection, as well as absolute objectivity, we believe does not exist, but constitutes a valid prospect for constant improvement. Striving for perfection means making a cocktail, a cigar, a food and any job always to the best of one's ability and knowledge, improving with practice and in-depth study.

So what do we mean by "technically perfect"? A pairing that goes beyond the aromatic combination, which does not al-

low alcohol to be the protagonist and which at the same time manages to compensate for the physical and tactile aspects of the smoke, tending not to perfection itself but to the versatility of the juxtaposition. Well, as strange as it may seem, a cocktail is the perfect paring for any cigar and we will demonstrate it by analyzing the use of the two products in parallel.

Anyone with minimal experience in the world of mixology knows that a correctly executed cocktail, to be defined as such, must be balanced (for more information, see the article "The perfect cocktail", in CigarsLover Magazine Spring 2020). Any drink must therefore have a sweet, a bitter, an acid part, a strong ingredient (alcohol) and a dilution (offered by ice). Starting from this base, but by slightly modifying the ingredients or their quantities, other families of drinks will be obtained, such as those slightly more acidic (Sour) or more bitter (such as Negroni). However, the continuous research in the bartending sector has led to an overcoming of these rigid categories, varying and playing a little with the components: to simplify, if in a Negroni (classified as a pre-dinner cocktail) the bitter part is replaced with a bitter liqueur, it will become a perfect after-dinner. This is because by replacing the bitter component with another bitter ingredient, the final result will remain balanced. Therefore, a cocktail where the sum among its basic components will

be neutral will not affect the perception of the flavors of a smoke. Conversely, any other unmixed product will have a dominant flavor that could affect the cigar flavor profile. The combination between a cigar that tends to be remarkably sweet and a sweet drink (think, for example, of a Coca-Cola or a rum), although it may also please some, will not find favor with many. And the examples could go on. This is why a cocktail, being balanced by "discipline", will be able to combine well with many cigars.

Another very important aspect is the ice, almost always present in cocktails, which continues to dilute our drink according to the time we take to finish it and the temperature of the surrounding environment. Now, let's imagine that we are comfortably seated and, waiting for our cocktail to be ser-







ved, we have proceeded to cut the cigar and take a few cold puffs. As soon as the drink is served to us (or a few moments before), we light up our companion and so on: a sip, a puff and vice versa, for several minutes. However, both products have a physiological degradation: the cigar, advancing in the smoke, tends to become a little more bitter and more scratchy in the mouth, while the cocktail, as the minutes pass, begins to water down due to the melting of the ice. It seems the beginning of the end but it doesn't! Just when the cigar begins to bring out its less round part on the palate, the cocktail mitigates the effects of the first, turning into a drink with the same initial flavor but diluted by the melting of ice in water. This parallel "deterioration" of the two products becomes another valid reason in support of our thesis about the perfection of the cigar-cocktail combination.

Obviously, in this perfect system there are a couple of variations that play a crucial role. First of all, the size of the cigar: a robusto or a corona will be the perfect formats for a drink. Conversely, a larger double corona, toro or larger vitolas will last longer than the ice, which will begin to melt well before the cigar begins to get more scratchy. Add to this the other variable: the environment temperature. At 35 ° C (95 ° F) the ice will melt faster than at 25 ° C (77 ° F) and, in a warmer environment, the life of any cigar would last longer than that of a cocktail made with ice. After all, any drink is affected by the serving temperature. However, in the presence of a mild temperature condition and a cigar of the right size,

once again the cocktail with ice shows itself to be the most technically balanced pairing with any cigar.

From all of the above, some may think that great ice-free cocktails, such as daiquiri, have fulfilled their time. Absolutely not. While an ice-free cocktail won't offer "dilution" to our smoke, that doesn't mean it won't be a perfect pairing for some cigars. However, it will have a smaller range of matching possibilities and, of course, even the size of the cigar should not exceed the drinking time (unless you are going to have a second or a third drink).

Last, but not least, is the serving temperature of most cocktails which, notoriously, tends to be cold. This last aspect is intuitive: the freshness of the drink reduces the overheating of the oral cavity (tongue and mucous membranes of the mouth) caused by the heat of the smoke. It is no coincidence that only fresh water is allowed in technical tastings.

In conclusion, a cocktail with ice, due to its physical components (dilution and freshness) and its almost neutral flavor, is the perfect match for all cigars produced. Only a minimal subjective component of the user remains excluded: an aficionado might like a slightly more tart cocktail with a cigar tending to acid or with a sweeter product. Compared to this, however, the world of mixology offers a more than vast range of drinks, for which it is only necessary to experiment. Always with a cigar between your fingers.



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# The Paloma

*Known as the other side of Margarita,  
the Paloma is the very essence of Mexico*

by **Davide Pertino**

Despite every effort to overcome stereotypes, it is still easy today to identify a country with a dish: the United States with a hamburger, Italy with pizza, China with rice and so on. A circumstance that does not improve with cocktails, and conversely, it is amplified. So, even more simplistic are the associations Mojito-Cuba, Italy-Negroni, Martinez-USA, Hanky Panky-England, etc .. It is clear, however, that is not that the country eats or drinks only that food or drink, as much as its worldwide popularity. In fact, as is well known to travelers or to those involved in the beverage world, very often a nation has a lot to tell. Mexico, for example, has been associated with Margarita in the cocktail world for decades, although it is the country of other blends such as Batanga, Miscelada or Paloma. The latter is one of the most popular tequila-based drinks in Mexico.

Who was the inventor of this fresh and thirst-quenching cocktail, with that lively touch given by the fizziness and the pinch of salt, is not really clear. Evan Harrison, in 1953, introduced Paloma to the American people by having it in the brochure "Popular cocktail of the Rio Grande", referring to the Texas region where grapefruit production was called "the pride of the Rio Grande".

In the same years, a few kilometers away, among the many Mexican cocktail bars there is one that stands apart from the others for its stories and legends. Here we find the barman (and owner) of the famous "The Capilla" in the city of Tequila, Don Javier Delgado Corona, who has been unquestionably recognized as the most popular drinker, but his was also known for the recipe for Batanga (tequila, lime and coca-cola). Don Javier certainly had his trademark for the

preparation of drinks, but there is a curious anecdote regarding the Paloma: the barman used to finish the drink by mixing the ingredients with the help of the "dirty" citrus and fruit knife previously cut.

In 1955, also in Mexico, he started the first real "Squirt" branded beverage business. Fresh and soda products created by Herb Bishop, who had the intuition to reduce the percentage of sugar, offsetting it with that conferred by fruit. In this way, the first and true grapefruit soda was born, a citrus fruit easy to find in the United States, given its extensive cultivation. Until then, Mexico's favorite distillate, Tequila, was mixed only with sparkling water or soda, giving life to the good old Tequila Highball. In many advertisements and posters of the "Squirt" brand, reference was already made to sparkling grapefruit juice as a perfect combination with good tequila, even though the name Paloma was never mentioned.

Later, in the 90s, tourists and travelers returning from Mexico began to mention the drink as a simple Margarita but with the addition of grapefruit soda. We can therefore conclude that thanks to this "image" given both by tourism and by the "Squirt" brand product (currently owned by Dr. Pepper), the Paloma has seen its consecration of notoriety outside the Mexican borders. In fact, as early as 1977, Nancy Zaslavsky, a well-known author specializing in Mexican and South American cuisine, mentioned in her book "A cook's tour to Mexico" this cocktail as a "margarita for lazy men". Nancy Zaslavsky with the "Lazy Man's Margarita" wanted to re-propose a variation on the classic Margarita but with the suggestion of adding soda to grapefruit.

About 25 years later, at the beginning of the new millennium, Brigit Legere Spears, a writer specializing in cookery books from around the world, and Grady Binns, author of several books relating to Central American cuisine, in their book "Cowboy Cocktail" quoted for the first time the name we all know. They called it "Virgin Paloma" certainly due to the absence of the alcoholic part which, however, is strongly recommended at the end of the description of their recipe. If they catapulted us to Mexico and we wanted to have an aperitif, the choice between Margarita and Paloma will not be obvious. The base is always made by the tequila, and the duel will be, just like a good drink, always balanced. Margarita remains in the top five of the most consumed drinks in the world, while Paloma plays a fundamental role in Mexican and global mixing, perhaps also thanks to the freshness given by grapefruit that combines perfectly with the taste of agave.

To prepare a perfect Paloma all you need is good 100% agave tequila, grapefruit soda, a few drops of lime juice and a pinch of salt. No shakers or professional bartender tools, just ingredients and a lot of thirst.

Paloma surprises with its fresh and drinkable character, with that citrusy taste that reinforces the aromas of tequila. It is also pleasant in combination with a cigar and, we are sure, it will not make you regret a margarita or a daiquiri.

