

Cigars Lover MAGAZINE

WINTER 2020



- | 2020 EPILOGUE - SAINT LUIS REY - RICKY RODRIGUEZ - THE FUTURE OF LOUNGES - NICHOLAS MELILLO - CIGAR AWARDS
- | BEST RUM & WHISKY OF 2020 - BOTTLED IN BOND - BLENDED WHISKY - BLOOD AND SAND - GLENCAIRN
- | CIGAR & CHAMPAGNE PAIRINGS - TRUFFLE - HIGHEST PROOF BEERS - THE MEDALS OF WINE - HOT CHILI

CigarsLover
MAGAZINE

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Editor's thoughts

Digitalization is here, for everyone, for everything.

2020 is a year that has put everyone to the test, from manufacturers to distributors, to retailers to aficionados. All events that have always brought news and allowed you to try and touch the new products were canceled during the year. In some countries, lockdowns have limited the ability to go to stores physically and at the same time spend time with family and friends. The working environment has also changed, moving from offices to homes, and where this could not happen, as in the case of cigar factories, everything stopped.

At the same time, all the difficulties related to the physical world, such as meeting for a smoke or a dram together, going to buy products, or merely going through a public magazine, have gradually become a sort of a memory. Simultaneously, the world of the future, the digital world, has instantly become the present. With purchases moving online, events and conversations are started through social networks, and information and reading have been released almost entirely online.

Digitization is an important opportunity. Information circulates very quickly. In almost instant times, CigarsLover Magazine is read on a global scale within seconds from the date of publication. Product searches are done in a few moments, providing answers to even the most advanced search criteria. This problematic year has incredibly enhanced the use of these tools, which are used daily by everyone.

We have reached the epilogue of 2020, and with all the difficulties it has accustomed us to, this last issue of the year collects the best that has been launched in terms of cigars and spirits. As for the spirits, this year, the best spirits also see the introduction of the best rums list, next to the best whiskies. Over 80 are the products that are reviewed in this issue. All the best that we have tested over the year awaits you in the next pages, preceded by interviews, pairings, and many curiosities. Happy reading and enjoy the awards!

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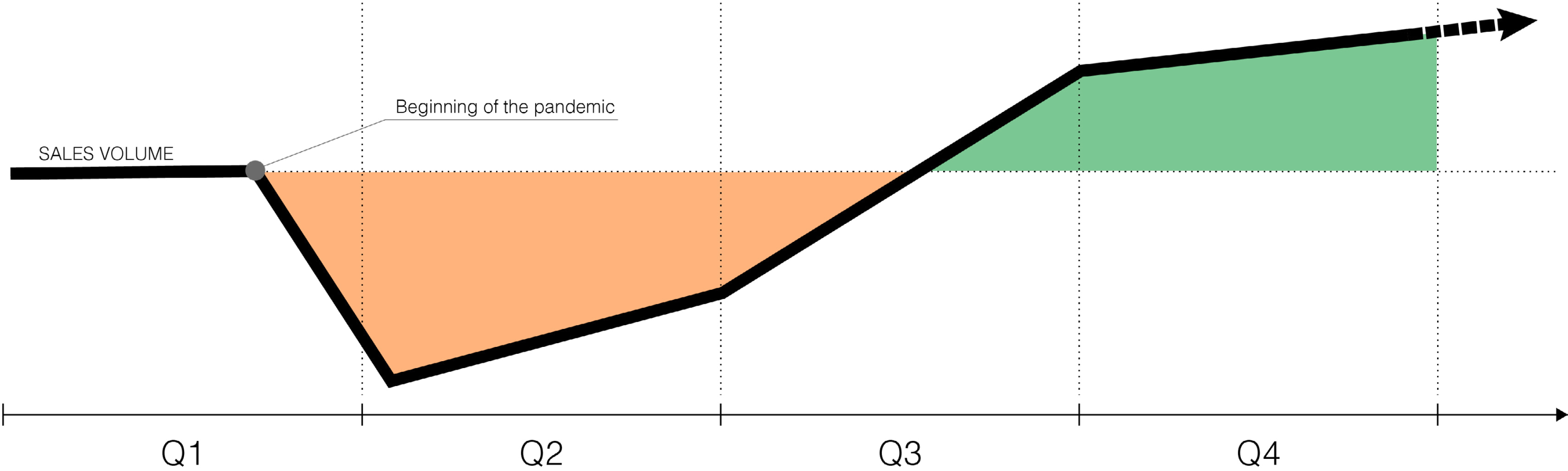
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“Any cigar smoker is a friend, because I know how he feels.”
Alfred de Musset





2020 Epilogue

*Demand and supply in the cigar world
in the year of the Covid-19 pandemic*

by **Luca Cominelli**

2020 was, and still is, a tough year. Since the pandemic struck, we had to change our habits, and we had to adapt to this new situation. The world of cigars got used to see a lot of new products coming to the shelves, but 2020 didn't follow the same "rules." All the events got canceled, plus many factories had to stop production for several weeks, making the producers run very low in terms of inventory. What happened was an overall drop in orders from the consumers in the first part of the year, especially in the US market, while the European continued with just a minor decline. The brick and mortar stores were the ones that registered the most significant contraction in sales, to the lockdowns and the fact people preferred not to risk to contract the disease, moving to the online stores.

After a couple of months, the orders went up again, with

the demand increasing day after day. The problem switched from having way fewer orders to too many of them, and supply became the biggest issue. The inventory became the actual problem, and it still is right now. The producers are trying to get the products back to the retailers, but the factory lockdowns and shipping delays created a ripple effect that will take months before everything will get back to the way it was. That said, in terms of numbers, the first month of 2020 was pretty bad, but then things changed and this year became, a very good one in terms of sales, with many companies registering an increase compared to 2019.

We had the chance to talk with many producers, and they were positive about the sales trend they had, and they will expect in the next months. Henderson Ventura told us that after two months of stop in the Dominican Republic, they

started production once again with 50% of their capacity, and after one more month, they got back to the full schedule. Robert Caldwell explained how devastating the beginning of the pandemic was for his brand, with sales going down 90%. After a month, orders picked up, and right now, 2020 shows a much bigger sales volume than 2019. The same went for Sebastien Decoppet, that told us 2020 would be 70% up. The Scandinavian Tobacco Group registered a much smaller inflection in sales, but also for them, order went up after the first period of the pandemic. The same was for Tatuaje, said Pete Johnson. Many orders moved from the brick and mortar store to the online shop, which saw a constant increase in the digital purchase in the past years. Andrew Considine, from SmallBatchCigars.com, didn't expect the tremendous growth. Not only with new customers but also from existing customers that are occupying more of their free time with cigars. Another change

came in the form of Virtual Events that took place, and are still happening, online. This creates an ample opportunity to reach even a higher number of aficionados. These events have also allowed brand owners and reps to use their time more effectively. Connecting has never been easier, and the relationships of any level can, thanks to the online world, grow closer and stronger together.

This pandemic has brought many changes to the industry overall already, with possibly more to come. COVID19 has forced everybody, be it factories, brand owners, retailers, and consumers, to change the way they do business. Under many aspects, 2021 will be challenging for the industry. One thing is for sure; the pandemic has accelerated the trend that everyone was expecting: the digital is not the future anymore; the digital is now.

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WINTER 2020

BEST

50

CIGARS
of the
YEAR

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Nestor A. Plasencia

LIANA FLUENTE - DOUBLE PUFF - PUNCH - ANDULLO - THE CIGAR RING - MICALLET CIGARS - LOUNGE: LISBONA

GLENDALOUGH: THE IRISH DISTILLERY - DINING WITH WHISKY - TRIPPLE DISTILLATION - MORE THAN WINE

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THE PERFECT COCKTAIL - TIKI STYLE - KILCHOMAN & ANTHONY WILLS - RON DIPLOMÁTICO: SV 2005 - MILLET WHISKEY

BIOLOGIC, BIODYNAMIC & NATURAL WINE - THE BEER FOAM - HISTORY OF HAMBURGER - PORTUGUESE FRANCESINHA

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SUMMER 2019

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



Saint Luis Rey

In the shadow of this brand there was also the San Luis Rey one: similar names but with completely different stories.

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

The Saint Luis Rey brand, despite never having entered the Olympus of Cuban premium brands, has always exerted a special fascination on the true aficionados and, more generally, on medium to full-bodied cigar lovers.

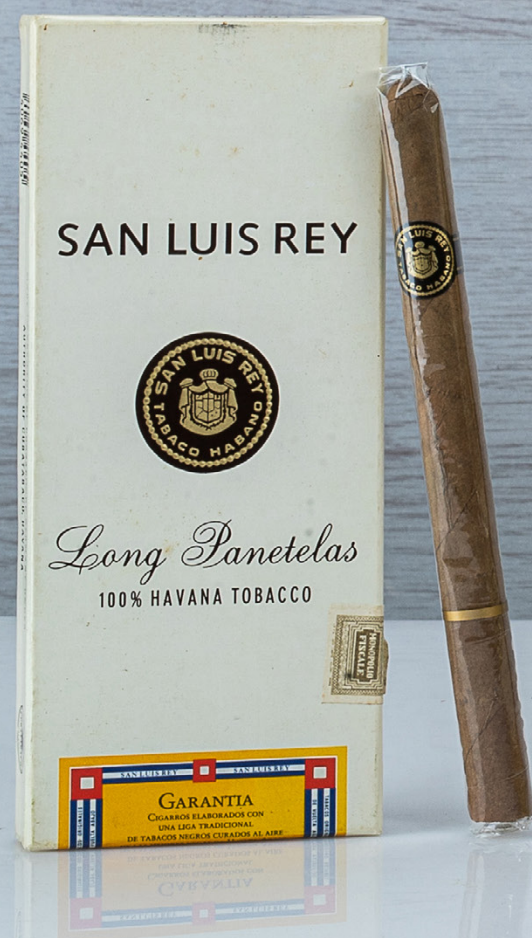
Its history is relatively recent compared to that of other brands, since it was born around 1940. In reality, according to some sources, the idea of making cigars belonging to a new brand would seem to originate in the late 1930s, at the request of British importers Michael Keyser and Nathan Silverstone. The year zero, however, remains officially 1940 when Saint Luis Rey was officially registered by Zamora and Guerra in the Register of Exporting Manufacturers, held by the Comision Nacional de Propaganda y Defensa del Tabaco Habano. The original headquarters of the manufacturer was at 810 de Calle Maximo Gomez.

Some will wonder why an English-speaking name is present among Cuban brands. The question can be answered immediately: when a specific request is made by importers for the creation of a new brand, having to choose a name, one familiar to the language of the target market (another example is Quai d'Orsay) is favored in comparison to others. Here is the reason for the use of "Saint" English and not of the Spanish "San" (which is used on the contrary for San Cristobal de La Habana cigars).

The choice of the name, on the other hand, does not have an equally unique and well-established answer. San Luis is a very famous Cuban tobacco growing area, located in the Vuelta Abajo, while the addition of the name Rey (meaning king in Spanish) was probably added to provide greater elevation to the whole thing. We would therefore find ourselves attesting to the coexistence of English and Spanish in the name of the brand. Another thesis would call into question Thornton Wilder's novel "The Bridge of San Luis Rey", published in 1927, which however became even more famous in the 1940s thanks to a film adaptation (for the film's record, a remake followed in 2004). Neither version seems to be truer than the other one, which is why the mystery continues to remain true even today. If the detailed analysis of the Saint/San name may seem like an end sophistication in itself, it actually becomes of fundamental importance to understand the coexistence of another brand, again from Cuba, with a very similar name: San Luis Rey. At the end of the 1980s, Cubatabaco was about to enter into a partnership with the German company Villiger and Söhne aimed at the production of mini cigarillos, made with Cuban tobacco, and for their distribution in Germany and Switzerland. To push sales, however, Cubans also decided to plan the introduction of five handmade cigars: a Churchill, a Prominente, a Lonsdale, a Corona and a Petit Corona. The name chosen for the fresh new brand was San Luis Rey, but to distinguish it from the almost homonym one (distributed only in England) specific adjustments were applied to logo (vista) and anilla: the shield on golden drapery, which in the brand Saint Luis Rey stands on a red background in the anilla, in the brand San Luis Rey was on a black background and was used for both the bands and the vista. On the other, the much more detailed vista of the habilitadas of Saint Luis Rey depicts a tobacco cultivation behind a stream in the foreground; all around, drapes, shields and ornaments that

recall gold, red and blue. The San Luis Rey brand, however, covered a production of only ten years, since in 2000 it was officially discontinued. Let us go back to the dawn of production. By 1940 the brand was officially registered and Nathan Silverstone was exclusivist in terms of production and distribution in the UK market. Even today, in England

this is the only Cuban brand not imported by Hunters and Frankau but rather by N.R. Silverstone Cigar Limited. However, the exclusive distribution for Her Majesty's market was cancelled in the early 1990s and from 1993 Saint Luis Rey became available in some markets across the world. The production has never been numerically copious, rather the



opposite. Between the 1960s and the 1970s there was a decline in production, while the following decade marked a resurgence of the brand. The manufacturing site of Romeo y Julieta was entrusted with the construction of the cigars. Starting in 2010, however, Habanos S.A. began to remove from the market many sizes belonging to the brand: in 2010 the Churchill (Vitola de galera Julieta No. 2, 47x178mm), the Corona (Corona, 42x142mm) and the Petit Corona (Mareva, 42x129mm) were cancelled in single action; in 2013 it was the Double Corona (Prominente, 49x194mm) and the following year the Serie A (Corona Gorda, 46x143mm). Until 2010 it was still possible to find the Lonsdale (Cervante, 42x165mm) despite having been discontinued as early as 2006. The only survivor of the brand is the Regios (Hermoso No. 4, 48x127), perhaps the least representative size of the brand when compared even to the Serie A, a more renowned cigar among the aficionados. Currently the production of the only survivor, the Regios, is responsibility not of a specific single manufacturer, as for many Cuban brands, but rather varies from year to year, according to the production plan that Habanos SA puts in place per each fabrica. The use of this brand in commemorative editions is limited to very few appearances among the Regional Editions. Considering that the ER have existed for fifteen years and over time have covered several countries and distribution areas, only five Saint Luis Rey cigars wear the second silver and red band. Another curiosity: it had to wait six years between the first Regional Edition of the brand (the Pacific, intended

for the Asia Pacific market in 2009) and the next (the Inca, distributed in Peru in 2015).

The attempt to describe the aromatic profile typical of the brand was difficult even to Min Ron Nee, author of An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Post-Revolution Havana Cigars. The Hong Kong collector describes the Saint Luis Rey cigars as "an unmistakable Saint Luis Rey aroma" (these are the exact words in the book), which would suggest the use of tobacco from a single cultivation area. Although the volume is old (2001) and the variables related to the making of cigars over a period of twenty years are to be taken into account, the brand has continued to retain distinctive features, unlike other and more famous Cuban brands. All cigars were characterized by well-defined and very intense aromas, often having as a common note a singular mineral flavor, reminiscent of graphite or flint stone and a body that varied from medium-strong to strong. Time is improving almost all cigars and Saint Luis Rey are no exception, but especially the large sizes produced until a few years ago, can really benefit from extensive aging. Due to its poor distribution in the worldwide markets and the somewhat "niche" audience which this brand was intended for, it is not uncommon to find in selected stores a box of Saint Luis Rey (habilitada or Slide Lid Box): in such a lucky case, the advice is not to wait too long before purchasing, because the economic outlay will be repaid by a more than satisfying smoking experience.



Standard Saint Luis Rey Band
Since before the Cuban revolution to nowadays

For some special releases, the wording becomes Habana/Cuba and the embossing is greater

San Luis Rey Band
Band used for products marketed in Europe



The word "Tabaco Habano" is replaced by "Habana" for cigars marketed outside Europe

INTERACTIVE

LA AURORA

107

1903-2010

ANNIVERSARY

NICARAGUA

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Ricky Rodriguez

A Session with Ricky Rodriguez.

by Michel Arlia

Ricky Rodriguez has been the face of CAO Cigars for a decade now, and he's one of the people responsible for bringing you hits like the Amazon Basin, CAO OSA, and CAO Pilon. We had the chance to talk to Ricky Rodriguez about his unorthodox way of becoming a blender and one of his latest projects, the CAO Session.





You have been the Master Blender of CAO for ten years now. What did you do before getting into the cigar business, and how did you get started in the industry? Tell us a little more about the story of Ricky Rodriguez in the tobacco world.

Believe it or not, I was in the flooring business before I started to work for General Cigar/STG in January of 2000. I was working as a Premium Cigar Sales Manager in Florida for about 4 1/2 years when Mr. Cullman, the owner of General Cigar, reached out to me about an opportunity to become a blender for the company. This opportunity changed my life and set me on my path for what I do for the company today.

Your path to become a Master Blender has seen you traveling to many countries and working with some industry legends such as Mr. Cullman, Frank Llana, Ernesto Perez-Carillo, Benji Menendez, and many others. What stood out for you with working together with these people?

Their willingness to share their knowledge and information with me was unbelievable. Each person had a set of unique talents. Mr. Cullman taught me how to walk into a factory. He was always telling me that every person and job in the factory was equally important in his eyes. Always respect everyone who works for us. Frank taught me about growing tobacco and working with different styles of tobaccos from different countries. Ernesto taught me about fermentation and aging and how important that is to a cigar. Benji taught me about blending and how to put tobacco together to develop the best cigars. I can never thank each of them enough for taking the time to train me and help me achieve my goal of becoming a blender for STG.

CAO Pilon, Flathead, Amazon Basin are some of the lines you have created over the years and have become fan favorites. How does your creative process work, and are you involved in the lines' imagery as well?

Before we start any project, marketing and the factory sit down to discuss what we want to do for the following year. Once we all agree on a project, a target for that particular blend is given to me and I begin working with the team to create that cigar. I also work with marketing to help name and design that cigar. Typically, it will take us about 6 - 9 months to work on this project. At the end of the day, what we are trying to accomplish is to give the fans of CAO what we believe they want and will enjoy.

Your latest creation is the CAO Session. How did you approach this project? Did you have a set idea/blend already in mind?

This is one of the most fun projects I have ever been involved in. It really started with Doug Baldwin, CAO's Brand Manager. During our conversations, I shared a story of how

I bring new blends from the factory home to share with the guys in the garage to get their input. To notify these guys, I usually text "cigar session" and they know they're coming down to smoke new blends that I am working on. Doug loved the story and the name Session. The blend was simple for us because the blend came from the fans of CAO telling us what they wanted in a new cigar.

This new line also brought you back to your beginnings of the Master Blender journey, the Dominican Republic. Your good friend Yuri Guillen was also part of this project. How long did you guys work on this blend, and why did you specifically choose some of the tobaccos, like the Connecticut Broadleaf for example?

I was honored to have the opportunity to go back to work with Yuri & the team in the DR on this project. Keeping in mind that the target was already set for us from the fans of CAO, meaning that they wanted a dark, rich cigar with some sweetness and a blend that would provide some spice. Knowing this, why not use a tobacco that the DR factory is known for, CT Broadleaf. And the blend was simple because all we were trying to accomplish was to add some spice to that cigar. The blend took Yuri, myself & the Team about six months to create.

You have also mentioned that the CAO Session undergoes a lengthy fermentation process. Can you explain the process and what it does to the tobacco?

Session is all about the fermentation process for this wrapper. What we are trying to accomplish is not only to darken that wrapper but to really bring out the sweetness in that wrapper. We accomplish this by lowering the temperature and extending the fermentation time. This allows us to showcase this beautiful wrapper. Sorry, I can't share more detailed information, but I don't know who is reading your magazine. It could be one of my competitors, haha.

One of the slogans of the CAO Session is: "Wherever and whenever you're hanging out with good friends, make it a Session." With the world's situation having forced everybody to take their distances somewhat, how can we still make a Session happen? What are your suggestions?

You can still get together with your friends to share a cigar, keep your proper distance, and be safe but at the end of the day, still try to share your cigars with your friends. Or you can do like me and live on Zoom.

What can we expect from CAO in the future? Are you already working on something new?

Of course, we are always working on new projects and new cigars. Right now, Session is the newest cigar I can share with you, and you can look forward to something new in the Spring of 2021.



C.A.O Amazon Anaconda (wrapper: Bahiano Braziliiano - binder: Nicaragua - filler: Brasile, Colombia e R.Dominicana.)

C.A.O Pilon (wrapper: Ecuador Habano - binder: Nicaragua - filler: Nicaragua.)

C.A.O Session (wrapper: Connecticut Broadleaf - binder: R.Dominicana - filler: R.Dominicana e Nicaragua.)

C.A.O Flathead Steel Horse (wrapper: Connecticut Habano - binder: Arapiraca - filler: R. Dominicana, Honduras e Nicaragua.)

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SESSION?



GARAGE | SHOP

5¼ x 54

6 x 60

AVAILABLE SOON!



PAGE



The future of lounges

"The future is always before us, invisible. He casts his shadow at our feet, inadvertently."
Piero Scanziani, Chiasso, 17 August 1908 – Mendrisio, 27 February 2003

by **Simone Poggi**

Whether the future is in front or behind us, everyone agrees that it is not easy to see its contours. However even from the shadows, from the remote signals, from the most evanescent and transient sensations it is good to grasp those minimal indications that tell us how the new scenarios will be composed, those that we will live in a short time.

Writing about lounges forced and stuck in Tuscany for over five months, something rather unique for us in the last seventeen years seems almost impossible. The feeling of loss has been alleviated during the most critical months of the lockdown by a series of various (and even quite unique) attempts to form virtual lounges. In some cases, smokes have been organized together with prominent figures of the cigar world, who climbed on the virtual stage to narrate their

experiences of boyhood struggles with the first smokes, women in the male world of cigar, established entrepreneurs fighting with revolutions or natural disasters.

More often the idea was that of a tasting, mixing technical components with much lighter tones, to dilute sessions of prohibitive duration. There have also been numerous attempts to make simple entertainment, of various levels of fun and empathy, exploiting the puro almost exclusively as a pretext for a gathering.

However, for those who have visited lounges in every country on the globe, these are admirable attempts to recreate a human connection that cannot be digitized. Instead, these are new and interesting attempts to integrate and differentiate the way of smoking before and after the pandemic,

which we hope will be maintained in the future. But nothing can be compared to the moment you enter a cigar bar; you try to understand the unwritten rules (where you can smoke, if you can light up your own cigars, if drinks and smoke are allowed in the same area, what cigars and spirits are for sale, what kind of characters the place attracts) and a thousand other observations and rituals that are consumed in the excitement that preludes to the smoke.

It is often a solitary experience, but often done on close proximity to others: a few words of circumstance are exchanged, we come close to each other (although at the time there was no talk of social distance, lounges have never been such crowded places) probing, testing the interlocutor, the neighbor, the bartender, the waiter.

Sometimes, but only sometimes, one tuned in and began to speak more freely, sometimes without any restriction about what one wanted to overcome, forget, leave at the end of the smoke with the cigar butt, such as work problems, wives, lovers, goldfishes. And communion could be imagined, in the ritual that fascinates us so much.

None of this is reproduced by the virtual, as it remains a teacher-student experience, a course, a narrator and a story. There is someone who organizes an event, who speaks, who dictates the rhythms, who holds the desk. Who decides when to silence others. Who removes less suitable comments. As much as you can praise social media and digital platforms as truly democratic, the truth is that the most aggressive and impactful comments are the lion's share, while such attitudes would be very rare in a real lounge.

In addition, the more disciplined interlocutors may consider difficult to exchange comments on the story with those who you have not met before, or at least you have not "studied" before. Empty times are bad to fight, the live broadcast imposes tight times and someone who sends the show forward; but the lounge does not live on shows, it lives on post-show, after work, after dinner.

So will there be a future for traditional lounges, in the new normal?

If the distancing seems not difficult to implement, since it is certainly not a crowded downtown bar where you are very tightly packed just for a coffee at the counter, it seems obvious that some other measures will upset the habits of those who have frequented the lounges

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN EFFECT

PLEASE STAY

6FT
APART

For the safety of yourself,
other customers and our
staff, please keep a safe
distance (a minimum of
2m / 6ft) away from
others at all times.

Thank you for your
co-operation

in the past. Most likely the masks will not be of great impact, mandatory at the entrance, less at the tables, at most during orders to the waiter.

First of all, no more cigar cutters and lighters on the tables, each will have to bring their own, or buy them on site. Would it be conceivable to clean them thoroughly after each use, even when two aficionados sit at a table? The tradition of having cigar sommeliers cutting and lighting up the chosen cigar will also disappear; the support of this professional will no longer prevent the newcomer from making charcoal out of the newly purchased Cohiba Behike by lighting it with a ho-okah flamethrower.

The big doubt, however, concerns the walk-in humidors, where anyone in the past could freely inhale the divine aromas, touch a cigar to check its conservation status, sometimes even partially remove the cellophane and then put it back to choose another one. This really looks like a legacy of the past in time of covid-19, like the Cuban puros without cellophane.

Thinking of sanitizing your hands with alcoholic gel before touching the cigar, although recommended, would still mean contaminating it with a not-so-pleasant scent. Will we keep the masks in the walk-in humidors and select the cigar only on paper (and the images of poorly maintained cigars, seen around the world, come immediately to mind)? Is the freedom we had to bring cigars from home and in perfect state of preservation, an option that will be no longer available, because of the impossibility of ensuring safety?

These are minor aspects, which each of us would probably sacrifice in order to return to visit in person some places now carved in memory. The greatest concern, however, is a less obvious aspect: will the new rules be the pretext for a further shutdown on smoking places? Before, the rules were sprawling, very strict in some cities, less rigid in countries of the same nation, impossible to follow with certainty: what if the covid-19 will mark the end of smoking all together?

Many companies have indefinitely suspended international gatherings, replacing them with remote meetings, and are very happy (for now) about cutting costs. What if it happens at the lounges?

We are not sure of the final answer, however the scent of the future is the aroma of alcohol-based gel, rather than well-seasoned tobacco.



Table cigar cutters

*Robust, efficient, elegant
and impossible to lose*

by **John Jeremy**

If one decided to make available a "man cave" or a room used to enjoy cigars, together with a sturdy lighter, and often near to it, a table cigar cutter may find its own spot. Although not one of the most frequently purchased accessories by conventional smoking aficionados, it features many important advantages. So many that its presence on a well-equipped smoking table can be very much appreciated by anybody. First of all, its robustness and weight keeps it firm on the top (often the grip is facilitated by rubber feet or silicone seals placed below the central block), allowing the smoker to focus solely on cutting the head of the cigar without damaging it. This feature in addition allows manufacturers to use harder steels and therefore sharper and longer-lived blades, which are less damaged over time, providing a more precise and accurate head incision. Another positive aspect, although residual, is the cleaning of the cut:

almost all models collect at the bottom the refuse of the cigar cut head, thus remedying the pieces of tobacco that sometimes end up outside the ashtray with a classic cigar cutter, adding some kind of mess to the scene.

From vintage or French guillotine style, moving to more modern and compact solutions, there are different models and categories available on the market, which can fit the most diverse furniture or personal tastes. All the biggest brands in the industry (Palio, Savinelli, Xikar, just to name a few) have a table cigar cutter in their catalogue.

Among the various types, it is good to consider buying a model that allows you to make multiple cut diameters or even the V-cut. This will allow you to have a single tool that can meet multiple needs.

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Hakon Aanonsen

The Norwegian Online Retailer

by **Michel Arlia**

Hakon Aanonsen wears many hats. He owns two online stores, SiGARCOM and AWOCC, and also a cigar brand, Viking Cigar of Norway. We had the chance to talk to Hakon, also known as Hawk, about how he got started in the business.

How did you get started in the retail aspect of cigars?

I started my journey in the world of Cuban Cigars in 1995, smoking a Romeo y Julieta Churchill. I really loved the taste and the feeling of this cigar. I still remember this experience with joy and happy thoughts. After that, I started checking the market in Norway, and I found only a few shops.

Prices were remarkably high. Back in 1995, I was running my own business that I started in 1986 (at 18 years old) selling cooperate gifts customized with a logo. I contacted Tobakshuset AB in Gothenburg, Sweden (Tobakshuset AB was the Nordic Distributor of Cuban cigars before they were bought up by Habanos SA and became Habanos Nordic AB) early in 2001. So I started to sell Habanos and humidors as cooperate gifts and started www.sigar.com, the first Norwegian cigar shop on the internet in 1999. Our

first non-Cuban cigars were ordered in 1998 from Nick Perdomo's Cigar Company in Miami. Now over 20 years later, we still sell Perdomo's awesome cigars, and they are the best-selling cigars right after the Habanos.

You have more than 20 years of experience in retail. First, with SiGARCOM in 1999 and in 2017, you also launched AWOCC. How has the business changed over the years, and how has the online aspect affected it?

The Norwegian webshop started slow, but we found a lot of cigar smokers online. SiGARCOM began to grow, and still, 20 years later, we have many of the same customers, and we still are growing every year. In 2020 we are still the major Norwegian online cigar shop. We started www.awocc.com (A World Of Cuban Cigars) after years of experience of getting Cuban cigars from Hong Kong and Switzerland. If Switzerland online cigar shops were a success, I could do the same from Norway. After a meeting with Stephan Praetorius (CEO Habanos Nordic AB) early in 2017, he encouraged me to start selling from an international webshop out of Norway. Awocc was launched 3 months later. This webshop started slow as well, but three years later, it is bigger than the Norwe-



gian webshop. My experience has been that more and more aficionados use the internet to get information and buy their cigars there. After the COVID19 outbreak, we have sold as much as ever before.¹

You operate out of Norway, with Habanos Northern Europe. How big is the Cuban market in Norway?

The Cuban cigars still sell well in Norway. The Norwegian cigar aficionados are very Cuba oriented. Our Norwegian Shop has a 65 / 35 split in favor of Cuban cigars. But there are 3-4 Norwegian importers of Cuban cigars, so I don't have an exact number.