## INGREDIENTS

- 50 ml of Tequila blanco 100% agave
- 15 ml of fresh lime juice
- Grapefruit soda top

## GLASS

Highball

## PREPARATION

- Cool the glass with ice, and then remove the excess water
- Pour the ingredients into the glass
- Mix them gently so as not to lose the carbonation of the soda
- Fill with more ice

## ADVICE

Pour the soda into the glass already cooled and without ice and then, always gently, add all the other ingredients. By doing this you will get a more carbonated drink that will not risk losing the carbonation halfway through. It is optional to add a pinch of salt, to enhance all the flavors of the drink, or a pinch of sugar, to balance the lime juice, but this depends on the sweetness of the grapefruit soda used.





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# TASTE

"I'm a man of simple tastes.  
I'm always satisfied with the best."  
*Oscar Wilde*





# Caffeine

*Taken with coffee, tea or mate, this alkaloid is responsible for numerous and beneficial biochemical reactions with the human body.*

by **Riccardo Noya**

Whether you drink it for pleasure or to boost your energy before tackling a day of work or an intellectually demanding activity, coffee will always deliver a variable dose of caffeine. Coffee is a beverage known to most, but not fully known in terms of chemical interactions with the human body.

Trimethylxanthine, more commonly known as caffeine, is extracted mainly from coffee (*Coffea arabica*, Rubiaceae), belongs to the group of purine alkaloids such as theophylline (from tea, *Camellia sinensis*, Theaceae) or theobromine (from cocoa, *Theobroma*, Sterculiaceae). The family of alkaloids of the purine group is a class of highly variable compounds common in plants, including atropine and nicotine. In nature, we can find it in different quantities, inside coffee beans (in a concentration ranging from 1% to 2.5%), in tea leaves (2-3%), in Guarana paste (5%, obtained from the Brazilian plant of the same name), and in the leaves of cola, cocoa, and mate. The origins of caffeine intake date back to ancient times since caffeine-containing berries and leaves were already consumed during prehistoric times. Centuries later, China began to make space on a large scale, becoming a social phenomenon thanks to the widespread consumption of tea.

Coffee is the most widespread and most consumed caffeinated beverage in the world, with an estimated average consumption of about 1.5 billion cups daily. The two most cultivated species are *Coffea Arabica* and *Coffea Robusta*. Both have very specific characteristics and, combined, allow you to obtain a myriad of blends. Without going into the technicality of their respective peculiarities, it is enough for us to know that Arabica has an average concentration of caffeine of 1.5%, while Robusta is around 3%. Obviously, like all-natural substances, the percentages may vary depending on various factors such as varieties and extraction (an over-extracted coffee will contain more caffeine). The coffee that contains the greatest amount

of caffeine is espresso, but you have to consider the quantity ingested and not just the quantity of the drink: a cup of espresso contains between 30 and 50 mg of caffeine per 28 ml (or ounce), while a filtered coffee, with the same quantity (28 ml/ounce), from 8 to 15 mg. This does not imply, however, that the latter is "lighter": in fact, being served in greater quantities (about 250 ml) than the classic cup of espresso (28 ml), the caffeine taken with a filtered coffee will be at least double.

By reviewing the effects that this substance generates on the human body, caffeine is notoriously known for its ability to reduce the sense of fatigue and increase the ability to concentrate. In fact, due to its chemical structure, it is a psychoactive substance capable of binding to specific biological receptors responsible for effects on the cardiovascular, endocrine, and nervous systems. To expand, at the cardiovascular level, caffeine can increase the frequency of myocardial contraction, at the peripheral level, it stimulates the contraction of the muscles of the arteries with a consequent increase in arterial pressure, while at the respiratory level it acts as a bronchodilator, favoring gas exchange and increasing, hence, the amount of oxygen dissolved in the blood. Furthermore, by

acting on the nervous system, by binding to some types of receptors present on neurons, it causes the activation of various nervous areas, triggering an increase in attention skills, memory, and alertness. Another implication of caffeine concerns the peripheral level where, favoring the release of catecholamines and acting above all on lipolysis, it stimulates the metabolism allowing, for example, to burn even 100-500 kilocalories more per day, depending on the muscle mass of the subject. In fact, some studies have shown how caffeine, thanks to its latter property, can increase the metabolic rate from 3 to 11%, in relation to the body composition of the subject. Caffeine, therefore, would be able to modulate the basal metabolism. So, 500 mg of caffeine (the equivalent of five or six coffees) would be enough to increase it by 10-

15%, allowing for higher energy expenditure. Precisely for this reason, caffeine is also used to obtain a slimming effect, but only if associated with a correct diet and if taken under medical supervision. Caffeine, as well as other plant alkaloids including, as already mentioned, nicotine, acts on the central nervous system by activating the limbic system, with consequent release of the neurotransmitter dopamine which, by activating some nerve centers, causes the well-known sensation of pleasure and general well-being. Another effect of caffeine, in the case of consumption in mo-

derate doses, is to improve and promote digestion, due to its ability to stimulate the secretion of gastric juices and to promote intestinal motility. However, as mentioned above, the best-known function is its ability to, "wake us up." In fact, it is now scientifically proven that, by itself, it can reduce sleepiness and enhance concentration, thanks to its blocking action on the adenosine receptor. The latter substance, involved in multiple biochemical processes in our body, has an intrinsic sedative and inhibitory action on neuronal activity, carrying out a neuromodulatory effect on the central nervous system. These peculiar effects of adenosine are countered by caffeine, which favors the release of two substances called adrenaline and noradrenaline which act both as neurotransmitters in the nervous system and as hormones, interacting directly with the cells of numerous organs and tissues. Adenosine receptors are present in almost all brain areas and the highest levels are observed in the hippocampus, cortex (cerebral and cerebellar), and thalamus nuclei, while moderate levels compared to these structures are present in the striatum and nucleus accumbens. In these latter nerve centers, where there is a high presence of dopamine receptors, the stimulation mediated by nicotine causes a feeling of well-being.

Another large concentration of adenosine receptors is found both at the level of the cerebral cortex, as well as on the receptors present on the nerve cells that make up the basal ganglia, which are found deep in the brain. The neurons of the basal ganglia are in close interaction with the cells of the cerebral cortex and play a fundamental role in the control of voluntary movement and other forms of behavior, such as skeletal-motor, oculomotor, cognitive, attention, memory, and emotional functions. so the inhibitory action exerted by caffeine on these nervous structures translates, in other words, into an effect of enhancing cognitive performance and motor coordination skills.

In conclusion, this alkaloid typical of coffee but not only, considering a non-exaggerated amount of intake, can trigger considerable reactions in our body, for the most part, positive and beneficial. Also for sociability, think about it next time someone wants to offer you a cup of ... caffeine.



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# Aperitifs

*When preparing something to eat, before a smoke,  
or a relaxation to grant us a moment of extreme pleasure*

by **Vincenzo Lopez**



A mahogany-colored leather armchair, which I was caressing; perhaps out of deep admiration for the craftsmanship. White gloves using a cutter and immediately thinking, "here you go, I'll come with the drink".

Further on, at the bar, on the real mat, the barman mixes the long drink. What a beautiful orange! He arrives exactly after I have finished toasting the foot of the cigar. In unison, first puff, generous sip, and canapes with capers and anchovies, then off to the comfortable leather armchair without any more complaints.

How many times have you experienced or desired a moment like this? The aperitif is a habit that immediately makes us feel pampered and at peace with the world. Everywhere the suggestion of, "Aperitifs?" arouses emotion and relaxation.

It is interesting to focus on how the aperitif is a great help in preparing for a smoke. When we enjoy a good cigar the oral cavity, stimulated by the smoke, secretes saliva. With the increased saliva production, the stomach is tricked into believing that a meal has begun and, in physiological response, begins to secrete acids for digestion. If, however, we have not eaten any meal, we will start to experience that sensation of acidity typical of smoking "on an empty stomach". To avoid this annoying sensation, nibbling on something will allow our body to tolerate smoking better.

However, we must pay attention to what we eat because not all foods are appropriate for the correct tasting of a cigar. As an example, salted cashews, being extremely loaded with salt and oils, would compromise the perception of sweetness in the smoke. Even classic chips, with their salty and oily flavor, will inevitably have to drink more liquids than necessary to desaturate the taste buds from the excess salt and other flavors, often of a chemical nature and derivation.