Compared to your Norwegian sales, you also ship worldwide. How many countries do you do business with?

Awocc has already passed the Norwegian webshop in sales. We sell to more than 40 countries right now.

During this pandemic online shopping has exploded. Are physical stores obsolete?

No, I think physical shops, the good ones, will always do fine. We are thinking of starting a La Casa Del Habano / or Habanos Specialist in one of the "big" cities in Norway (after COVID19 is history). I feel that good shops with educated employees, that are also cigar aficionados, behind the counter are good for the cigar community.

Last year, the Norwegian Health Directorate started sending out letters and forcing local online cigar stores to remove all pictures. Can you explain what is going on?

The Norwegian Health Directorate (NHD) sent us an ultimatum to delete all pictures from www.sigar.com, Facebook, and Instagram within 14 days, or start paying a daily fee of 5.000€ until all the pictures are deleted. NHD has informed the Norwegian Government that Cigars and Cigarettes are the same and deadly. They think they can read the laws as they like and change them. We used the best lawyers in Norway to send a complaint to these in the NHD. In this letter (22 pages with a 144-page attachment) our lawyers informed the NHD that this was against many Norwegian laws, EU laws, and EØS Laws. After Norwegian Laws, NHD should have answered this complaint within 30 days. Now 7 months later, they still have not been able to answer. I plan on taking this to the Norwegian court system.

You also own Viking Cigars. How difficult has it been to work on new projects with all that has been going on?

Tobacco is a difficult business, and the NHD is not helping. So we will probably sell Viking Cigar of Norway or get a partner on this nice project. We still have good interest in the Ernesto Perez Carrillo made Viking Cigars, and we have started sending them to the USA where they love the artwork and the cigars.

What are your plans for the future?

We will continue working hard with SiGAR.COM so that we will still be the number one store in Norway on premium cigars. Awocc will grow to be the major business, and for Viking Cigar, we will continue with a partner or help the new owner to succeed.

ROMEO Y JULIETA GRAND CHURCHILL HUMIDOR

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Ring Gauge: 56 (22.03 mm)

Length: 190 mm

Vitola: JULIETAS GRANDES

Number of cigars per humidor: 100

Humidor produced by ELIE BLEU, Paris

Price: € 50.000



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 **Habanos**
Northern Europe

Foundation Cigars

5th Anniversary

Five years of always being on the level

di Michel Arlia



Nicholas Melillo and his brand, Foundation Cigar Co., will probably ring a bell with our long time readers. His company launched right after we, CigarsLover Magazine, decided to do an English version. He has been one of our supporters from the beginning and one of the first big names we interviewed five years ago, which happened to be the Winter issue as well. Now, five years later, with both our brands having grown immensely, it seemed fitting to catch up with Nicholas again.

Let's start with the obvious first, congratulations on your 5th anniversary of Foundation Cigars. Five years, in any business, is a great accomplishment. How does it feel?

Muchas gracias Fratello. It really feels good to have made it this far. We appreciate you and your readers for all the support these past five years. We started with one brand, and we now have an amazing portfolio with many different blend for all different palates. It hasn't been easy, but I feel very blessed to have seen Foundation grow these past five years and find its way into cigar lover's humidors worldwide.

The first line you introduced under Foundation Cigars was the El Güegüense line. What were your expectations when you launched the El Güegüense line back then, and what were your biggest fears before the launch?

I try not to have expectations in life because my expectations always set me up to be let down. My main focus was to pay tribute to Nicaragua, a place that has become my second home and has had a tremendous impact on my life. I wanted to honor my love for Nicaraguan tobacco with a 100% Nicaraguan blend and also honor its rich culture. I knew five years ago that many people didn't know about my history in the cigar world. There was a small group of consumers and cigar shops that actually followed my journey. I knew they would appreciate and understand El Güegüense, and from here, we began to build. Brick by brick and stone by stone. My biggest fear, of course, was people not liking the blend or the product itself. This is always a fear because you are producing and creating a product for people to enjoy. That is the end goal to produce a blend and brand that is memorable to the consumer. That is your intent, so you hope people will understand the product and enjoy the blend. But you can't give it too much energy because there is no time. The other fear at the time was the pending FDA regulations and eventually being told that I would not be able to sell my brands. So it is amazing we are here five years later and to finally get some clarity.

For the 5th anniversary, you pay homage to the El Güegüense with a short Perfecto size, tweaking the blend for this limited release. Why the blend change, and why that size?

The short perfecto size is not normally a vitola I would smoke on a daily basis, but it is a size I tend to smoke for a special occasion. It is one of the more difficult sizes to roll. After working with the blend in a few different formats, the Perfecto kept delivering maximum flavor, body, and strength without being too aggressive. It is a true flavor bomb. I wanted to combine aspects of the original El Güegüense blend but also incorporate Mexican San Andres from the Maduro line. The Nicaraguan Corojo wrapper combined

with the Mexican binder delivers a winning combination.

The boxes of the 5yr Aniversario are unique, and you and Thief Operandi (Foundation's Art Director) knocked it out of the park. Compared to your other lines, how did the approach for this release change, and how long did it take?

So about three to four years ago, I received a gift from a good friend of mine. He gave me an old Hoyo De Monterrey Cuban box from the early 1920s. I used this box as the inspiration for our limited edition Tabernacle Corona collector's box in tribute to opening our offices in the Connecticut River Valley. I made 250 boxes of this special blend, and many people never had the chance to see them. We worked with our box manufacturer over the past year and a half to be able to produce a larger number of boxes, even though they are still very time consuming compared to normal boxes. We then changed the design a bit, so the box looked like a treasure chest, which one of the El Güegüense characters carries in the famous dance. Thief and I then worked on the design of the bands and the box over the past year. Working with Thief is very organic in the way it develops. It starts with an idea and then develops naturally until it is refined and crafted into the final product. Working together is very much like the making of a handmade cigar from seed to smoke. The idea is the seed, and the final brand is that which complements the smoke.

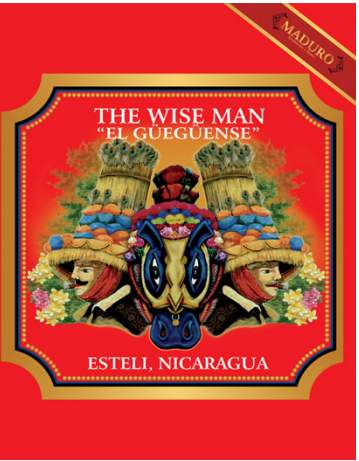
You have grown rather rapidly over these five years. What would you do now if it hadn't worked out?

knew starting my own company would be a lot of work, but

I didn't realize five years ago just how much work it is. It has been non-stop since the beginning, and we have just been building every step of the way. When I decided to start my own company, I knew if I didn't survive as a brand owner, I would be able to find work behind the scenes with tobacco purchasing or working in a factory. But I also knew if I didn't take the risk to start my own company, I would regret it for the rest of my life. I feel blessed to have had a unique experience in the industry, first starting in retail in 1996 and then moving to Nicaragua in 2003. I have been able to see both sides of the business and having started my own company has taught me a lot about sales and distribution these past five years, and I still have much to learn.

Expansion is a good thing, but rapid growth also has its downsides. Like having to turn down retailers who want to carry your product due to covering the other demands. Did you face any of those challenges?

I am fortunate that I come from the experience of rapid growth with Drew Estate. I know that challenge very very well. So with Foundation, I have been able to grow fairly quickly but always maintaining the utmost quality and consistency. But in order to do so, I have to hold the line. I have seen many over the years succumb to pressures of demand and compromise the quality. You end up shooting yourself in the foot, and you can never go back. So over the years, I have been very militant to hold the line of quality vs. expansion. As you know, we are yet to really open European markets and many foreign markets due to demand from our existing customers in the USA. I am not willing to open



The Wise Man
2017

Highclere Castle
Edwardian
2017

The Tabernacle
Havana Seed CT 142
2018

Highclere Castle
Victorian
2019

a new market if it cannot be supported properly, first and foremost with product and secondly with sales and marketing support. Trust me, I very much want to open these markets, and I am very humbled by the demand Foundation Cigars is receiving in global markets. Still, I want it done right, and I want consumers to know every time they light up a Foundation Cigar, that it will be perfect every time. We currently have a very small number of authorized retailers in foreign markets, and we hope to expand this distribution in 2021/2022. Unfortunately, these plans have slowed down due to COVID. I was finally hoping to attend Intertabac this September and really learn more about European markets.

Your portfolio consists of 9 lines. Aside from El Güegüense, which one is particularly close to your heart?

That question is really like asking me which of my kids is my favorite. I mean, they are all close to my heart. Each of them is a reflection of something that is close to my heart. Foundation Cigars main goal is to build brands with heart and soul. So, El Güegüense holds a special place in my heart because it was my first blend and brand. It is the cornerstone of Foundation Cigars. It represents an accumulation of all my years in the cigar industry and living in Nicaragua through the blend and the artwork. Each of my brands is a homage to something that has had a large impact on my life. For example, Charter Oak is my tribute to all the brands that once were manufactured in Connecticut. The Charter Oak is the symbol of Hartford, Connecticut. My grandfathers and great grandfathers smoked Connecticut cigars, and those brands started my love for the industry. Connecticut cigars

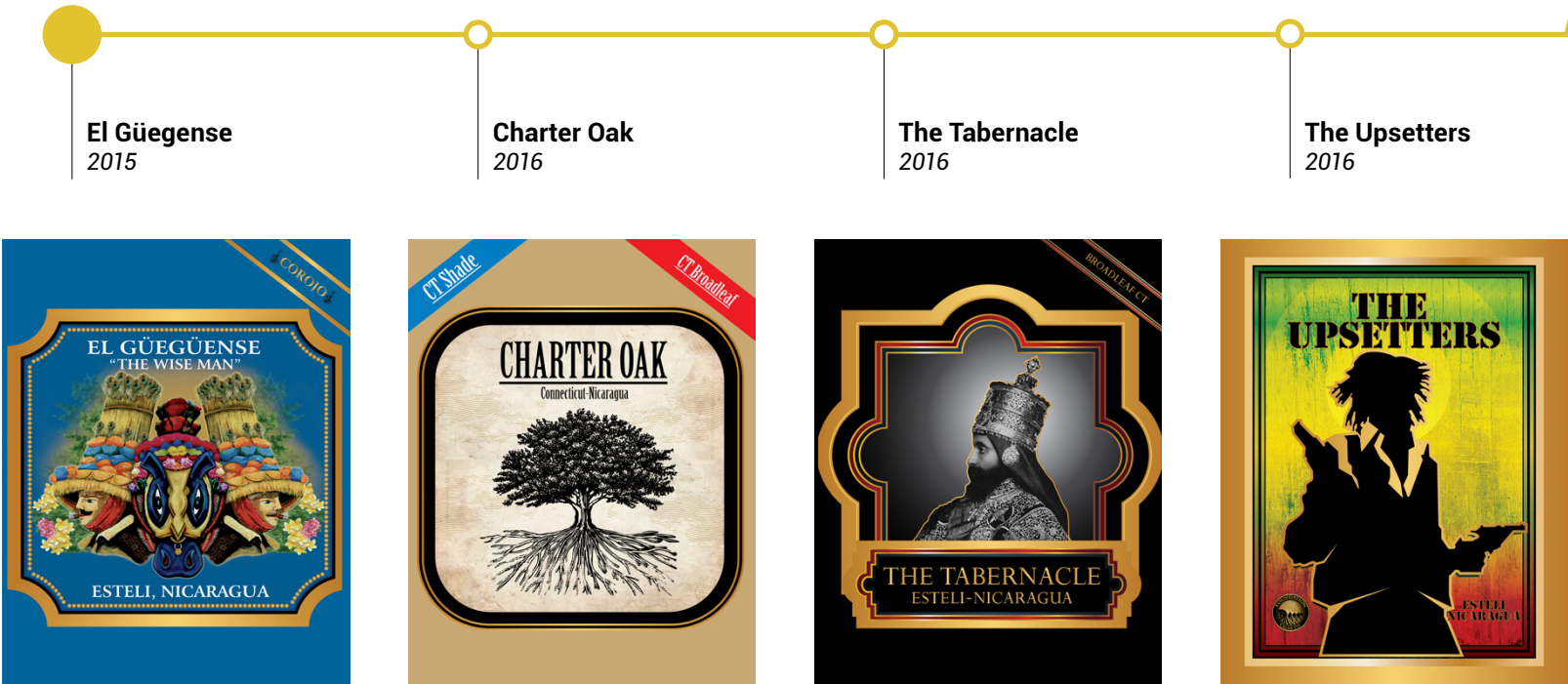
were great cigars at a fantastic value, and Charter Oak is just filling the footsteps of this history. Each brand has depth to it and reflects who I am as a person and what I hold dear—history, art, and culture.

What did you do right in the early days of Foundation Cigars, and if you could go back, would you change anything?

What we did right from the beginning is starting with passion and love for the industry. If you don't have that as a cornerstone for this industry, it translates in some way to the consumer. I ended up starting a lot smaller than I initially planned. We grew organically, and nothing beats organic growth and word to mouth. It evolved naturally.

Ever since you started Foundation Cigars, you have released a new line after a new line for five years straight. How far ahead do you plan projects, or if at all?

I probably wouldn't have released as many brands in the first three years. After I left Drew Estate on May 9th, 2014, I spent the year developing blends and brands, but I mainly focused on El Güegüense. The Connecticut Broadleaf and Cuban Seed tobaccos were planned almost three years in advance, due to the wrapper leafs' fermentation period. A lot of times, it's based on certain tobacco, so it depended on the availability of those tobaccos. I had until 2016 until the Connecticut Broadleaf tobacco was going to be ready from fermentation. So I had a couple of years before I released The Tabernacle, Charter Oak, and The Upsetters. Usually, we're looking at a year and a half of planning until it comes to fruition, which also happened to be how long we have





worked on the fifth-anniversary release.

This year has been a tough one and also for you personally. Your grandfather passed away. What have you learned from him that you have translated into your work or life?

It has been a very unusual year and a very challenging one. My grandfather, Anthony Pagnataro Jr., passed at the end of April due to COVID. He was 94 years old and had been smoking cigars and a pipe since 18 and went to World War II. He has been an inspiration to me in all aspects of life and my real-life hero. Smoking a cigar with him for the first time is really what started my love for the cigar industry. He has always been my number one fan and supported me in everything that I do. I am fortunate to have had him in my life for so long and to have him see Foundation come to fruition. The El Güegüense Lancero was made for him because that was always his size. I light up a pipe bowl every morning in tribute to him and, not to get too esoteric or spiritual, I can feel him. I feel like he's my guardian angel.

Speaking of your grandfather, we haven't talked about your Italian background. How important is Italy to you?