Therefore, wanting to bring together the need to fill the stomach without consuming a full meal and the attention not to alter our palatal perceptions, which foods should we choose? All types of breads are well suited, especially if toasted, accompanied by noble fats with a linoleic content. A good extra virgin olive oil on a simple crouton, a tart of soft white bread with butter, a leavened product from unconventional flours, combined with raw fish or cooked mollusks, vegetables in oil or brine, will favor, in the overwhelming possibility of cases, non-intestinal acidosis (except for specific cases or personal intolerances).

However, you will have to ask yourself: how many times, in the home, has an aperitif not satisfied that combination of food and drink or a simple cigar? It is easy to say. Time is always running out. It is difficult to devote yourself to the simplest of personal pamperings, or at least dedicate yourself to the excellent excuse of good company. But pampering yourself must be built, taken care of, in the same way that one takes the trouble to change the position of the cigars, brush them, check the temperature, the humidity, lo-



oking through the humidor with satisfaction.

Let's try to build a guideline that pushes a Chef to create the perfect "amouse bouche," for the cigars lover.

Organoleptic associations are definitely the first step for the correct gustatory association. The tart of Cantabrian anchovies and capers, perhaps with smoked butter and a light pinch of black Cyprus salt has always been the favorite aperitif of almost all chefs (I dare say acclaimed): sapidity, softness, strength, and elegance, all with just three ingredients.

Another alternative. A small medallion of goat cheese, accompanied by pistachio and strawberry pesto, will express its acidulous but perfectly balanced notes in a sapid finish.

Even mini tacos with vegetables, mayonnaise, and passion fruit vinegar, will do for us. Crunchiness, a velvety sensation, with strong exotic notes.

In an almost infinite list of suggestions, I have listed associations between products that are easy to find and, last but not least, long-lasting, a factor that benefits the limited time available. But what if we had more time? What if we wanted to surprise a friend with a gourmet aperitif and chat before lighting up a smoke? I want to share a small, simple, and delicious preparation: a mini tartare of fresh tuna and lime sour cream. Here's what you'll need for two people:

- 150 gr of fresh tuna (if possible, the central fillet)
- 100 ml liquid cream
- 100 ml plain yogurt (alternatively, Greek yogurt)
- One lime
- Cucumber or celery for garnish

Cut the tuna into cubes, then beat them with a knife to the preferred cut consistency. Place the tartare in a bowl and season with a teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, and the grated zest of half a lime. Leave to rest in the fridge.

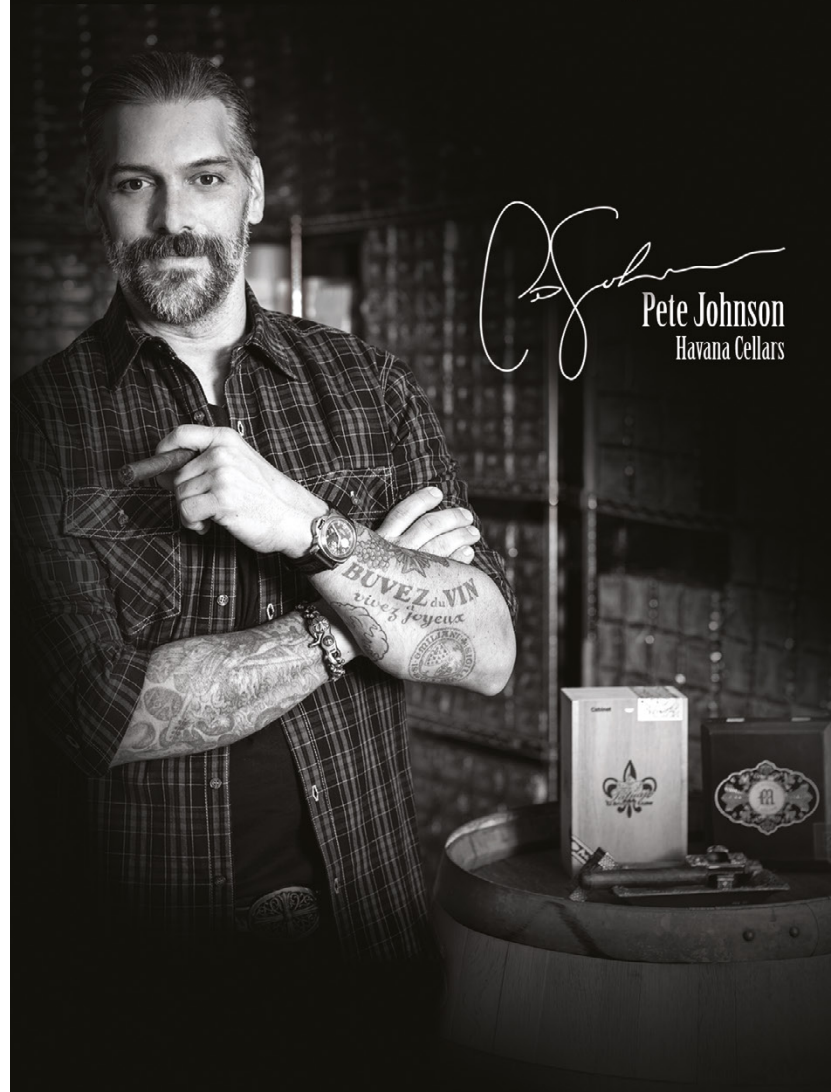
Whisk the liquid cream with a light pinch of salt (if it is very cold, it will be easier to emulsify it) until you obtain a thick, not whipped mixture. While gently stirring, add the yogurt. Leave to rest in a freezer for 10 minutes.

Cut the cucumber into thick pieces to become the base of the tartare, and place the well-marinated tuna on top. Retrieve the cream from the freezer, add half the juice of the freshly pressed lime, mix and garnish the tartare. A grind of pepper, dried pepper strands, or, even better, saffron pistils will give thickness to the amouse bouche. Voila! Here is an aperitif served to amaze your friends or to pamper yourself.

The aperitifs allow you to prepare yourself for a smoke, but also to try your hand in the kitchen, without much difficulty.

There is no limit to the imagination in the kitchen. It is an infinite wealth, with brilliant facets, which has only one enemy: laziness. But for good food and good wine, laziness becomes like a light smokiness: extremely volatile.

# tatuaje



*Pete Johnson*  
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## MACANUDO INSPIRADO

### EXPERIENCE A WORLD OF INSPIRATION

The Macanudo Inspirado line of premium hand rolled cigars features a multitude of unique blends that boast extraordinary tobaccos from across the globe, as well as distinct cigar-crafting techniques.



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# Noble or plebeian?

*The poor cuts, cooked with the right care, are full of flavor, and have nothing to be envious of compared to the noblest ones.*

by **Vito Renna**

**T**-Bone, rib, and fillet, these are the best-known cuts of beef, most ordered by the butcher and in steakhouses and the "heaviest" ones for our wallet. However, if we decide to overcome the stigma and broaden our horizons, we should not preclude ourselves from the possibility of knowing, tasting, and experimenting with new dishes, the basis of which there are so-called "poor" cuts. Less expensive, less known, and less valuable. There are many parts of the animal of which very little is known, and, often, they are used exclusively for certain types of cooking. However, with the necessary in-depth analysis, you can be amazed in tasting a dish with an explosive flavors and tenderness, spending very little. In this scenario, it should be pointed out, the role of the butcher is crucial. It is up to him to make the poor cuts better known, bring them back to light and enhance them. Also helping to reduce waste. From this

point of view, we should take an example from our predecessors. They knew what it meant not to waste anything from the slaughter of an animal, and it is this ancient tradition that handed down to us amazing dishes with less valuable cuts. But why are some cuts more valuable than others? To answer this question, it is necessary to know that the animal is slaughtered into two parts called half-carasses, and it is from these that the various cuts are obtained according to different needs. Each of them corresponds to a specific functional area of the animal. This determines that a cut coming from a part of the animal constantly engaged in movement will have thicker and therefore harder muscle fibers. Similarly, there will be areas where the animal tends to accumulate more fat or connective tissue. Does this mean that they are not as good? Absolutely not! This only means that cuts with different characteristics will have to be prepared and handled

in different ways. The quality level of a cut is determined by three factors: muscle fiber thickness, the quantity of fat, and the quantity of connective tissue. This, however, does not mean that a defined "low quality" cut is not equally as flavorful as a "high quality" one, as long as they are both cooked in the best possible way. If we decide to grill a piece of beef cheek, we will have to make room in the waste bin and be prepared to throw it away once it is cooked. However, if we let it cook for hours at a low temperature, the result will be a succulent, tender, and delicious meat. As previously reported, the cuts are classified according to their "composition", i.e., the amount of fat and connective tissue present. Let's analyze them specifically to grasp the differences.

First choice or "noble" cuts. They come from areas that the animal does not stimulate much and which are therefore not involved in much movement, such as the back-lumbar area and the thigh, i.e., the hindquarter. These are the so-called "sedentary" areas of the animal, and for this reason, they are poor in connective tissue and fat. Here the muscle fibers are not developed and are thin. Second choice cuts. They are medium-quality cuts. They have high amounts of fat and connective tissue. They come from the back, shoulder, and ribs, which is the forequarter. Third choice cuts. They come from areas constantly stressed by the animal: neck, limbs, under the shoulder, and belly. These muscles play fundamental roles in the movement or support of the animal's weight. Due to this role, they are extremely rich in

fat and collagen. Regarding the latter, it is understood that it is a contradiction to call them "poor cuts" because, in reality, they are very rich in fat and connective tissue but also in nutritional values. Collagen is a connective tissue fiber and, biologically, it is a protein. The amount of collagen in the muscles increases with the age of the animal and with movement. This explains why cuts from areas that are very subject to movement are richer in collagen. The positive note is that the collagen protein chain denatures and dissolves very slowly, at temperatures between 65-70 ° C, forming a gelatin. This is what makes your stew creamy and tasty after a long time on the stove: collagen and fat. But long cooks or minced aren't the only options for this category of cuts.

Can you have a poor-cut steak? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. The belly of the animal is considered a third category cut, less valuable. Yet, not everyone knows that it is packed with flavor as it comes from the front. These cuts, in appearance, are very different from those of the classic steaks and require skill in processing by the butcher and excellent final cooking. The flavor, however, is more than guaranteed. Belly steaks are Hanger Steak, Short Ribs, Skirt Steak, Flap Meat Steak, and Flank Steak. Each of these has characteristics that require care. Let's see them in detail.

## Hanger Steak

It is obtained from the front of the belly. It hangs from the animal's diaphragm, hence the evocative name ("to hang").



It has a strong aroma, with a very strong minerality, whose taste recalls, according to the sensitive palates, the liver. It is undoubtedly one of the tastiest cuts of beef, and, given its fibrous structure, it lends itself well to marinades. When cut into individual steaks, it has a triangular section, a bit difficult to cook evenly. Better a medium / rare cooking; otherwise, it remains excessively bloody and moist and never exceed medium cooking, as it would become leathery and dry.

#### Short Ribs

In Argentina they are called Asado de tira. They are obtained from the first three or four ribs of the animal, cut transversely, and with the belly muscles still attached. They have a full and delicious aroma. They possess a juicy meat, one of the most marbled parts of the animal. The flavor is similar to that of the spinal muscle of the back - the famous ribeye cap - too intense for the most refined palates. The fibers can be particularly tough, except for a thin cut, which is why short ribs are subjected to long cooking, braising, or stewing. However, they remain the cheapest and tastiest steaks around. With the necessary marinade, they can be grilled directly on the coals. We will have all the taste of the best ribeye at a quarter of the cost.

#### Skirt Steak

It is a part of the diaphragmatic muscle. It has a buttery, intense flavor, driven by a stringy texture. It bards itself with fat simply by cooking it. The diaphragm is thin, better to grill it at very high temperatures and, for a short time, scor-

ching it externally. It can be cut into pieces, then finely sliced against the fiber. Leaving the silver skin (pleura) is an exercise for the more savvy grill masters who really have the handle: they know how to make it crunchy and irresistible.

#### Flap Meat Steak

It is obtained from the belly, just below the Brisket. It has a sweet, mineral, real beef flavor. Sometimes also liver, especially the one sold vacuum-packed. Arrogantly fibrous but tender, almost soft when raw, we recommend medium cooking for this steak. As for the skirt and hanger, it is preferable to cut it as much as possible against the fiber.

#### Flank Steak

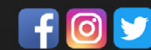
It is obtained from the animal's belly, more precisely from the abdominal muscles or the flank. It has a strong flavor, despite being lean but rich in connective tissue and therefore slightly tenacious. Excellent if grilled whole at high temperatures with the flip and brush technique, i.e., brushed with oil and turned over very often. This process will facilitate the Maillard reaction and allow us to have uniform cooking. It must necessarily be cut against the fiber.

Are you so sure you want to keep buying only fillet? Going for poor cuts is a smart choice. They are certainly full of nutritional value and taste and, if cooked with the right care, they have nothing to be jealous of the first choice cuts. They are not just tasty but cheap, which in this case also coincides with profit.

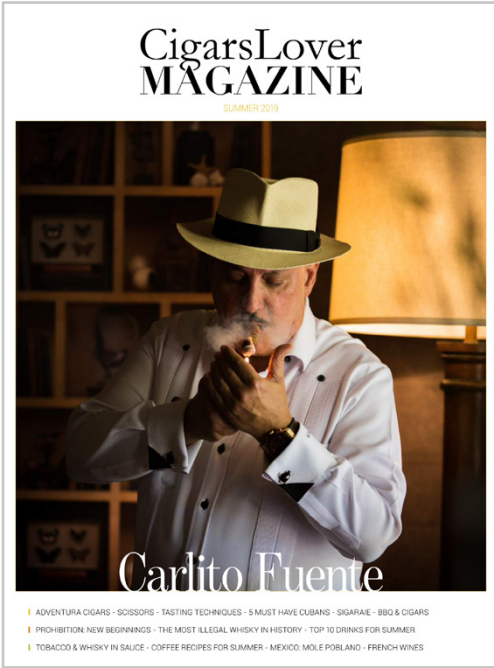
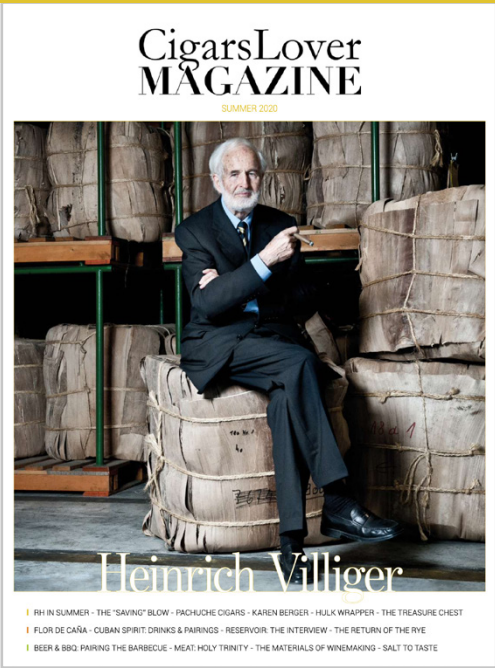


Foundation Cigar Company is dedicated to quality, consistency, balance, flavor, and building brands with heart and soul. With over 20 years of love and dedication for the industry, we merge old world traditions with modern day styles and customs to produce unique premium cigars.