My Italian heritage has always been an important part of my life. Some of my earliest memories are of my great grandfather. He was a little man and spoke English with a very thick Italian accent. I learned about his travels in the early 1900s when he was 16 traveling to Ellis Island and starting a new life in America. Both grandmothers as well, they all

came from the classic story of immigration into the United States. He pushed a vegetable cart around the streets selling produce and eventually opened seven supermarkets around New Haven, Connecticut. I come from a family of hard-working Italian immigrants that left Italy with nothing and went to the USA for a better life. When I was about 13 or 14, my parents took us on a family trip to Italy for the first time, and it changed my life. It opened my eyes to different cultures and perspectives, and I realized from that trip that my dream was to one day live in Italy and travel the world. When I was 21, I realized this dream and moved to Italy to work with the Vatican for the Gran Jubilee in 2000. Italy means a lot to me, and I think if it weren't for traveling, it wouldn't have led me to Nicaragua.

The COVID19 Pandemic has put every cigar event on hold. Has the fact that you don't need to work on a new release for the trade show and the lock-down worked in your favor?

To be honest, I was about to wear myself out because I was burning the candle at both ends. It has been a blessing in disguise. This is the longest time I have been in the USA in 17 years. It was the first time in many years that I actually got to enjoy a summer because usually, the PCA trade show takes place in July. Most of our trade show booth is created in Nicaragua. We start planning in February, and a lot goes into preparation. The design, the layout, the new product releases, customer preparation, set up, travel, and when it's all over, we then go full steam into fulfilling all the orders at the

trade show. It is a lot of work and extremely exhausting. It personally has been nice to have a break from trade shows and travel. It has also been great to see the viability of Foundation's brands through all this madness and not attending trade shows or events. It is great to see five years of hard work pay off and see that our brands have found homes in humidors throughout the world.

From a manufacturer's point of view, how has COVID19 affected how you do business now?

It has definitely slowed down the production process since we have taken extreme caution to ensure that COVID doesn't spread in the workplace. And so far, so good. I have been very impressed and pleased with all the precautions manufacturers have taken in Esteli. I took the last flight out of Nicaragua and haven't been back since. Everything is taking longer than usual. The product takes longer to arrive, and development-wise, we are air shipping blends back and forth and making sure everything is right.

Your schedule has probably been getting busier year after year. What do you do to wind down?

I have literally put every waking hour over the past five years into Foundation. I am not married, and I don't have children, so the company and the brands have been everything to me. I have put all my time, care, and love into them. Five years into the process, I am realizing how important it is for me to take personal time to disconnect. This summer

was the first time I have taken a real vacation where I shut down my phone, computer, internet, etc., and I actually read three books for the first time in a long time. I have also started hiking and meditating, which really helps with anxiety and stress. At night I'm usually diving into some heavy documentaries. I'm fascinated by the timeline of the human story about ancient civilizations and cultures. Music also is an important part of my day and winding down. Without music, I don't know where I would be.

With five years in the books, what can we expect from Foundation Cigars in the near future, and where will you be in another five years from now?

You know, I think we're just continuing to grow organically. I hope that we continue to find a place in connoisseurs' humidors throughout the country. We'll continue to keep producing high-quality products and always be committed to the product. As long as I am around, I am committed to quality, consistency, and building brands with heart and soul. We need to continue building brick by brick, keep the brands fresh and on people's minds, and support our retail partners with excellent products. It has been humbling to see the demand for Foundation Cigars around the globe, and I hope that we will finally be able to expand our distribution to international markets throughout the world. We have demand in Dubai, Europe, Africa. So, the plan is going to be to expand into foreign markets. I am looking forward to the day we are in humidors throughout Italy and Europe.



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Las Vegas

*“Las Vegas is the Versailles of mass democracy”
Tom Wolfe, Richmond, March 2nd 1930 – New York, May 14th 2018*

by **Simone Poggi**

Documenting yourself before you leave is always a good habit. Sometimes the professional traveler pushes this practice to the far-fetched: which cigars to bring, where to go for dinner, which bars to visit and of course, which lounge to test.

If it is a leisure trip you can also plan itineraries, monuments, museums; If you embark instead on a business trip, in addition to the meetings and tasks of your own business, maybe you can identify a small time spot to carve out a short visit, a look, a fleeting taste of the country to which you are sailing to. However, there are aspects that no book, no guide, no blog can fully explain: sometimes it is called atmosphere, sometimes magic, in other situations it is more understandable as a strange lightness of mind, a place where the deepest and most philosophical thoughts can be

forgotten in a hotel drawer, to get involved by the frivolity, the chaos, the lush attraction of neon lights, the crude show but strong colors, the immediate and tasty food, the sweets of perdition. All of this is Las Vegas, and nothing can prepare you not so much for big hotels or casinos, girls, clubs, but as much as you will be able to do and become in Las Vegas, whether you are a well-established manager or street performer, nurse or stripper, angel or demon. You may decide not open Pandora’s box, but you will feel the call as much in few other places.

In this seductive place, the smoker needs to give in to even the temptation he knows best, that of giving himself a great cigar in a quality environment. Among the various possibilities, a must-try is the Montecristo Cigar Bar, which is easily encountered when you allow yourself to be captivated by the

dream of being a new Roman emperor and asks the taxi driver to leave you in front of Caesars Palace. In a modern and luxurious environment, with neon lights from trendy locals and ultra-tattooed model-waiters, but very comfortable leather sofas as well, the treasure chest is opened to us by a very knowledgeable and competent cigar sommelier, who smokes five cigars a day to strengthen his knowledge and that year after year continues to recommend the Padrons of the Anniversary 1964 line, quite a full-bodied smoke. Although one can safely rely on his care, it is too much curiosity to analyze every open box, and the gluttony assails us in scrolling through the endless paper of rye and bourbon whiskeys. The choice ends up on an H-2k El Centurion, with a reasonable cost of 10 dollars. You must also carefully choose a pairing for best enjoyment; on this subject there are fewer certainties and recommendations are even more difficult, thus even our Virgil is hesitant and prefers not to guide us through.

We then opt for an intense glass of Eagle Rare 10y bourbon, in which vanilla and herbs, supported by a non-negligible ABV, complement well the earthiness and spices of the Nicaraguan cigar, without taking anything away from its excellent balance. Obviously, no accessory is out of place: do you prefer a “V-cut”? No problem! Cedar sheets for a traditional (and less precise) ignition? Of course! Special glass or “ice-ball” of considerable size, which will melt down pretty slow? All included! Selecting the Macallan 40yo from the whiskies also includes a crystal Rieder glass, all for as little as 1200 bucks! This is what many people dream of: coming to Las Vegas, winning at the tables even just one evening and affording these delicacies, without even being touched by the idea of keeping a penny of the winnings, and then coming home in the same clothes with which they arrived, but with a few more stories to tell. Just one of many dreams of Americans. Who, it has to be said, are unreachable in terms of modern lounges.



POSITION	REACHABILITY	CIGARS	SPIRITS	SERVICE
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VERY NEAR TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE CASINO	VERY MUCH	GREAT CHOICE	EXCELLENT SELECTION	CAREFUL AND GENTLE

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Open 12:00 – 24:00. [For more information, click here.](#)

SPIRITS

B.i.B. 44
Blended Whisky 46
Blood and Sand 52
Glencairn 56

“Never delay kissing a pretty girl or opening a bottle of whiskey.”
Ernest Hemingway





B.i.B.

*For some, an obsolete term,
for others, a guarantee of authenticity*

by Luca Cominelli

A sort of controlled denomination, or a certification that the product with this wording on the label has been bottled in compliance with a series of strict rules by the United States government. Specifically, these norms are summarized in what is called "Standards of Identity for Distilled Spirits", i.e., an extract from the "Bottled in Bond Act", drawn up in 1897.

This desire to control the production process stems from the fact that, back then, distillates were marketed as whiskey, which in reality did not have all the requisites to be defined as such. For this reason, the American government decided to create this new standard and showcase it on the label, rewarding producers, which allowed the control of production processes, with tax breaks.

What rules must be followed, to be able to put the term Bottled in Bond on the label? First of all, the product must be distilled by a single distillery and must belong to a single distillation season. To this end, it refers to two time periods: January - June, and July-December. Secondly, even more importantly, the distillate must be aged in what America calls a "bonded warehouse": aging must take place in a federally bonded warehouse, under government supervision, for a period of at least four years. But that's not all: the whiskey must be bottled at an alcohol content of exactly 100 proof, that is, it must have an ABV of 50%, and the use of any substance that could alter the product is strictly forbidden, with the only exception is for water, in order to make it possible to reach the mandated alcohol content. The label must then show the references of where the distillation and bottling took place, when the two do not coincide.

Nowadays, the legislation has become decidedly more rigid. Compared to the last century, it would be almost unthinkable to put a whiskey that is not what it is supposed to be on the market. This is the reason why many labels no longer carry the wording "Bottled in Bond", although there are quite a few well-known exceptions around. So why do some manufacturers continue to display this sign proudly? Due to the rules that must be followed in order to affix this "guarantee seal", the product cannot be created by mixing whiskeys of different ages and cannot come from multiple distilleries. All this makes "Bottled in Bond" the stars and stripes version of the renowned Scottish "Single Malt".

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Blended Whisky

*The history of the bestselling whisky style in the world
between tradition and innovation*

by Enzo Salvatore



These days the world of whisky showcases a complex and sophisticated landscape. Even before getting to sipping a dram, people can argue at length about what organic farming entails, the search for the terroir, the rediscovery of long forgotten craft distilling techniques, the integral productive control from the cereal to the cask, and the diverse effects of cask maturation. Yet, in thinking about whisky, the mainstream public still thinks of names like Chivas Regal, Johnnie Walker, Ballantine and the other great bottlers of blended scotch whisky; one of the most beloved spirits in the world thanks to easy availability and drinkability. Whereas today distilleries try to valorize their single malts as exclusive products strongly connected to the image of their territories, the master blenders of these brands came up with smart, and secret, recipes to realize large quantities of a very pleasing and drinkable product, that is always available at the most competitive price. If contemporary technologies and marketing allows us to take such a solution for granted, the invention of blended whisky about two centuries ago required a brilliant intuition and some high-level artisanal craft.

The global success of scotch whisky begun with the industrial development of Glasgow's harbor during the heyday of British imperialism in the 19th century. If the precious single malts had already earned an important place on the most prestigious tables given the direct connection between producers and the wealthy consumers of the time, the global reach of the colonial enterprise brought up a massive request for cheap and readily-available product, whose trade was organized by bulk buyers and shop keepers modelled on the French négociant business. Initially, these bottlers would exploit the sea travel months to cask-condition the raw spirit and make it more palatable, but the increase in industrial production and sales after the introduction of the coffee still in 1831 made evident the need to find a more reliable method to regularize the availability of ready-to-sell product. After all, technology helped with new make production, but it did not solve the problem of maturation, which back then was fundamental to tame and make drinkable the very raw young spirits for large consumption. Indeed, it became essential to make an easier, softer, cleaner, and less alcoholic whisky to face the great polemics about the nefarious effects of alcoholism among British workers, as Charles Dickens tragically described in his novels.

Among the first renown bottlers to experiment with blended whisky there was Usher & Sanderson: toward the end of the 1840s, they presented, with large success, the Old Vatted Glenlivet in a long-standing collaboration with the namesake distillery. In 1853 British authorities established a favorable taxation on blended whisky stimulating many other bottlers to enter the new business. In the same year, the Chivas brothers, who had already earned the Royal Approval from Queen Victoria in 1843, presented the Royal Glee Dee using malts from Milltown distillery (later to become Strathisla). In 1860, the British enactment of the Spirits Act regularized and reorganized whisky and spirits production, giving leeway to many other shopkeepers like Johnnie Walker, Ballantine, Dewar, Cutty Sark and J&B to build a fame that still last to our days. The most symbolic event of the period was pro-

bably William Sanderson's 1882 tasting competition with one hundred blended whiskies and a jury of experts: the winner was the sixty-ninth blend which later became the still very famous Vat69.

Essentially, single malt production could not guarantee enough regularity to an already developed market that required a steady availability of the product, not to mention the fact that more than often single malts were particularly hard and demanding for the less educated palates. Sanderson's idea, a father and a son who had been already for decades in the whisky business, was a bit unorthodox but in fact quite brilliant: buying multiple vintages from the same distilleries to create a recipe that could offer a decent taste, flavor, and quantity at the best price. Thus, blending was initially a mix of different single malts of various vintages from the same distillery to obtain a unique product with more regular profile and in the adequate quantity for mass market sales. After the introduction of coffee still distilling and the large availability of cheap grain whisky, blending technique was further developed. Bottlers started to experiment whisky blending with the most diverse typologies, maturations, and the addition of colorants and sweeteners to find successful recipes that could be replicated in any situation and condition. Bottlers like Ballantine would arrive to use more than forty different whisky to create a maintain their reference blend. Therefore, master blenders became more than technicians, developing what would be for years a secret art, transmitted only via family or exclusive apprenticeship paths.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when the main whisky market moved from the British empire to the United States and continental Europe, blended whiskies were adapted to the even more hectic and demanding rhythms of the consumer society. Yet, the decades of Prohibition and the world wars brought the whole whisky production almost to the verge of bankruptcy. Blended whisky made a massive comeback only with the post-war economic boom and the Hollywood triumph of some brands in the 1950s. With technological development, master blenders turned more into scientists than artists, even though the exact composition of main recipes continued to be kept extremely secret. In time, many bottlers also became owners of distilleries in order to integrally control production, and important consolidations took place among the major player on the market that lead to first productive giants. Hollywood and broadcast advertisement helped some brands of blended whisky to transcend their mundane daily shelf existence to become pop cultural icons, like the bottles of Johnnie Walker's of Cutty Sark.

The dawn of the new millennium drastically changed the whisky world. The growing call for a healthier lifestyle brought to a rapid decrease in the consumption of daily drams. In parallel, a renewed curiosity for craft production and genuine quality in food and beverage led to the rediscovery of the quite neglected Scotch single malts, as well as of Japanese whisky and excellencies from other countries. In the matter of few years, flocks of enthusiast drinkers started to invade distilleries, which soon became refined touristic destinations, and to discuss the aromatic differences, the impact of ma-



turation, casks, water composition, peat's nature, and the provenance of cereals. Exiled to the mass market shelves of cheap spirits, not to mention certain unfortunate acquisitions by owners with little interest in the history of the brand, blended whisky suffered often heinous decision to dramatically decrease their quality to better manage their productive costs and exploit their marketing value.

Even so, over the last years, it seems that once again something is about to change. On the one hand, the demand for quality whisky led to a general diminution in the availability of aged single malts (emblematic is the case of Japanese

whisky); on the other, the trade war moved by Trump administration against the rest of the world put blended whisky in a particularly advantageous position, as they are among the few products exempted from the 25% import overcharge. Famous brands like Chivas Regal immediately took the chance to relaunch their core range with important 18- and 25-year old version, but also some important brands in the craft world like Douglas Laing and Compass Box rediscovered blended whisky proposing some really interesting bottles. Putting aside the damages made by the Covid-19 pandemic, this peculiar situation could actually bring to a surprising Renaissance of blended whisky both in terms of sales and quality.