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# Blind Tasting

## 104 SPIRITS

- 106 Rum
- 112 Whisky

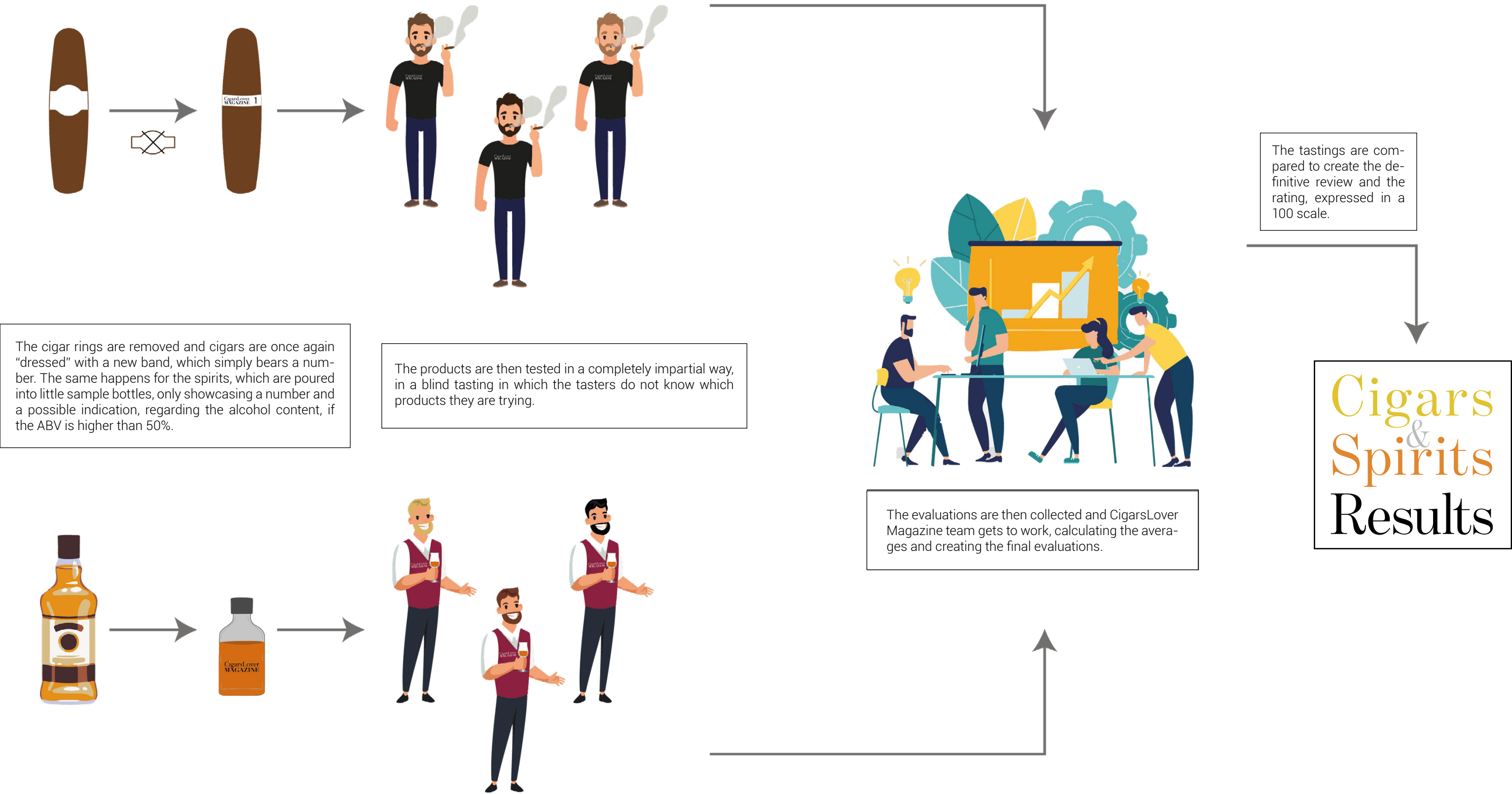
## 119 CIGARS

- 120 Panetelas/Lancero
- 124 Piramides
- 128 Robusto
- 132 Toro





# HOW ARE THE BLIND TASTINGS MADE?







1

# Legend

*All the information in the blind tasting*

To place the spirit inside of an ample rating scale, we adopt a scoring system made of 100 points. The rating of each spirit is made by the average given score by the reviewers. Blind tasting means every spirit is tested without knowing what it is. No information about the brand or origins are given. The reviewers only knows if the spirit is above 50% ABV.

1

Spirit image.

2

Name of the spirit reviewed.

“yo” means “Years Old” and indicates how many years the product has been matured. If there is no indication of that, it is because the producer didn’t declare it.

3

- COUNTRY: where the spirit is made.
- ABV-PROOF: percentage of alcohol contained in the spirit.
- PRICE:  
\$ less than \$50  
\$\$ between \$50 and \$100  
\$\$\$ between \$100 and \$250  
\$\$\$\$ above \$250

4

The tasting is divided in three parts: what is perceived to the nose, to the palate and in the finish. The final rows describe the overall experience that brought to the rating.

5

Rating scale: **95-100** memorable and excellent in every detail. **90-94** great quality and highly satisfying. **86-89** high quality and very pleasant. **81-85** decent, delivering a good dram . **Less than 80** not recommended.

KAVALAN  
*Solist Fino Sherry*

2

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Taiwan	57.8%   115.6	\$\$\$\$

3

## — NOSE —

Ripe fruit, with rich plum notes, together with honey and a mix of exotic fruit, including coconut. Then cocoa.

## — PALATE —

Exotic fruit, caramel and honey, along with rich white pepper notes and orange zest.

4

## — FINISH —

Long persistence. White pepper, cocoa and walnut. A touch of orange peel.

Complex and incredibly rich, it is a very satisfying whisky.

94

5

350+ SPIRITS TESTED EVERY YEAR

FIND SPIRITS





# Rum



### The chosen 12

A particularly varied mix of rums, all coming from different producing countries. All of these bottlings are priced under \$ 100.

### Results

The rum in first placed registered one of the highest score ever in a blind tasting. A truly amazing bottle. The second rum is from Thailand and scored great as well.



RUM NATION  
*Guyana 10 Year Old  
Cask Strength*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guyana	56.4%   112.8	\$\$

— NOSE —

Rich aromas of seasoned wood, spices, vegetal notes and tropical fruit. Then cocoa.

— PALATE —

Intense aromas of tropical fruit, spices and raisins. Dark chocolate and hints of cherries in alcohol.

— FINISH —

Long. Vanilla, vegetal notes and co-coa, with some spices.

A deep and explosive rum. The persistence seems to be endless.

95



PHRAYA  
*Gold*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Thailand	40%   80	\$

— NOSE —

Fruity, with rich ripe exotic fruit, coconut oil, cane sugar syrup, and spices (vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg).

— PALATE —

Plantain and almond notes, together with citrus essential oils, nutmeg, cloves, and herbaceous aromas.

— FINISH —

Spices, a touch of molasses, and a fresh and mineral tip.

Unique flavor profile. It offers an effective and stimulating combination.

90



1731 CUBA  
*5 Year Old*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
The Netherlands	46%   92	\$

— NOSE —

Hints of brine, vanilla and wood, enriched by wood polish. Then, petrichor and mineral nuances.

— PALATE —

Intense, with a full-bodied mouth. Wood and vanilla are delivered, with hints of banana and caramel.

— FINISH —

Medium-short. Hints of spices, mineral and vegetable nuances.

Nice intensity. Harmonious and with a fairly broad flavor profile.

87





BAYOU  
XO

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	40%   80	\$\$

—NOSE—  
Scents of cherry, cloves, plum jam, and candied orange peel. Then vanilla, milk chocolate, leather, and pecans.

—PALATE—  
Fresh and balanced. Dark tobacco, candied red fruits, and black cherry jam.

—FINISH—  
Medium persistence. Notes of spicy tobacco and sherry.

An easy and enjoyable rum, warm and full of spices.

87



GOSLING  
Family Reserve  
Old Rum

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Bermuda	40%   80	\$\$

—NOSE—  
Intense aromas of caramel, vanilla and a touch of seasoned wood, followed by honey and pecan.

—PALATE—  
It releases caramel and intense notes of orange peel, together with a spiciness of wood.

—FINISH—  
Medium persistence, with spices and orange peel. A touch of cinnamon.

Sweet and round. Nice and easy to enjoy. Nice harmony.

87



CANERO  
12 Year Old  
Sauternes Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Venezuela	41%   82	\$

—NOSE—  
Floral and fruity notes of herbal gummy candies, fresh straw, and mineral notes are released.

—PALATE—  
Sweet notes of honey and vanilla. Then spices, candied ginger, white pepper, and orange essential oil.

—FINISH—  
Medium-short and sweet. Candied citrus, cinnamon, and vegetal.

It offers two sides, one pleasant and the other intense and spicy.

87



DZAMA  
3 Year Old  
Old Rhum

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Madagascar	52%   104	\$

—NOSE—  
Citrous hints, lemon zest, and some floral scents, on a base of raw cane sugar. Young.

—PALATE—  
Intense and spicy, with caramelized molasses, smoky notes and piquant aromas.

—FINISH—  
Short but straight, dominated by rich peppery notes.

Rustic and straight. A no-frills rum for strong stomachs.

84



MOCAMBO  
20 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Mexico	40%   80	\$

—NOSE—  
Rich smoky notes, pecans and maple syrup. Then carob, licorice, and cloves.

—PALATE—  
Oily and round. Smoky aromas and espresso. Then licorice, nutmeg and spices, mainly paprika.

—FINISH—  
Medium long. Rich spices, maple syrup, coffee, and licorice.

Intense dark rum, rich in aromas. Easy gradation and an immediate sip.

84



ZAKA  
Trinidad Rum  
7 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Trinidad & T.	42%   84	\$

—NOSE—  
A hint of alcohol is perceived on the nose, then fresh fruit, quince, citrus, Williams pear, honey.

—PALATE—  
Warm, with notes of spices, vanilla, and cinnamon, together with some caramel.

—FINISH—  
Short persistence dominated by the alcoholic note, with a hint of orange zest.

A strangely light and alcoholic rum. It captures the brand rusticity.

84





RHUM J.M.  
*Fumée Volcanique*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	49%   98	\$

—NOSE—  
 Sweet scents of caramel, plum, sugar candy, candied fruit and a touch of aloe vera.

—PALATE—  
 Sweet, with sugary notes and a touch of ripe fruits. There are also some spices nuances.

—FINISH—  
 Medium, with wood and wood spice, along with a sugary hint.

Balanced, but the aromatic palette is not very broad and structured

83



CONDE DE CUBA  
*15 Year Old  
 Extra Añejo*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Cuba	38%   76	\$\$

—NOSE—  
 Delicate. There are notes of yellow pulp fruit in syrup, a fragrance of butter pastry, and lots of vanilla.

—PALATE—  
 Light and smooth, with hints of milk chocolate and vanilla, together with toasted wood.

—FINISH—  
 Short and fresh, with a hint of coffee cream.

It is an extremely drinkable rum that can also be used for a quality blending.

83



RON ESCLAVO  
*Gran Reserva*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Dominican Rep.	40%   80	\$

—NOSE—  
 Sweet, with scents of vanilla and rich in ripe yellow pulp fruit.

—PALATE—  
 Straight and a little sharp. Sweet, slightly spicy, with a hint of sapidity together with piquant peaks.

—FINISH—  
 Short and slightly bitter, with toasted notes of wood and dried fruit.

Easy to drink but with a flavor profile not structured.

83

# CigarMate

*Handmade CigarMate  
 for handmade cigars*



***The CigarMate is a cigarholder created to let your cigar lay on a smooth surface of wood, providing the best natural support.***

The design is completely studied in Italy and the production is entrusted to the most experienced woodworkers of the Philippines. Each CigarMate is completely made by hand, starting from a block of mahogany wood and slowly giving it size and shape. At the end of the process the cigarholder is lacquered manually with a brush. Each one has small differences from the others, which make it unique.

*The CigarMate is composed of several collectible pieces.*



# Whisky



## The chosen 12

Six producing countries have been selected for this blind tasting, which includes some well-known products and others not yet particularly widespread.

## Results

In the first three positions we find two independent bottlers, both characterized by Caol Ila whisky. The first place, surprisingly, is occupied by a Finnish whiskey.



TEERENPELI  
*Kulo*  
*11 year old*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Finland	50.7%   101.4	\$\$

— NOSE —

Caramelized sugar, pecans, smoked wood and hints of menthol.

— PALATE —

Smoky, mineral notes, wood and candied apricot. Medicinal herbs and peat. Caramelized sugar.

— FINISH —

Medium long. Peat, smoky notes, seasoned wood.

Intense and full-bodied, it is intense and with a good structure. Fulfilling.

91



BERRY BROS. & RUDD  
*Caol Ila 2009-20*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46%   92	\$\$

— NOSE —

Mineral peat and lemon peel. Then custard, beach bonfire and smoked, with a hint of vanilla.

— PALATE —

Mineral peat, spices, smoky notes, and lemon peel. Sea breeze and a touch of vanilla. Slightly dry.

— FINISH —

Medium-long, with spices, peat and notes of ash.

Well balanced and intense, with a nice flavor profile.

90



WILSON AND MORGAN  
*Caol Ila 2010-21*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46%   92	\$

— NOSE —

Mineral peat, lemon peel and hints of medicinal herbs. A touch of petrichor.

— PALATE —

Mineral peat, the lemon peel and a touch of vanilla. Medicinal herbs, smoky scents, and marine breeze.

— FINISH —

Medium to long, with peaty notes, vanilla and custard.

Balanced and endowed with a harmonious aromatic palette.

90





WRITERS  
TEARS

Florio Marsala Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	45%   90	\$\$

—NOSE—

Fruity scents, with apple and a touch of apricot. Then vanilla and nuances of maple syrup. Floral hints.

—PALATE—

Notes of oak, spices are perceived and then fruity aromas. Toasted aromas.

—FINISH—

Medium to long, with candied fruits, cedar peel and a touch of spice.

Fairly complex and with a good intensity and an interesting finish.

89



OLD EZRA

7 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50.5%   101	\$

—NOSE—

Intense wood and vanilla, together with butterscotch and spices. Lastly, toasted notes.

—PALATE—

Seasoned wood and vanilla are confirmed. Sweet, with spices and toffee. Floral echoes.

—FINISH—

Medium long persistence, with spices, vanilla and honey.

Balanced, warm and round, with a nice finish to it.

88



HELLYERS  
ROAD

15 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Australia	46.2%   92.4	\$\$

—NOSE—

Oak, raisins and lit match. Dehydrated plums. Echoes of citrus, with grapefruit peel and sweet floral tips.

—PALATE—

Wood, red fruit, and raisins. A vegetal touch is also perceived. Ganache and hazelnut show up last.

—FINISH—

Medium-long, with spices and mineral notes.

Nice complexity that demands attention in order to be fully appreciated.

87



MILK & HONEY

Ex Rum Single Cask  
#2017-0189

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Israel	55%   110	\$\$

—NOSE—

Floral scents, particularly fresh. A touch of balsamic herbs.

—PALATE—

Spices, nutmeg, cloves and vanilla. The base is sweet and honeyed. A touch of orange peel.

—FINISH—

Medium-long, with spices, orange peel and ripe fruit.

Timid on the nose, intense on the palate. The flavor profile is fairly complex.

87



OLD  
BALLANTRUAN

15 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	50%   10	\$\$

—NOSE—

Peat, accompanied by toasted and smoky notes, which become more pronounced after a few moments.

—PALATE—

Peat and spices, with a hint of cinnamon along with a touch of medicinal herbs.

—FINISH—

Medium long persistence. Peated and smoked.

Harmonious and simple to appreciate, but not particularly deep.

87



GEORGE  
DICKEL

9 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	51.5%   113	\$

—NOSE—

Caramel, vanilla, and ripe fruit. Then maple syrup and coffee beans. Lastly, cereal biscuits.

—PALATE—

Sweet. Spices and ripe fruit, followed by vanilla, cereal biscuits and maple syrup.

—FINISH—

Medium-long and spicy finish, with spices and peppery notes.

Intense and with a fairly broad bouquet. Satisfying but a little too sharp.

86





STALK & BARREL  
*Cask Strength*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Canada	60.2%   120.4	\$\$

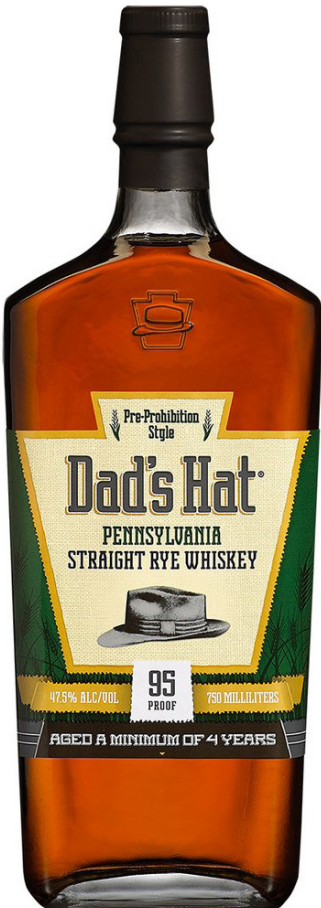
— NOSE —  
 Oak, vanilla and an intense mix of cedar and lemon peel, with a hint of leather.

— PALATE —  
 Citrus fruits are confirmed, accompanied by wood. A hint of honey and a touch of brine.

— FINISH —  
 Long. Wood, spices and a hint of honey.

Despite the high ABV, it is well balanced. Decent harmony, nice intensity.

86



DAD'S HAT  
*Straight Rye*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	47.5%   95	\$

— NOSE —  
 Hints of seasoned wood and vanilla. Then Balsamic herbs, roasted notes and leather.

— PALATE —  
 Oak, spices, a hint of maple syrup and again balsamic herbs. Slightly sweet.

— FINISH —  
 Medium persistence, with oak wood and toasted notes.

Good intensity. The flavor profile is not that complex, but harmonious.

85



KURA  
*The Whisky*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	40%   80	\$\$

— NOSE —  
 Herbaceous and medicinal peat, fresh cedar, mandarin and lemon. A touch of powdered sugar.

— PALATE —  
 Salty, herbaceous and with candied citrus notes, and liquid sugar.

— FINISH —  
 Short, fresh and light. Citrus and herbaceous.

Simple, with a limited structure and complexity.

83



CHOOSE WHO TO BELIEVE.

A MIRACULOUS LIE

Inspired to the miraculous and fraudulent remedies sold by charlatans in the 1700s.

A BITTER TRUTH

A craft amaro bitter, made by infusion and distillation of herbs, spices and barks.



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DRINK RESPONSIBLY





PAGE

# 1000+ CIGARS TESTED EVERY YEAR


FIND CIGARS



## Legend

All the information inside the blind tastings

To place cigars inside of an ample rating scale, we adopt a scoring system made of 100 points. The rating of each cigar is made by the average given score by the reviewers. Blind tasting means every cigar is smoked without knowing what the cigar is. No information about the brand, blend or size are given. This is the only way to evaluate cigars objectively.