Colin Scott Master Blender - Chivas Regal

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Blood and Sand

*The story of an ancient and glorious cocktail
inspired by bullfights, loves and blended whiskey*

by **Nicola Ruggiero**

The Blood and Sand is a great blending classic, one of the best-known international drinks made with blended scotch whiskey, cherry brandy, red vermouth and also orange juice.

The cocktail is named after the famous movie "Blood and Sand", which debuted at the Rialto Theatre in Los Angeles on August 22, 1922, at the height of the Prohibition period. This fact makes it implausible to assume that the drink is contemporary to the movie. More likely, the Blood and Sand was conceived following the publication, of the 1909 novel "Sabre y Arena" by the Spaniard Vicente Blasco Ibeaz, from which the much more famous film was made. The great popularity of the cocktail, however, remains linked in the collective imagination to the film of 1922, a work that deftly tells a story in which love and betrayal, redemption

and death merge in a poignant way. The film stars the legendary Rodolfo Valentino, who plays Juan Gallardo, son of a Seville bullfighter who died during a bullfight. Driven by the desire to retrace his father's footsteps Juan leaves for Madrid. After ten years and with a modest career as a matador, Juan returns to his hometown. There, in addition to the poverty that he had left behind two lustrous before, he finds Carmen Espinosa, a girl who had fallen in love with him one night, watching him fighting against a bull. The young man, in the desire to help his family financially and to crown his love affair with Carmen with a wedding, finds discovers the motivation allowing him to finally become a rich toreador, acclaimed by the crowds that fill the arenas to watch him fight the bull every time he enters. Juan's fame makes him the subject of the attentions of an attractive and sensual, yet fickle, widow of noble origins Doña Sol. Juan is

caught up in the woman's graces and when he mends his way, understanding the wrong done to his Carmen and the strength of the love and passion he feels for her, it is now too late. Juan, in fact, dies during his last bullfight, asking forgiveness from his beloved for having betrayed her. The success of the 1922 film was so impressive that nineteen years later the first remake was produced in technicolor (the role of Juan was played by Tyrone Power), which was quite successful, to the point of being awarded the Academy Award for Best Cinematography. Later, in 1989, a second remake of the film was presented to the public, starring Sharon Stone, among other actors.

This is the story of the cinematographic Blood and Sand, but now let's move on to that of the cocktail bearing the same name. The drink was first mentioned in Bruce Reynolds'

book "A Continental Cocktail" in 1926, about four years before the complete recipe was published in Harry Craddock's "Savoy Cocktail book". Blood & Sand reached the peak of its popularity in the 1930s and 1960s, until the spread of gin and vodka based cocktails upended the mixology landscape, rapidly changing the most sought-after cocktails.

Blood & Sand survived this "revolution" thanks to the consumption by a small circle of loyal enthusiasts, until its return to prominence, due in large part to the role played by the famous bartender and producer Dale De Groff, in the new "cocktail renaissance" during his years at the Rainbow Room in New York. This is the period from 1987 to 1999, when the drinks which were very famous and largely consumed during the 1980s began to lose their appeal. It was De Groff who stated "the fruity cherry liqueur goes very well

with the cereal flavor of Scotch Whisky, the red Vermouth harmonizes with the notes of spices present in the distilled base and is complemented with orange juice bringing complexity and balance to the recipe".

As with any cocktail, Blood & Sand also has quite a large number of variations. In some of them grapefruit juice replaces that of orange because of its increased acidity that allows you to better balance the drink. In other versions, instead, to emphasize the Iberian inspiration, the use of Spanish oranges from Seville or blood orange is emphasized. Orange juice is notoriously underused in drinks due to its lower acidity when compared to lemon and lime and its tendency to make drinks weak and watery. You can overcome

these problems by dissolving a little citric acid in the orange juice, in order to give it the same acidic taste as lime juice. With this method, very popular among bartenders, the sweet freshness of orange juice is enriched with the acidity of the lemon. Among the most interesting variations to the traditional recipe one can definitely name the one that involves replacing blended scotch with single malt, a richer and characterizing flavor thanks to the peat notes when this type of single malt is selected.

The highlight should also be given to the choice of vermouth to accompany the cherry brandy: it would be recommended to use vermouth with hints of chocolate, which well match the cherries liqueur.

Ingredients:
2,5 cl blended scotch whisky
2,5 cl red vermouth
2,5 cl cherry brandy
2.5 cl fresh juice of red oranges

Preparation:
Squeeze half an orange and filter the juice (ideal would be to add a pinch of citric acid). Fill the shaker with ice, pour all the ingredients and shake until the shaker becomes pretty frozen. Pour into a previously cooled cup and garnish with an orange zest.



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Glencairn

*The twentieth anniversary
of the most popular whisky tasting glass*

by **Luca Cominelli**

Glencairn has become one of the best-known brands in the production of glasses for tasting spirits, especially when it is about whisky. The Glencairn glass is recognized as an official glass for tasting by the Scotch Whisky Association.

We had the pleasure of talking with this well-known manufacturer on the occasion of their twentieth anniversary, which saw the introduction of a colorful series of glasses to celebrate this important milestone.

How did Glencairn's story begin?

Before the year 2000, whisky had no singular glass it could call its own, unlike champagne, brandy, or wine. Raymond Davidson, the Founder of the Scottish crystal glassware company, Glencairn Crystal, set out to design a glass spe-

cifically for the whisky industry. His original prototype glass was actually relegated to the filing cabinet for almost 20 years until his son Paul (now Glencairn Crystal's Managing Director) came across it whilst searching through samples. It was then brought to the attention of the Master Blenders of the scotch whisky industry, and with their guidance and expertise, the glass evolved and became the Glencairn Glass that we know today.

Today, Glencairn Crystal sells over 65,000 Glencairn Glasses each week all over the world.

What are some of Glencairn's milestones?

This year is a milestone for the Glencairn Glass as it is 20 years old. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the world's favorite whisky glass, Glencairn Crystal Studio has intro-

duced a new core range of colored glasses. Following the huge popularity of the limited edition black Glencairn Glass last year, whisky fans worldwide will now be able to purchase the Glencairn Glass not only in black but also in blue, red, green, and shimmering gold alongside the original clear glass.

When did the glass actually become the symbol of the whisky tasting?

The Glencairn Glass has been endorsed by the Scotch Whisky Association as the official glass for whisky since 2004.

Considering that most of the recent whisky releases are featuring cask strength products, do you think that the glass's geometry will have to keep this into consideration? Are you considering some change for high ABV whiskies in the future?

The Glencairn Glass has been specially designed to help the drinker get the most out of their whisky experience – even the high ABV whiskies.

Its tapering mouth captures and focuses the aroma on the nose, and the wide bowl allows the fullest appreciation of the whisky color. Its unique shape is the perfect form to admire the body of the whisky. The thistle style base is designed to fit comfortably in your hand and allow your whisky to develop in the glass over time.

What's next for Glencairn?

Here at Glencairn Crystal Studio, we will continue to be at the cutting edge of design and innovation not only with the Glencairn Glass but also with the unique glassware and handcrafted custom decanters we design and create – sometimes for the world's rarest and most expensive spirits.



TASTE

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“I only drink Champagne on two occasions,
when I am in love and when I am not.”
Coco Chanel



Perlage & Cigar

*Five great champagnes to celebrate
and five great cigars to enjoy them to the fullest*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo & Luca Cominelli**



In all cultures, celebrations during winter holidays always regard a conception of time: some celebrate the end of the year with all its past moments of joy and tension, others prefer to welcome the new year hoping it will be better than the past one.

The most traditional way for an aficionado to bid farewell to the past year or to welcome the new one is to light “the” cigar that has been lingering in the humidor for a long time now, waiting for the right moment. Even more often, this celebratory moment is not a technical tasting, but a moment of maximum relaxation, maybe in good company and almost always paired to something to drink or eat.

This year, the staff of CigarsLover selected five important champagnes and pairing them to the most suitable cigars. We chose a prestigious rosé, a newcomer blanc de blancs, an exalted prime minister, an ambitious noir, and an out-of-the-ordinary cuvée. We will let you discover them one by one, so you can savor the childlike spirit of surprise for the best presents.

JACQUESSON

Cuvée 743

GRAPES
Chardonnay 50%, Pinot Meunier 15%, Pinot Noir 35%
DOSAGE
0 g/l
AGING
Minimum 3 years
PRICE
\$80 €70

Established in 1798, this maison offers its best expression in the Cuvée 7xx: the assemblage of single-vintage wines from different parcels (2015 in the case of this 743) with the vins de reserve, preserved for many years in the winery's cellar.

The nose is intense and rich, with mineral and flowery notes, and some citrusy hints. The palate is smooth, elegant, and pleasingly complex, confirming the olfactory perceptions (citrus fruit, in particular), and offering a very long mineral persistence, almost salty. It expresses a silky and fine perlage.

Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona is the right Cuban cigar for this champagne. Sweet and creamy to the palate, with a complex and elegant aromatic palette of exquisite spices, cedar wood, and citrus fruit that evolves towards vanilla, hazelnut, and chestnut honey. It is a harmonic and refined cigar, with a tamed strength that valorizes a surprising pairing with the Jacquesson.



LOUIS ROEDERER

Rosé 2014

GRAPES
Pinot Noir 63%, Chardonnay 37%
DOSAGE
8 g/l
AGING
4 years + 6 months after degorgement
PRICE
\$70 €75

The peculiarity of this rosé is the “infusion technique” developed by Louis Roederer that consists in slowly adding Chardonnay juice to the Pinot Noir maceration to let them ferment together and fully integrate.

Its bouquet is wide and rich with small red berries (blueberry, wild strawberry), peaches, tones of canine rose and lemon zest. The fruity component explodes to the palate, almost chewable, and adds hints of pomegranate and a fresh minerality. Long and delicate finish.

Caldwell Easter Standard Sungrown Toro, has unique aromatic features and a well-balanced strength that make it a great pairing to this rosé. The sweetness and creaminess of the cigar are balanced by acidity and minerality, while the notes of ripe fruit, earth, walnut, with the citrus and coffee finish are exalted by the vibrating aromaticity of this Roederer.

POL ROGER

Sir Winston Churchill

2008

GRAPES
Pinot Noir (prevalente), Chardonnay
DOSAGE
7 g/l
AGING
9 years
PRICE
\$250 €230

Pol Roger’s Prestige Cuvée is an homage to Sir Winston Churchill. It has a secret grape blend, but it is intensely dominated by the structure, wideness, and robustness of the Pinot Noir over the elegance and finesse of the Chardonnay. This Cuvée Sir Winston Churchill is produced only in the best vintages.

It achieves almost perfection in terms of aromatic intensity and richness. The nose is incredibly satisfying with floral notes, brioche, then dry fruit (hazelnut and almond), and citrus zest. The palate is well balanced, with an excellent perlage, notes of ripe citrus fruit and rich petit pâtisserie. The finish is mineral and salty.

Davidoff Winston Churchill Toro has a vivacious underlining sweetness and an impressive aromatic range with spices, noble woods, honey, and balsamic herbal tones. It is a complex, rich and potent cigar that deserves to be paired only to the finest champagne.



LAURENT-PERRIER

Blanc de Blancs

2019

GRAPES
Chardonnay 100%
DOSAGE
0 g/l
AGING
6 years
PRICE
\$75 €70

Established in 1812, it is the first time that Laurent-Perrier experiments with a 100% Chardonnay vinification. The grapes come from parcels in the Côte des Blancs and Montagne de Reims, which than are enriched with precious vin de réserve.

In the glass, it expresses minerality and citrus hints, as well as more delicate floral tones and bread making. In the mouth, it has a refined perlage, a perfectly well-rounded finesse, and a vibrating minerality rich with citrus notes. The finish is extremely clean and persistent.

Among Nicaraguan cigars, Plasencia Reserva Original Churchill boasts all typical aromas of the land of volcanos without an excessively marked palate footprint or pronounced strength. On a sweet and creamy base, the cigar develops tones of carob, noble wood, walnut, and spices. Its aromatic vivaciousness is well valorized by the minerality of this Laurient-Perrier Blanc de Blancs.



FREDERIC SAVART

L'Overture

2020

GRAPES
Pinot Noir 100%
DOSAGE
7 g/l
AGING
minimum 2 years
PRICE
\$75 €60

L'Overture is made with pinot noir grapes grown in the vine of Frederic Savart from the nort-west part of the Montagne de Reims. Low crop yield and maximum expressivity of the soil are the leitmotiv of the Maison, as they chose to adopt all possible solutions to let the last word to the terroir.

The nose is characterized by a very wide spectrum of scents, from fruity (apple and peach) to floral notes, mineral and citrusy hints. The palate is extremely intense, refined, and pleasingly mineral. Perlage is fine, gentle, but enduring.

These features are perfectly married to the Cavalier Genève White Series Lance-ro, particularly to its buttery creaminess and its well-balanced sweetness, confirmed by honey and vanilla aromas, enriched by coffee, spices, and walnut notes. The pronounced evolution and strength of this cigar are the best match for L'Overture.



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A MAN AND A CIGAR FOR ALL TIMES

Truffle

*A shy underground mushroom
but true king of the table*

by **Elisabetta Stella**

The truffle is probably one of the most valuable foods in use, since time immemorial, in the kitchen. The first written evidence of its use dates back to the publication "the modern steward, or the Art of Preparing banquets well" (1694) by Antonio Latini, in which the author describes, in detail, its use in an infinite sequence of libations that embellished banquets in honor of nobles and prelates. Yet it was already known to the ancient Greeks (who called it Idnon) and to the Latins (for whom it was Tuber Terrae) with whom it met a happy era. Feasts that ended around the fourth century after Christ, during which it no longer found a place in recipes because it was considered unbecoming, due to its alleged aphrodisiac qualities.

To understand what makes this food so precious and sought after, it is necessary to better know its biological nature. The truffle is an underground fungus that grows and develops underground: what we commonly define as truffles are, in fact, the fruiting bodies of some species of fungi of the genus Tuber. Like all mushrooms, it is heterotrophic, that is, it is unable to provide the nutrients it needs because it





cannot activate the chlorophyll photosynthesis process. To overcome this drawback, it lives in mutualistic symbiosis with the root system of some arboreal plants: this means that to find them, it is necessary to look for them at the foot of the trees. The white variety grows near oak, downy oak, turkey oak, poplar (in its various theologies), white willow, hazel, and many other species. On the other hand, the black variety prefers fewer tree species, but it has some in common with the former: downy oak, holm oak, turkey oak, linden, hazelnut, black hornbeam, cistus.

It is considered an important sentinel of the environment because, due to its characteristics and the symbiotic relationship it establishes with the surrounding nature, the truffle does not survive herbicides, pollution, or anything else that alters the environment. Therefore its proliferation is a symptom of a healthy environment. The search for truffles is also in perfect harmony with the environment. In fact, the truffle hunter relies on the nose of a dog or a pig (the latter particularly used in France) trained for the task, which, once sniffed, indicates the exact point where to dig. The seeker then extracts the prize delicately and paying attention to replacing the removed soil in order to allow the formation of new rootlets (which will, in turn, be mycorrhized) and thus be able to hope in the formation of a new fruiting body.

Growing in the woods, it is possible to find truffles all over the world. Although, the area of Central Europe, together

with England, seems to be the most fruitful. However, the countries considered to be the largest producers, by variety (over twenty different types) and by quantity, are France and Italy. Being an underground mushroom, it does not have a particular harvest season, but this can be conditioned by the climate or limited by local laws.

The price is determined by various factors, including size, color, shape, and ripeness. In particular the difficulty of the search, together with the rarity of the type found and the annual collection trend, influence the final price that fluctuates from year to year, like a real market exchange. Not only that, because weight also makes a difference: in a specific weight range, the reference price changes. For a prized White Truffle (Tuber Magnatum, the rarest and most expensive variety, which loves to grow significantly in Piedmont, a region north-west of Italy), you could easily spend 4,000 Euro / Kg, provided that a tuber of exceptional weight is not auctioned. In the latter case, as has happened in the past, the figure could reach hundreds of thousands of Euros.

However, with these prices, it is good to rely on specialized sales channels as scams are around the corner: it is not unusual to come across vendors who sell mediocre products for high-quality truffle prices.

The peculiarity of this expensive and precious ingredient lies in its peculiar scent, a reason for continuous refinement and

culinary experimentation. The aroma of the truffle is due to the molecule of bismethylthiomethane, which in the prized white truffle is responsible for the characteristic sulphurous note, often associated, incorrectly, with a quality product.

In fact, precisely because of its characteristic scent (which for some may be unpleasant), sometimes bismethylthiomethane is deliberately added to flavored products or even to the truffles themselves to enhance their olfactory imprint. Therefore, a quality truffle will not be "flat" to the nose, returning only this scent, but will express a broader aromatic spectrum, even with notes of undergrowth, honey, hay, etc., depending on the type of tuber and shrub under which the truffle grew—a few examples. Tuber Borchii has an intense garlicky scent and aroma that often makes it difficult to digest, but very pleasant if used in modest quantities. The Tuber Melanosporum is gentle on the nose, with notes almost tending towards strawberry and honey, a sweetness

that is also confirmed on the palate so much so that it deserves the nickname of "black sweets". The Tuber Brumale has an olfactory approach that recalls unripe hazelnut, turnip, and bark. Tuber Aestivum (a very common species throughout Europe) has a slightly sulphurous scent, but also with notes that recall cooked corn and brewer's yeast. When eaten, its flavor resembles hazelnut and is often associated with a slight spiciness.

In conclusion, wanting to generalize, the black truffle has more vibrant and vigorous aromatic characteristics, while the white variety is more suited to gentleness and refinement. For these reasons, the use in the kitchen is often associated with more robust dishes for the black truffle and more straightforward dishes for the white one. However, in both cases, the quantity used is always modest, not so much for its price, as for its predominant olfactory imprint, which could destroy a dish when overused.





ABV, generally comprised between 7,5% and 13%. Less precise is the term double, and now also triple and quads after the Belgian tradition, that are fundamentally synonyms of imperial, often in less aesthetically marketed beers. Unfortunately, the creative drive of imperial/double styles ran out in what often is simply an excessive increase in intensity and structure without any balance. Barleywines offer a very different array of possibilities. From the onset, these beers were inspired by winemaking techniques in their usage of sugar-rich worts and cask maturation. Born in England in the 15th century, barleywine were not particularly alcoholic for the usual tax-related issues. Yet, they always boasted the fame of rich meditative beers. The first regularly marketed beer was Bass' N°1 Barley Wine in 1870, but the contemporary renaissance can be probably ascribed to 1983 Sierra Nevada's Bigfoot Barleywine, a famous Californian beer still produced today. In the USA, Samuel Adams' production is fundamental for the style renaissance: in 2000 they launched the celebratory Millennium, 20% ABV, while the following years they issued Utopia annually, a barleywine that reached 28% ABV in its last versions. Utopia also paved the way for the most extreme experimentations in terms of productive processes: from the individuation of the best barley varieties to the selection of the most WRAPPERble strains of yeasts to handle the incredible sugar density of the wort. These experiments allowed craft high fermentation beers to

get to the future of their productive success. Moreover, Utopia revamped the fashion for cask maturation, pushing to a whopping 24 years of conditioning, as well as for blends and cuvées imitating wine and whisky making techniques. Every year, this results in an ever complex and surprising beer with scents of port wine, dry fruit, plums, raisin, dark chocolate, and obviously the most intense aromatic expressions of malt.

In the crazy competition after the world record for the most alcoholic beer, eisbock has recently become the most fashionable high proof style in the United Kingdom. Eisbock comes originally from Germany, and it retains the principles of eiswein production, but it had little success due to a series of technical difficulties. Practically, brewers freeze the wort until they can fraction excess water crystals to concentrate the fermented mass. Usually, producers would eliminate about 20-30% of water volume, but modern technologies allow brewers to reach the maximum level of cryoconcentration. So, over the past few years, some really impossible beers have hit the market, like the 2013 Scottish beer Brewmeister's Snake Venom (67,5% ABV!), which currently holds the world abv record. Brewdog, another Scottish brewery, gave a shot at eisbock with Sink the Bismarck! (41% ABV) and The End of History (55% ABV), two beers born during a year-long competition with the Dutch brewery Koelschip and the German Schorsch-

Highest Proof

Tripel, Imperial, Barleywine, Eisbock, Grape Ale and the new extreme beers

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

As winter approaches, beer loses its fresh and thirst-quenching appeal, but the heat of a high proof beer might offer a similar comfort over the colder months. Over the past decade, the success of high fermentation craft beer brought on the market a series of more and more extreme high proof beers. Until the 1990s, very few brewing styles would consider high proofs and even fewer would allow ingredients from different from cereals, yeasts, and hops: on one hand, brewers had to avoid overcharges for alcoholic proof; on the other, it was much easier to control production (emblematic was the validity until 1992 of the 1516 German Purity Law). Only in Belgium, where the sale of spirits was forbidden until 1983, did brewers develop high proof styles like tripel, and more recently quadrupel, taking advantage of beer's special statute in

the country. The classic recipe of a tripel requires higher amounts of malts and hops to express more structure and gustative richness. Even if their typical ABV of 8/12% is hardly striking today, producers like Westmalle, Kameliet, Chimay, and Corsendonk managed to develop quite unique tripel beers for their aromatic profile, complexity, and a convenient price as well.

Similarly, the term imperial put before a style indicates a more powerful and alcoholic version. The name comes from a 10% ABV British stout made originally for the tsarine Catherine the Great in the 18th century. It was later revamped with great success by Samuel Smith's Imperial Stout in the 1980s. In fact, depending on the style one chooses to "imperialize" – does not matter if pilsner, IPA, stout, or porter – one can get very different



brau, whose Schorschbock won with an impressive 57% ABV. These extreme products can still be considered beers as the eisbock style is basically a mechanical fractioning of the wort, followed by a series of brewing techniques that handle the flavor and gustative profile. In fact, many aficionados harshly criticized the difficulty to effectively taste these beers, as the alcoholic strength often takes over any type of flavor and makes it quite easy to get intoxicated.

Another fashionable high proof style today requires the addition of grape to the wort for making the so-called grape ales, often in sour variety. Toward the end of the 1980s, it was the genius of the Belgian brewery Cantillon that came up with the legendary Vigneronne, an 18-month aged lambic to which they would add Italian Moscato grapes for a second maceration of about six months (now they use organic viognier grapes from France). Cantillon-inspired grape ales had large success in the whole world, with many examples from the United States, Germany, Czech Republic, and France, but it was in Italy that this style found a natural home thanks to the wide enological biodiversity of the country and the courage of some experimental brewers. Presented in 2006 by the Sardinian brewery Barley, the BB10 is still today the most representative Italian Grape Ale. IGA can actually be made in any style: indeed, the determining feature is that grape is added directly during wort fermentation as whole grapes, juice, must, sapa (cooked must), and even pomaces, largely influencing the final outcomes in relation to the percentages of malts and hops. Many brewers also experiment with wine-specific yeasts, exclusively or in combination with beer ones, as well as with the indigenous yeasts present on the grape skin when it gets added to the wort. Quite obviously, given the amount of grape involved, IGAs often follow the path of barleywines in terms of cask conditioning and maturation, finding inspiration also in the traditional method used for sparkling wines to push high fermentation to its maximum possibilities. After the international success and the awards won by the best IGAs, the Beer Judge Certification Program acknowledged in 2015 IGA as the first authentic Italian-born beer style. Considering the combinations of styles, grapes, and maturation, the aromatic profile of IGAs is difficult to summarize. The main effect of adding grape to the wort is to increase acidity and tannicity depending on the grape variety, particularly if we talk about black grapes. Alcoholic proof can be quite diversified, as it depends mainly from the starting style (and thus on the sugar gravity of the wort), but in general between 4 and 12% ABV. The combination of grape and malt is not always immediate, and results can be often disappointing, but brewers like Barley, Crak, Ca del Brado, LoverBeer, and Oenobeers Liberatori have shown that IGAs can match any prejudice. All in all, more than a new brewing style, IGAs are de facto a new hybrid species that is arousing an impressive interest among beer lovers and fine drinking aficionados.



INTERTABAK AG

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Medals of Wine

*A report from the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles
where thousands of wines from all over the world compete*

by **Vincenzo Scivetti**

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted international wine festivals in a variety of ways. For instance, the 27th edition of the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles was postponed from early May to September 4-6th in Brno, Czech Republic.

It was a quite austere edition for what is considered the most important international wine contest, born in Bruxelles, as you can imagine, and then moved across the world.

What is the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles? It is a wine contest that evaluates wines from all over the world, of all possible grapes and varieties: in this infamous year there were 8.500 different samples from more than 40 countries (there were more than 10.000 contenders in past editions). For tasters, it is also a great opportunity to get to know or to

rediscover wines and grapes that are often very rare in local markets. Just imagine that you can have a roster of Chinese wines made with Marselan and Longlan (two traditional hybrid grapes from China), Melnik and Mavrud from Bulgaria, Czech Palava, Romanian and Moldavian Feteasca, along with British, Belgian, and Luxembourgian sparkling wines, and, of course, French Bordeaux and Bourgogne, Italian Brunello and Barolo, and hundreds of other wines. This is the spirit behind the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles whose slogan is, "The United Nations of Tasters".

Behind this contest there is also a great organization. They are capable of handling not only a massive amount of samples, but also a large number of people. Besides 350-400 judges from different countries, there are about a hundred sommeliers and a courageous management team led by

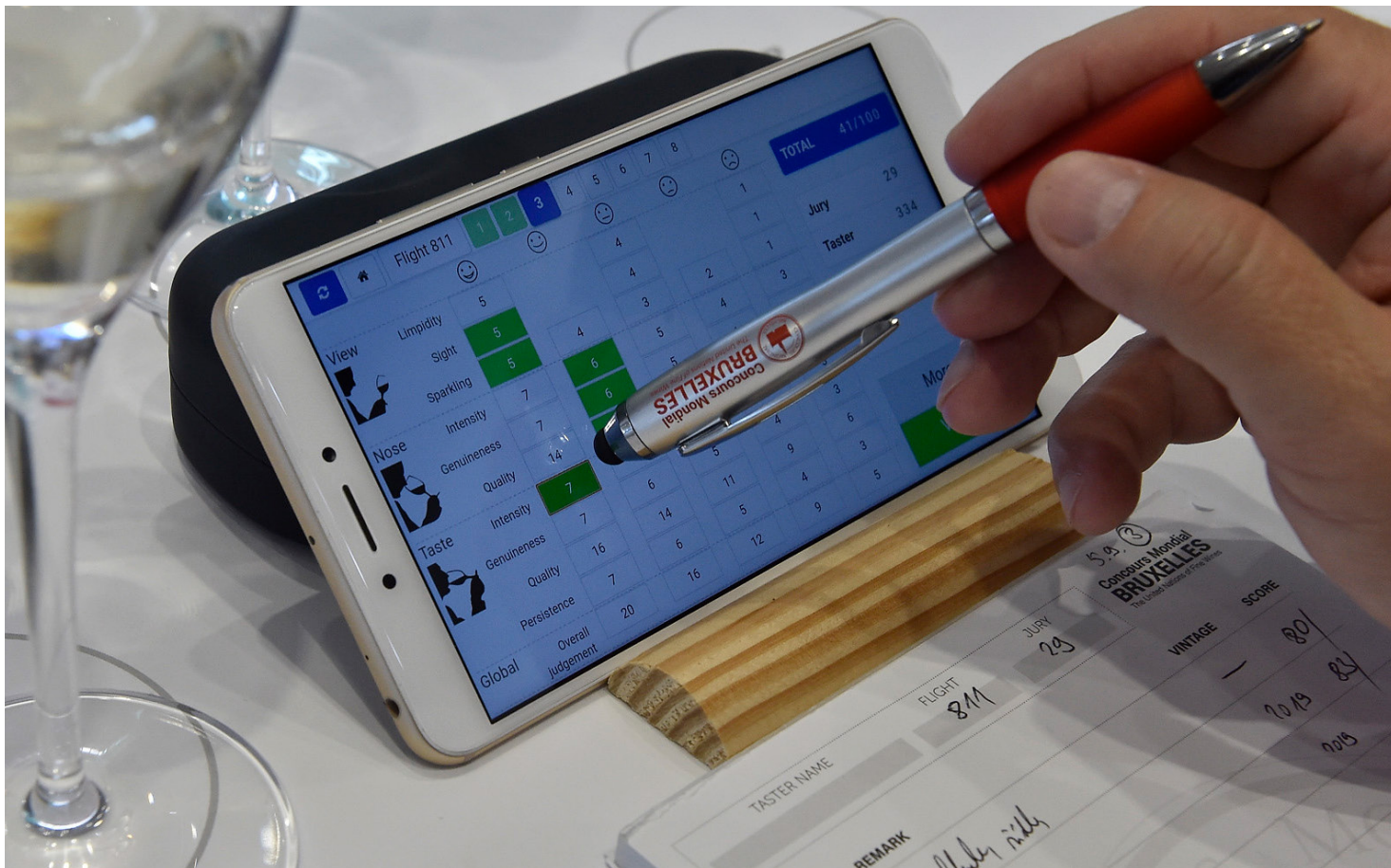
president Boudouin Havaux, director Thomas Constenoble, and, among the others, the precious Karin Meriot. Each of the approximately 50-60 panels is composed of a jury president of renowned fame and experience along with four other judges of different nationalities. Every jury evaluates at least fifty wines every morning. In my personal experience as judge and jury president for several years, I have never sat together with the same colleague twice. Usually, judges are of different nationalities, mainly from the most important European wine countries like Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, or from important markets like the UK, Benelux, and Scandinavia. Also, there are often representatives from China, Chile, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, as well as Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. A true Babel tower where the only real shared language is the word of wine, that we communicate via what I dubbed "Babilish", a universal mix of English, French, Spanish and Italian words, that allows us not only to somehow understand each other but also to exchange valuable know-how and experiences.