**ADVENTURA**  
*Royal Return King's Gold Robusto*

**COMPLEX AND RICH**

It releases cocoa and citrus, enriched with earth and a touch of incense. The base is honeyed. Then, it continues with spicy notes of white pepper, which gradually become more intense, culminating in hot spices.

**3**

**95**



**4**

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x127mm (5")	\$ 13.5   € 13.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA, U.S.A.

1

Cigar picture.

2

Cigar tasting notes: the flavor profile delivered throught the smoke.

3

Rating scale: **95-100** memorable and excellent in every detail. **90-94** great quality and highly satisfying. **86-89** high quality and very pleasant. **81-85** decent, delivering a good smoke . **Under 80** not recommended.

4

Flag identifying the country where the cigar is made.



Cuba



Dominican Rep.



Nicaragua



Honduras



Brazil



Mexico



U.S.A.



Costa Rica



Italy



Philippines



Canary Islands



Panama

5

- STRENGTH: described on a scale from "●" (lightest) to "●●●●●" (strongest).
- SIZE: ring gauge (1/64 of inch) and legnth, written in both millimeters and inches.
- PRICE: cigar price in US Dollar and Euro.
- WRAPPER: the external leaf.
- BINDER: the leaf under the wrapper.
- FILLER: the leaves inside the cigar.



# Coronas



## The chosen 12

Most of the cigars are regular products, easy to find and available in almost all countries worldwide.

## Results

The first two spots are taken by two Dominican cigars, followed by three Nicaraguan cigars. All of them registered great scores, above 90 points. The Cuban didn't do so well.



### BALMORAL AÑEJO XO CORONA

*RICH AND COMPLEX*

It delivers nutty notes and cocoa, on a slightly sweet base. Soon, rich spicy notes, with nutmeg and black pepper dominating the scene. In the second part piquant peaks join the flavor profile.

93



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x149mm (5 7/8")	\$ 9.5   € 7.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	DOMINICAN REP.	BRAZIL, DOM. REP., NICARAGUA



### CALDWELL LLTK MAD MF CORONA

*SWEET AND REFINED*

It delivers nutty notes and honey, soon joined by earth, cedarwood and a hints of leather. There are also some spicy nuances, with cinnamon and ginger. The base is sweet.

92



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	43x146mm (5 3/4")	\$ 11   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	INDONESIA	DOM. REP., U.S.A., NICARAGUA



### CROWNED HEADS MIL DIAS MAREVA EL XX

*COMPLEX AND WITH A LONG FINISH*

The first part is a pepper bomb, with rich notes of white pepper, piquant peaks, and cinnamon. In the background, hints of seasoned wood. Then coffee beans and a touch of leather.

92



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x130mm (5 1/8")	\$ 9   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA, PERU



### LIGA PRIVADA UNICO SERIE DIRTY RAT

*COMPLEX AND WITH A LONG FINISH*

The flavor profile is made of hazelnut, white pepper and earth. In some puffs, there are also some piquant peaks. In the second half, cocoa and a mix of nutty notes are added as well.

91



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	44x127mm (5")	\$ 15   € 15.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	BRAZIL	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA





HIGHCLERE CASTLE  
VICTORIAN PETIT CORONA

STRUCTURED AND ROUND

It delivers vegetal notes, together with earth and the spices, the latter mainly perceivable in the aftertaste. Then black pepper, piquant peaks and leather, together with a roasted aroma. The finale is balsamic.

91



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x127mm (5")	\$ 12   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	BRAZIL	NICARAGUA



GILBERT DE MONTSALVAT  
CLASSIC CORONA

INTENSE

The flavor profile is made of vegetal and grassy notes, together with faint graphite and spices, among those, the white pepper stands out. In some puffs, there is also a touch of dry wood.

86



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x140mm (5 ½")	\$ -   € 4.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, PANAMA



PADRON  
CLASSIC LONDRES NATURAL

RICH AND SATISFYING

The cigar develops earthy and spicy notes, together with some leather. In the second part, the spices get more intense, with black pepper and piquant peaks.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 6   € 4.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



TRINIDAD  
COLONIALES

HARMONIOUS

The flavor profile is all about cappuccino and nutty notes, together with a spicy component, where the black pepper stands out, accompanied by some chili notes.

86



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	44x132mm (5 ¼")	\$ -   € 14
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



LA GALERA  
HABANO BONCHERO NO. 4

COMPLEX AND REFINED

It develops white pepper notes and oak wood, enriched by vegetal aromas of tea and mint. Advancing, coffee, bread and some mineral hints are added to the flavor profile.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	42x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 5   € 6
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



COHIBA  
SIGLO II

BALANCE ON THE EDGE

Notes of earth, black pepper and wood get developed on a slightly sweet base. In the second half, there are also some piquant peaks, but the balance is on the edge.

84



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x129mm (5 ⅛")	\$ -   € 16
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



LA ESTANCIA  
CORONA

WELL BALANCED

It delivers note of oak wood, leather and walnut. Advancing, roasted aromas are added, together with some sour grains. In some puffs, scents of cellulose appear as well.

87



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	42x130mm (5 ⅞")	\$ -   € 7
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	CUBA, NICARAGUA



H. UPMANN  
REGALIAS

A LITTLE BITTER IN THE SECOND HALF

It delivers notes of almonds, wood, and spices, mainly white pepper. Advancing, the flavor profile is enriched with earthy aromas but also with a slightly bitter aroma.

83



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	42x130mm (5 ⅞")	\$ -   € 8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



# Lonsdales/Dalias



## The chosen 12

This blind tasting is about two similar sizes: Dalias and Lonsdales. Two formats which unfortunately nowadays are not on the top vitolas list.

## Results

The Nicaraguan cigars occupy all the top places, and the top 3 are all 90+ cigars.



### MOMBACHO TIERRA VOLCAN FINO

*POWERFUL AND FULFILLING*

It delivers notes of leather, coffee beans and co-coa, together with roasted nuts and seasoned wood. In the background, rich black pepper aromas accompanies every single puff.

93



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	44x152mm (6")	\$ 10.5   € 9
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



### JOYA DE NICARAGUA CLASICO NUMERO 6

*COMPLEX AND REFINED*

The flavor profile is made of green pepper, walnut and leather, together with some roasted coffee notes. In the finale, some vegetal notes are delivered as well.

92



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	41x152mm (6")	\$ 7   € 4.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



### PLASENCIA RESERVA ORIGINAL CORONA

*STRUCTURED AND INTENSE*

It delivers mild notes of pepper, together with rich aromas of coffee beans, earth and nuts, where the almond stands out. In the finale, the spices become the protagonist.

90



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x159mm (6 ¼")	\$ 7   € 8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



### JOYA DE NICARAGUA NOCTURNO

*RICH AND FULFILLING*

It develops notes of earth, herbs, cocoa and black pepper. Then the cigar become particularly creamy, delivering roasted coffee notes and herbs. Aged wood in the finale.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	43x159mm (6 ¼")	\$ 6   € 6
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA





HERRERA ESTELI  
LONSDALE DELUXE

RICH AND FULFILLING

The opening is spicy, with rich notes of black pepper, together with some piquant peaks. Then the flavor profile is enriched with incense, nutmeg and some balsamic hints.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x152mm (6")	\$ 9   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	HONDURAS	NICARAGUA



DAPPER  
DESVALIDO LONSDALE

HARMONIOUS AND BALANCED

It exhibits notes of hazelnut, oak and black pepper, together with green tea hints. Advancing, some citrus notes refresh the flavor profile.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	46x165mm (6 ½")	\$ 10   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	U.S.A.	NICARAGUA, U.S.A.



PADRON 1964  
SUPERIOR NATURAL

BOLD AND STRUCTURED

It develops vegetal notes, earth and a mix of black pepper and piquant peaks. Advancing, leather and vegetal aromas join the flavor profile.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x165mm (6 ½")	\$ 12.5   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



COHIBA  
SIGLO V

REFINED

It exhibits notes of honey, leather and cedarwood. In the background there is a light spicy aroma, mainly white pepper. Advancing, some earthy aromas are added as well.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	43x171mm (6 ¾")	\$ -   € 27.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



ROMEO Y JULIETA  
CAZADORES

INTENSE AND SATISFYING

It exhibits notes of young wood, earth and a riot of spices, the latter being a mix of cinnamon, black pepper and chili. In the second half, the flavor profile is enriched with nutty notes.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	44x162mm (6 ¾")	\$ -   € 11.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



AVO  
XO PRELUDIO

BALANCED AND ROUND

The flavor profile is all about earth and seasoned wood, together with spices, the latter being light at the beginning of the smoke and more pronounced in the second half.