What are the evaluation criteria? Wines are blind tasted, without providing any information about their provenance, grape, and productive techniques. The only available information are their category (red, white, sparkling, etc.) and their vintage. In such a situation, deprived of any reference, judges must work with great attention, focusing solely on the technical quality of the wine and ignoring whatever

presumption they might have to recognize grapes and territories. Thus, the shared ground for evaluators is only the technical confrontation of products, where every different nation can offer its own peculiar approach to evaluation. Some examples? The feverish attention of French judges to the quality of tannins vis-a-vis the unconditional love of Iberian colleagues for the wood-derived flavors, as well as the Eastern Europeans' search for softness vis-à-vis the acidic freshness beloved by Germanic tasters, but these are just few examples. All judges express their own point of view within the common framework of an exemplary technical analysis. It is a constant and fecund confrontation for us judges: we can enrich our analytical skills by reading the wine in the glass and comparing our own respective cultural backgrounds.

Attending these contests offers the possibility to deepen the knowledge of wines and territories of the hosting country. This year it was the South Moravian Region's turn, at the southern border of Czech Republic with Austria and Slovakia. This area has never been particularly regarded for its wines as it is universally famed for its blonde beer of amazing drinkability. Yet, the local enological traditions date to remote times, with vineyards built by the early Roman legionaries who had found here a perfect landscape for wine farming and quality production. In particular, today this territory expresses white wines of great personality, using mainly grapes present in the nearby Austria like Grüner Velt-





liner and Rhenish Riesling that make the most representative Moravian wines. Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, and Italian Riesling are also quite successful, but above all we must consider the two hybrid grapes that offer the most intense territorial representativity: Hibernial and Palava. The first shows a decisive mineral character and a great expressive freshness. On the contrary, the second embodies the style of the sweeter Eastern European wines, but it is extremely floral and fruity, as well as harmonic and elegant. The production of red wines must unfortunately pay the price of a less than ideal climate for the best concentration and maturation. For this reason, we can often find lightly structured wines with pleasing black fruit flavors and less inviting herbal and green tannic tones, which nonetheless are still capable to amaze for their frankness and immediacy.

Why do so many producers want to participate in the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles? Whatever may be its declaration of intents, an international wine contest cannot simply establish which are the best wines in the world. First, because not all world wines can be considered by any given wine contest, but only those from registered producers. More properly, because that is not the main purpose of a wine contest. A medal given in such contests represents an evaluation that an international jury of, let's say, an Italian, a Chinese, a Portuguese, a Norwegian, a Brazilian and a Slovakian, attributes to the organoleptic characteristics and the technical quality of a wine with respect to the infinitely more

vast international wine market. Fundamentally, it becomes a certification of technical and objective satisfaction that can be attached to the bottle label for highlighting its productive value: in the case of the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, the possible awards are Grand Gold Medal, Gold Medal, and Silver Medal. These evaluations are intended for the final consumers that will be able to find in wine shops, supermarkets, and restaurants easily recognizable; award-winning wines whose organoleptic quality has been assured by a jury of experts. These medals are also a qualifying license for wine producers to sell wines on targeted markets. These indications can be particularly helpful to navigate a world of wine that is mostly split between large-scale producers for the international market and small-scale traditional winemakers who focuses on the truest expression of the grape and the terroir. Whereas the former offers a more easy-going and universally likable profile for the general consumer, the latter offers a more evolved and personalized dimension of wine tasting for the expert consumer.

This year's edition of the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles assigned the highest number of awards to France with 570 medals, followed by Spain with 495 and then Italy with 363.

Those who are interested in the full list of awarded medals, countries, and categories, can find all the details on the institutional website of the wine contest at <https://concoursmondial.com>.



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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。

雙層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，名稱擴大了蘇格蘭威士忌。雙層單威士忌也保留了單一產區的標量。一些蘇格蘭威士忌增加了生產區域，以強調產品的地域性。

*歲升之後經常出現的數字對產品的最低年齡有關。最低年齡因為，與標量不同標的混合相比，最低年齡的數字是相等的。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，無助使用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。另一個相關是Small Batch，它仍然是一個更廣泛的概念：您可以從兩桶中取出，但仍比標小一些（但一些例子：獨立桶Caskhead的更複雜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（今年精心標桶為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見的術語，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。

Hot chili

The biological family of solanaceae consists of several species, including tobacco and chili peppers.

by **Francesco Floro**

Tobacco and chili peppers, at least from a plant taxonomy perspective, can be classified as “cousins”, since they both belong to the same family (solanaceae). However, they can be distinguished by gender: nicotiana for tobacco, caspicum for chili peppers. As in tobacco, there are dozens and dozens of types of chili peppers, almost all of which belong to five main species, all related to the caspicume genus: C. annuum, C. baccatum, C. chinense, C. frutescens, C. pubescens. What makes the chili famous is its typical spiciness. The main chemical

compound responsible for this tactile sensation is named capsaicin, an alkaloid, as is nicotine for tobacco. The genetic link between these two plants is also underlined by the curious circumstance for which nicotine itself is also contained in chilies, especially in the unripe fruits. Capsaicin and the other substances that generate spiciness and all those related sensations (heat, pinch, etc.) are contained inside the chili, especially in the placenta, the white part which the seeds are attached to. To “turn off” the fire of spiciness, water and ice are not able to significantly dilute the capsaicin,

thus proving to be useless. Much more efficient is the intake of milk, sour cream or yogurt: casein and other fats present in these foods absorb the capsaicin present in the oral cavity, this way mitigating the burning hot effects. To make sure we find the right chili for our tolerability level, we can refer to the Scoville scale that measures the degree of spiciness using SHU (Scoville Heat Units). It was designed, at the beginning of the last century, by chemist Wilbur Scoville, who set a minimum value of zero for products with no capsaicin (such as the classic sweet pepper) and placed the upper limit value at 16,000,000 for undiluted capsaicin. This scale is very useful because it allows you to evaluate how “lethal” a single bite can be. A few examples. A classic “Mazzetti rosso Etna” chilli is around 30,000 Shu, while a “Carolina reaper” (the spiciest in the world) will take your breath away with its limit value over 2,000,000 Shu. The latter is about a hundred times more spicy than the classic Italian chilies (belonging to caspicum annum) or many other chilies from all over the world such as Pancho (Chile – c. annum), Cayenna (French Guyana – c. annum), Chupetinho (Brazil - caspicum chinense), tabasco (Mexico – c. frucens).

As already mentioned, going into the details of the various types of a product that has spread enormously around the globe, is a difficult and certainly not exhaustive task. We will do our best, however, to indicate chili peppers which are particularly representative for spiciness, for aromatic sensations or for peculiar characteristics.

Carolina reaper (about 2,000,000 Shu): the current spiciest in the world, very particular to the view with its wrinkled surface and small scythe popping at the bottom. An incredible experience given its strength, it will overwhelm you with spiciness leaving little room for other sensations.

Ghost pepper (bhut jolokia) (about 1,000,000 Shu): This chili is undoubtedly very nice looking with its “fluorescent” red color. The name is due to the fact that it seems to show its incredible strength only later, several minutes after the intake (a legend, in the opinion of the writer).

Habanero Chocolate (about 900,000 Shu): the spiciest of the countless varieties of habanero, gorgeous with its chocolate color. A view that does not deceive, because savoring it, you will perceive aromas of cocoa.

Jamaican scotch bonnet (about 200,000 Shu): a miniature pumpkin that will prove to be not too spicy but capable of amazing you with excellent fruity and pleasant scents.

Bird pepper (pequin) (about 100,000 Shu): named this way because of their small size and because of the birds who eat the tiny fruits, it includes several variants under the same name. One of the most widespread is a sapling with small leaves, dotted with many small red “lights”. Fruits are very small (average less than 1cm long), absolutely strong and above all very versatile, given the size.

Black fire (about 50,000 Shu): an Italian chili pepper, characterized by a very intense violet color. The taste is not as round as other varieties, but it has a rough texture that includes pungent notes, which can be quite an experience.



AWARDS

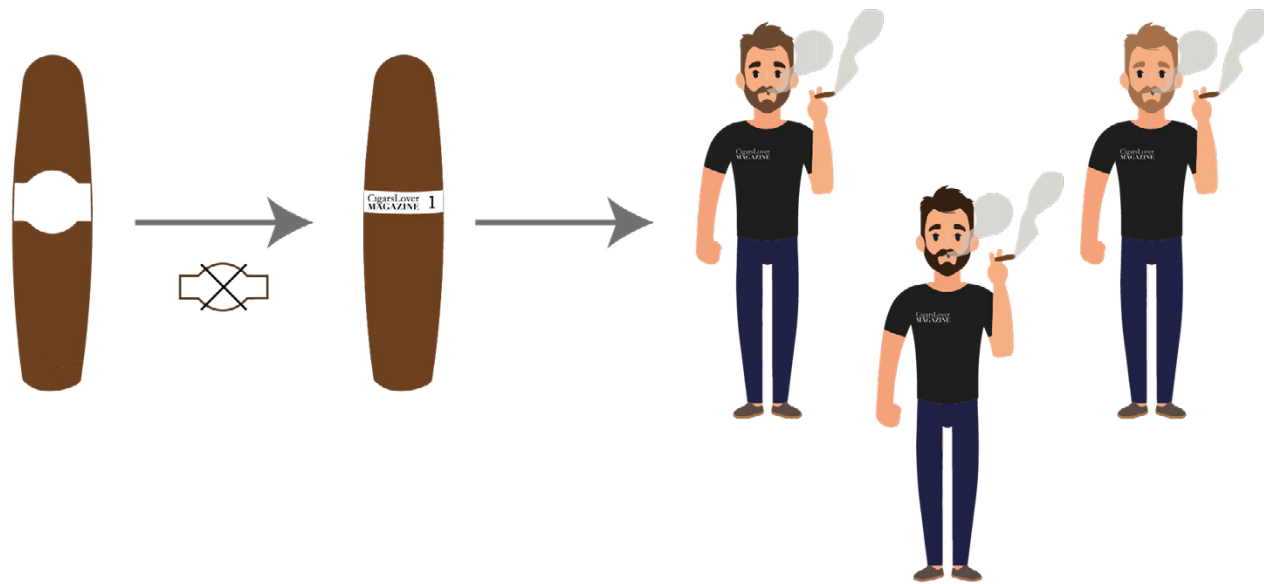
2020

At the end of the year, it is time for the big rankings, those collecting the best products tested during the year in blind tasting, combined with the latest news that have recently entered the market.

Since 2015 CigarsLover Magazine has divided cigars into five terroirs, to showcase the best products each country offers. Since 2018, the TOP50 has also been added to the Awards, the all-inclusive list without distinction of territory. This is accompanied by the Best Brands, Best Buys and the best Boutique Brands. Regarding the Spirits, 2020 brings with it an expansion of this section, which in addition to the 10 best whiskies of the year, now showcases also the 10 best rums of the year. The next pages collect the best of the best, the products that have thrilled us the most, the ones we recommend to end 2020 with a bang, and at the same time start 2021 in the best way!



HOW ARE THE AWARDS MADE?



The cigar rings are removed and cigars are once again "dressed" with a new band, which simply bears a number. The same happens for the spirits, which are poured into little sample bottles, only showcasing a number and a possible indication, regarding the alcohol content, if the ABV is higher than 50%.

The products are then tested in a completely impartial way, in a blind tasting in which the tasters do not know which products they are trying.



The evaluations are then collected and CigarsLover Magazine team gets to work, calculating the averages and creating the final evaluations.

BEST 50 CIGARS of the YEAR

Only the best products, those that registered the best scores, are included in the 2020 Awards list.

BEST RUM & WHISKY of the YEAR



TOP 10 RUMS

1

Foursquare Nobiliary

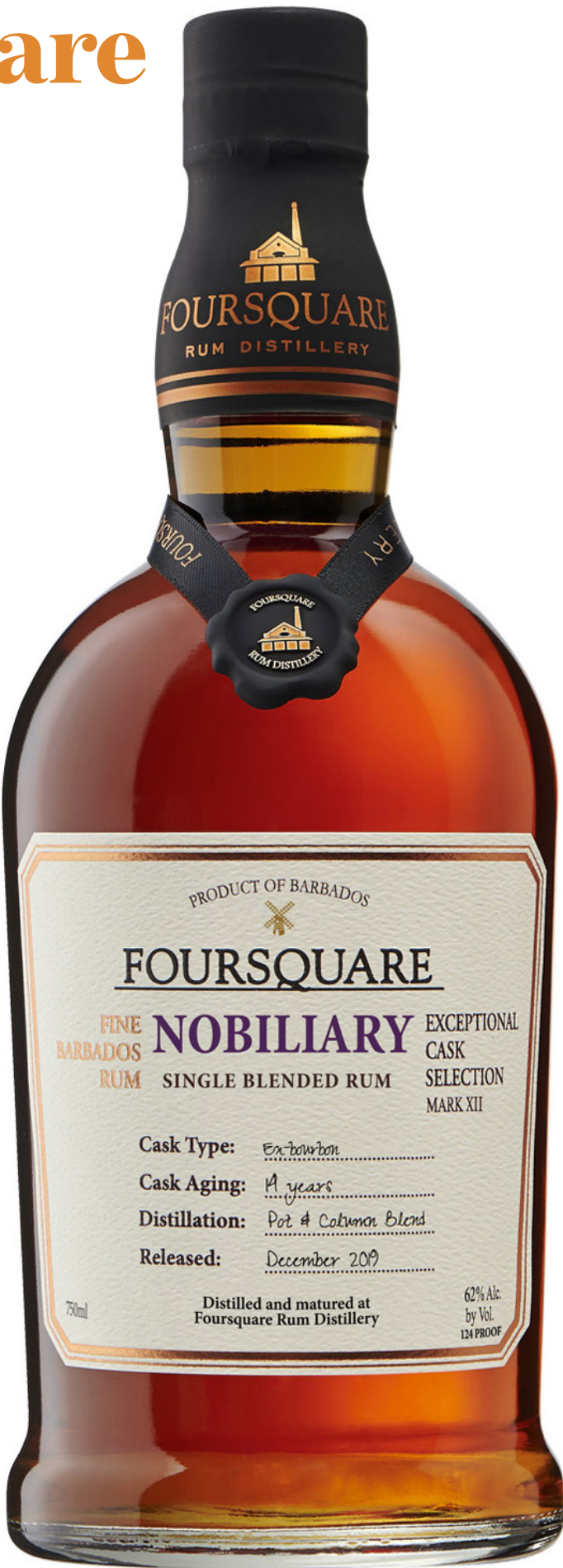
TROPICAL FRUIT,
A RIOT OF SPICES
AND WOOD.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Barbados	62% - 124	\$98 - €79

Owned by the Seale family, Foursquare is one of the most prestigious traditional and independent distilleries in Barbados. Completely renewed in 1996, over the past years the new distillery became worldwide famous for producing high-level and great value bottles.

This Nobiliary expresses the noblest and most exclusive soul of the 2005 production. It is a cuvée of molasses rum from column and pot still that has spent fourteen years in bourbon casks before being bottled cask strength at a whopping 62% ABV.