87



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	40x152mm (6")	\$ 11   € 10
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



ADVENTURA  
NAVIGATOR FRANCIS D.

WELL BALANCED

It delivers notes of seasoned wood and a touch of spices, joined in the second half by earth, leather, and vegetal aromas. Black pepper and piquant peaks alternate in the finale.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x152mm (6")	\$ 10.5   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	INDONESIA	DOM. REP., ECUADOR, NICARAGUA



PARTAGAS  
8-9-8

REFINED

It exhibits notes of honey, leather and cedarwood. In the background there is a light spicy aroma, mainly white pepper. Advancing, some earthy aromas are added as well.

87



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	38x170mm (6 ¾")	\$ -   € 14.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



# Robustos



### The chosen 12

Recent releases and products that can be considered "classics" are part of this Robusto blind tasting. Four producing countries are involved.

### Results

Half the cigars tested scored at least 90 points, making this blind tasting one with the highest average score of all time. This attests how good the cigar made nowadays are.



### ALEC & BRADLEY KINTSUGI ROBUSTO

WELL BALANCED & SATISFYING

The cigar develops aromas of earth and nuts, together with an intense spicy component, where the black pepper is the protagonist. The flavor profile is enriched with leather and camphor. The ending is woody.

92 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 8   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



### CLE 25TH ANNIVERSARY 50X5

BOLD & RICH

It delivers notes of earth, walnut and black pepper, soon joined by seasoned cedarwood and a vegetal touch. In the last part of the smoke, a hint of espresso appears as well.

92 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 16   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



### PLASENCIA ALMA FUERTE ROBUSTUS I

STRUCTURED. LONG PERSISTENCE

The cigar exhibits notes of earth, leather, and black pepper. The background is a little tangy. There are also aromas of black pepper. In the last part, the smoke is enriched with balsamic herbs.

90 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x133mm (5 ¼")	\$ 18.5   € 18
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



### SILENCIO RED DOT ROBUSTO

A SPICY BOMB

It exhibits rich black pepper notes and piquant spices, together with espresso and earth. Then seasoned wood, and touch of leather, with some vegetal nuances. The finale is vegetal and balsamic.

90 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	49x127mm (5")	\$ -   € 10
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP.





DAVIDOFF NICARAGUA  
ROBUSTO BOX PRESS

WIDE FLAVOR PROFILE. RICH

Aromas of nuts, spices, leather and cocoa, together with hints of mineral. Advancing in the smoke, there are also notes of wood and black pepper, enriched by rich cappuccino.

90 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	48x127mm (5")	\$ 16.5   € 16
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



POR LARRAÑAGA  
GALANES

ROUND

The cigar delivers notes of cinnamon, dry wood and cracker. In the second half, the flavor profile is enriched by coffee notes, black tea and spices.

88 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x111mm (4 ¾")	\$ -   € 10
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



TATUAJE  
CABAIGUAN NO. 52

WELL BALANCED AND ROUND

The cigar delivers mild notes of spices, together with cream and dry wood. There is also a touch of hay, while in the second part a rich cedarwood aroma appears as well.

90 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	52x111mm (4 ¾")	\$ 9   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



VEGAS ROBAINA  
FAMOSOS

BALANCED

It exhibits notes of black pepper, charred wood, roasted beans and spice. In the second part of the smoke, the flavor profile is enriched with coffee beans, cardamom, and mineral aromas.

87 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	48x127mm (5")	\$ -   € 12
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



A.J. FERNANDEZ NEW WOR-  
LD CAMEROON D. ROBUSTO

ROUND AND SMOOTH

The opening delivers notes of leather and spices. Then is all about leather, cappuccino and spices, with a distinctive aroma of black pepper.

89 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 9.5   € 7.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



ASHTON  
ESG 21 YEAR SALUTE

BALANCED BUT A LITTLE STATIC

The cigar delivers seasoned wood and spices, with the black pepper being the most relevant one. In the aftertaste, there is a rich earthy aroma.

86 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x133mm (5 ¼")	\$ 20   € 22.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



CALDWELL MIDNIGHT  
EXPRESS ROBUSTO

BALANCED AND ROUND

It delivers notes of leather, piquant spices and earth, together with hints of undergrowth. In the second half, the flavor profile is enriched with seasoned wood.

88 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	55x127mm (5")	\$ 12   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



ROCKY PATEL QUARTER  
CENTURY ROBUSTO

A BIT STATIC. NOT MUCH STRUCTURE

Notes of coffee beans, together with some leather hints. There is also an earthy aroma, the first is light and then becomes more and more pronounced. In the second part, notes of wood are added.

84 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 12.5   € 10
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	HONDURAS	NICARAGUA



# Toros



### The chosen 12

Recent releases and coreline products available by some years are part of this Toro blind tasting. Four producing countries are involved in the tasting.

### Results

Cigars from Dominican Republic and Nicaragua reach the highest places, with 4 products scoring 90 points or higher. Many of the products are excellent smokes.



### LAURA CHAVIN VIRGINY NO. 1 EDITION 2019

CREAMY AND SMOOTH

The cigar opens with notes of wood, nuts and herbs. There is also citrus zest coming through. In the second part, the base gets a little sweet, and the flavor profile is enriched with spices.

92

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x140mm (5 ½")	\$ -   € 25
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



### ROMA CRAFT CROMAGNON CRANIUM

GREAT BALANCE AND FINISH

The cigar develops aromas of black pepper, licorice, dry wood, and dark chocolate. There are some hints of black tea as well. Advancing, the flavor profile is enriched with espresso.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●●	54x152mm (6")	\$ 11   € 9
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	CAMEROON	NICARAGUA



### VIKING TORO

STRUCTURED AND EVOLUTIVE

It releases notes of cellulose and spices, enriched by fine wood. In the second half, it turns to earth, white pepper and chilli, which alternate with wood. Vegetal nuances are also perceptible.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	\$ -   € 10
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA



### FURIA MEGAERA

ROUND AND RICH

The cigar starts out with earth and spices, soon joined by wood and vegetal notes. Black pepper comes through as well, enriched by herbs and nuts. Some puffs are sweet.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	54x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 1 -   € 14
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA





LA FLOR DOMINICANA  
ORO TUBO NATURAL NO. 6

LIMITED EVOLUTION BUT RICH AND DEEP

It develops notes of earth and black pepper, together with some vegetal hints. Advancing, cedarwood is delivered and the spicy component gets more intense. Coffee beans perceived in the finale.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x152mm (6")	\$ 14.5   € 13
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



ROCKY PATEL  
NUMBER 6 TORO

WELL BALANCED

It develops light spicy notes, where the black pepper stands out. There are also earth and some nuances of incense. In the second part of the smoke, a mix of nuts joins the flavor profile.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x165mm (6 ½")	\$ 10.5   € 9.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



FRATELLO NAVETTA  
INVERSO TORO GRANDE

BALANCED AND RICH

The cigar develops aromas of wood and black pepper, together with some floral hints and chai tea. Advancing in the smoke, some roasted notes appear as well, together with cinnamon.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x158mm (6 ¼")	\$ 12.5   € 11.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



CAO  
ARCANA MORTAL COIL

SWEET BUT A LITTLE ON THE DRY SIDE

The cigar starts off with notes of cocoa and earth, soon joined by some herbal aromas. There is also a light black pepper note present in the background. The base is sweet.

86



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x156mm (6 ⅛")	\$ 9   € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	U.S.A.	DOM. REP., HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



DAVIDOFF  
YAMASA TORO

NICE INTENSITY

It delivers wood resin and balsamic herbs, soon joined by roasted coffee and hazelnut, together with some grassy hints in the background. There are also some spices in the background.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x152mm (6")	\$ 12   € 25
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



CAMACHO  
NICARAGUA TORO

A LITTLE STATIC

The cigar develops aromas of wet hay, black tea and some lithe spices. In some puff there are also some cellulose notes. A touch of earth completes the flavor profile.

84



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x152mm (6")	\$ 9   € 9
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	HONDURAS	DOM. REP., HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



CASA TURRENT  
SERIE 1973 GRAN ROBUSTO

BALANCED

The first puffs alternates wood and nuts. Then the flavor profile is enriched with a touch of earth. There are also some vegetal hints in the background.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x146mm (5 ¾")	\$ 9.5   € 9
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO, NICARAGUA



A. FLORES  
EL COYOTE TORO GRANDE

LIMITED FLAVOR PROFILE

The cigar develops aromas of leather, together with rich vegetal notes, that soon gets very balsamic. In the last part, the cigar involves a wet wood note.

81



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	58x152mm (6")	\$ -   € 7.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



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