In the glass, a blast of tropical fruit, a wide range of spices, and precious wood. The palate is coated by precious wood, vanilla, caramel, and coffee beans. The long finish is dominated by a riot of spices.



96

2

COUNTRY
Martinique
ABV - PROOF
52.8% - 116.4
PRICE
\$150 - €135



Depaz 2005 Single Cask N° 503

PECAN, WOOD AND A RIOT OF SPICES.

Established in 1651 among the mountains of Martinique, Depaz is one of the oldest everlasting distilleries. After a devastating eruption, Victor Depaz rebuilt the distillery in 1917 and it has been making peculiar and prestigious bottlings ever since. This rum agricole was put in cask in 2005 for fifteen years. Every cask has been bottled cask strength at 58,2% ABV for a limited production of only 485 numbered and signed bottles.

It develops balsamic aromas, with pecan nut, fine wood, and dried fruit. On the palate it is slightly astringent, with pecan nut, spices and caramel. Wood, leather and tobacco are revealed in the long finish.

95

3

COUNTRY
Venezuela
ABV - PROOF
43% - 86
PRICE
\$119 - €99



Diplomatico Single Vintage 2005

CHESTNUT HONEY, FINE WOOD, SPICES.

Diplomatico is the par excellence Venezuelan ron. The Single Vintage range represents the best year expression of the distillery production. Made in the traditional copper stills, this cuvée spent twelve years in a combination of bourbon and single malt whisky casks before being finished for another year in sherry butts. It is bottled at 43% ABV, in eye-catching bottles.

It releases aromas of chestnut honey, caramel, and cocoa, along with red fruit and spices. Wood, raisins, and caramel, with spicy nuances on the palate. The finish reveals precious woods and spices.

94

4

COUNTRY
Martinique

ABV - PROOF
44% - 88

PRICE
\$79 - €68



HSE
Kilchoman Finish 2013

PEAT, SPICES AND VEGETAL NOTES.

For more than a century, Rhum HSE has been one of the main producers of rum agricole in Martinique. This collaboration with the Scotch distillery Kilchoman showcases a six-year old liquor with a unique four-month finish in Islay peated single malt casks. Bottled at 44% ABV, the result is a surprising rum that combines the rustic flavor of agricultural rum with the potency of peat in a characterful product.

In the glass, sweet peaty scents and mineral notes, together with vegetal and smoky aromas. On the palate it is peaty and herbal, enriched by an explosion of spices. In the finish, cedar zest, wood and ash.

93

5

COUNTRY
Costa Rica

ABV - PROOF
40% - 80

PRICE
\$220 - €210



Centenario
Real

WOOD, COFFEE, CARAMEL, DRIED FRUIT.

Boasting a century-long tradition, Centenario is the symbol of Costa Rica's traditional rum. Thanks to their fertile volcanic soil, the molasses of this Spanish-style rum expresses the best of the territory in a cuvée of precious aged liquors aged between 15 and 30 years. Bottled at a classic 40% ABV, Centenario Real has a great drinkability and elegance beyond compare.

In the glass, aromas of coffee, candied citrus, and almond, enriched with caramel and red fruit. Wood, vanilla, and caramel, with toasted nuts, on the palate. The long finish is dominated by spice.

92

6

COUNTRY
Jamaica

ABV - PROOF
43% - 86

PRICE
\$109 - €75



Appleton Estate
21 years old

ORANGE PEEL, HAZELNUT AND COCOA.

From the Nassau Valley, in the heart of Jamaica, Appleton Estate has become one of the most prestigious, known and appreciated Caribbean rum producers. The master distiller made a special selection of their best aged rums for this limited edition of 12.000 bottles. The 21 years old is equipped with a great harmony and it is well structured. It is bottled at 43% ABV.

In the glass, it releases aromas of caramel and spices, enriched with cinnamon and orange peel. Honey. Hazelnut, wood and cocoa on the palate. The finish outlines honey and citrus.

92

7

COUNTRY
Dominican Rep.

ABV - PROOF
43% - 86

PRICE
\$99 - €79



Opthimus
25 years old Port Finish

RAISINS, CUSTARD AND COCOA.

This rum is another excellent product of the Dominican distillery Oliver & Oliver. After twenty-five years of maturation in bourbon casks, this special version of the Opthimus undergoes a precious finish in Port pipes. It is then bottled at 43% ABV. The 25 years old Port Finish is a traditional Spanish-style rum apparently creamy and sweet with a surprising boisé personality.

In the glass, aromas of sponge cake, raisins, custard, and a touch of dark chocolate. Echoes of nutmeg. Notes of candied orange are added on the palate. Almond and noble wood in the finish.

92

8

COUNTRY
Jamaica

ABV - PROOF
62% - 124

PRICE
\$120 - €100



Habitation Velier
Monymusk EMB 2010

DARK CHOCOLATE AND SPICES.

Luca Gargano is one of the most important collectors and connoisseurs in the rum world. His products are always targeted towards maximum quality and complete productive transparency. The Monymusk is a Jamaica Pure Simple Rum pot still distilled in 2019 and aged for 9 years. It is bottled cask strength at 62% EMB, which means that it has a light level of esters of 275,5 gr/hlpa.

It develops scents of dark chocolate, spices, raisins and citrus, along with a touch of citrus. Red fruit, dates and dark chocolate on the palate. Cocoa, caramel and spices are present in the long finish.

91

9

COUNTRY
Dominican Rep.

ABV - PROOF
40% - 80

PRICE
\$85 - €75



Quorhum
QRM 30 years old

COCOA, CAMEL AND SPICES.

QRM is the most aged ron produced by Oliver & Oliver distillery, established in Cuba, but operating for a long time in Santo Domingo. Made from molasses and aged in bourbon cask with a solera method where the oldest liquor has 30 years, the QRM is a creamy, sumptuous, and perfectly structured ron. It is bottled at 40% ABV, for a triumph of toasted spices.

In the glass, it reveals caramel, honey and spices, together with dried orange. Wood, cocoa, caramel and almond on the palate. Cocoa, caramel and wood spices are confirmed in the long finish.

91

10

COUNTRY
Belize

ABV - PROOF
53.8% - 107.6

PRICE
\$75 - €65



Fair Rum
Belize 8 years old

COCOA, ORANGE PEEL AND SPICES.

Fair Spirits produces high-quality liquors using only source materials from ethical and fair-trade cooperatives. Their distillery in the Cognac region of France is run with passion by master distiller Philip Laclie. In this case, Belize's sugar cane gets transformed into an intense and balanced rum, despite the very high alcohol content (53,8% ABV), due to the cask strength bottling.

In the glass it is fresh, with hints of menthol, marzipan, and ginger. Wood and cocoa, together with orange peel, are present on the palate. Spices, cocoa, and orange peel, with balsamic highlights, in the finish.

91



PAGE

1000+
CIGARS
TESTED
EVERY
YEAR

FIND CIGARS





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

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.



TOP 10 WHISKIES

1

Glendalough

17 years old Mizunara Cask Finish

TROPICAL FRUIT,
RED APPLE
AND SPICES.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	46% - 92	\$279 - €230

Since 2011, the guys at Glendalough brought back to life the ancient art of Irish single malt whisky establishing their fame as one of the most interesting European craft distilleries. Moreover, they were among the first European producers to discover the joys, and the troubles, of the difficult aging in Japanese mizunara oak casks.

Last year, their 13yo Mizunara ranked sixth in our award charts, but this year the bigger brother overcame any competition thanks to its peculiar and complex profile. Bottled at 46% ABV, it is a triple distilled pot still single malt aged for 15 years in ex-bourbon casks and finished for 2 years in the delicate mizunara casks that gave it unique nuances of resin, patchouli, and sandalwood. A limited edition of only 6000 bottles.

In the glass, it releases aromas of red apple, enriched with honey and wood spices. On the palate yellow fruit and tropical notes, along with fine wood, pecan nut, and a touch of ginger. White pepper in the long finish.



95

2

COUNTRY
Scotland
ABV - PROOF
52.9% - 105.8
PRICE
\$240 - €175



Highland Park

17 years old The Dark

GENTLE PEAT, CITRUS AND PEPPER.

The Orkney distillery is one of the most important and lasting brands on the market. Among the many special and limited editions, this The Dark set the path of a new series dedicated to whisky color hues. The intense dark hue, named embernectar, derives from 17 years in rich sherry butts that maximized the typical peated and salty notes of the northernmost whisky in Scotland. Bottled cask strength at 52,9% ABV.

Peat and smoky scents are enriched by medicinal herbs, cloves, and cherry compote. On the palate peat, coffee beans, and wood spices, together with lemon peel and hazelnut. Peppery finish.

94

3

COUNTRY
Taiwan
ABV - PROOF
57.8% - 115.6
PRICE
\$380 - €280



Kavalan

Solist Fino Sherry

RIPE TROPICAL FRUIT, HONEY, COCOA.

Kavalan's Solist range established itself as one of the bravest and more interesting experiments on the market with its unconventional cask maturations and single cask strength bottlings. Every bottle is numbered and marks the cask code with the signature of the Master Blender. In this case, we have precious Spanish Fino sherry casks. Bottled at 57,8% ABV, this 2020 batch is really an astonishing high level whisky.

A riot of ripe fruit and honey, enriched by a mix of exotic fruit, with a touch of coconut. On the palate, white pepper and caramel are added. Spicy finish, with cocoa, honey, and orange zest.

94

4

COUNTRY
Scotland

ABV - PROOF
52% - 104

PRICE
\$150 - €130



The Tweeddale 28 years old The Evolution

CANDIED ORANGE, CUSTARD, HONEY.

Reborn in 2010 after a half-a-century long oblivion, Tweeddale is a small independent bottler of blended whisky. Over the past decade they strongly contributed to the renaissance of blended whisky, but this 28 years old made with Speyside single malts and a Lowland single grain set a new standard on the market. It is bottled at 52% ABV, unfiltered and uncolored, it is a complex, elegant, and really satisfying scotch whisky.

In the glass, it releases rich scents of leather, lemon zest, honey, and candied orange. On the palate custard, noble wood, and vanilla. The finish is slightly balsamic, with custard and honey.

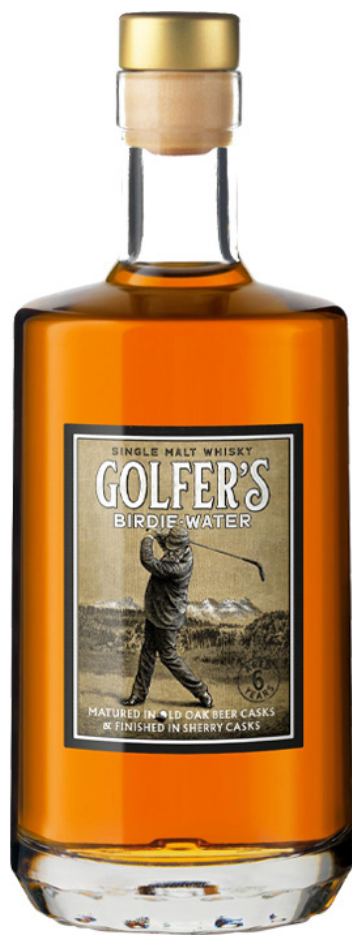
93

5

COUNTRY
Switzerland

ABV - PROOF
46% - 92

PRICE
\$65 - €55



Sântis Golfer's Birdie Water

CEREALS, VANILLA AND TOFFEE.

Nestled between the Swiss Alps and the Lake Constance, Brauerei Locher is an historical brewery that has been producing an interesting range of beer casked whisky for the past two decades. This year's special edition is a single malt aged for six years in the traditional family beer casks and then finished in flavorful sherry butts. Bottled at 46% ABV, it showcases a unique tasting profile in the European whisky production.

Malt and mineral notes, with a touch of burning match, together with red fruit. On the palate noble wood, vanilla and toffee, enriched by a sweet spiciness. Peppery finish, with cloves and wood spices.

92

6

COUNTRY
Canada

ABV - PROOF
57% - 114

PRICE
\$70 - €59



Lot No. 40 Cask Strength 3° Edition

PECAN, BLACK PEPPER, ORANGE PEEL.

Considered lost for years, Lot 40 is one of Canada's alcoholic jewels that luckily has become once again worldwide available after the productive troubles of the 2000s. The third release of the cask strength version of this nowadays mythic rye whiskey arrives on shelves bottled at a whopping 57% ABV after being integrally matured in French oak cask. A rich and fulfilling whiskey, that can also be savored with a drop of water.

Pecans, nutmeg, and maple syrup, along with cereal biscuits. On the palate noble wood, black pepper, pecans, and orange peel. Long and peppery finish, with peppermint, cloves, and wood varnish.

91

7

COUNTRY
U.S.A.

ABV - PROOF
47% - 94

PRICE
\$39 - €44



Legent

COCOA, RED FRUIT, LEATHER, VANILLA.

This bourbon is the fruit of the collaboration between the two legendary figures of Fred Noe, Jim Beam's master distiller, and Shinji Fukuyo, Suntory's chief blender. Fred developed the original recipe of the mash, which first matures in virgin oak casks and then gets split between Californian red wine casks and sherry butts. Finally, Shinji mastered the perfect blend at 47% ABV among the different souls of this dark, rich, and sumptuous bourbon.

Vanilla, pecan nut, leather and milk chocolate, with a touch of red fruit are present on the nose. Cocoa, wood, caramel and a toasted vein are revealed on the palate. Long finish, with spices, vanilla and nutmeg.

91

8

COUNTRY
Scotland

ABV - PROOF
47.2% - 94.4

PRICE
\$300 - €230



Big Peat
33 Years Old

PEAT, SHERRY E GRILLED PINEAPPLE.

For over a decade, Douglas Laing has been standing for powerful peated whisky and original experimentations. This year they decided to really amaze us with an exalted blend of Islay single malts with a minimum age of 33 years. Its complex structure works around delicate and refined nuances thanks to an original combination of cognac and sherry cask finishing. Bottled at 47,3% ABV for a limited production of 1500 bottles.

Winey with red fruit hints, enriched by a sweet component of mineral peat. Then peat, grilled pineapple, noble wood, and a touch of olives on the palate. The finish is smoky, sapid and buttery.

91

9

COUNTRY
U.S.A.

ABV - PROOF
50% - 100

PRICE
\$45 - €65



Balcones
True Blue 100 Proof

CRÈME BRÛLÉE, RED FRUIT AND CORN.

Established in 2009 in Waco, Texas, Balcones is a bold distillery that over the years has been capable of building a solid range of corn whisky (yes, without the e) from the precious blue variety, locally grown in Mexico and in the Southern US. Even after the departure of the brilliant founder Chip Tate, Balcones continued to develop its core range and found in the True Blue 100 Proof the best and more balanced expression of this original liquor.

Scents of crème brûlée and maple syrup. Eucalyptus oils follow. Unripe red fruit, toasted corn, white pepper, and rich notes of cocoa and nut on the palate. Long finish, with cedar peel and toasted corn.

90

10

COUNTRY
India

ABV - PROOF
48% - 96

PRICE
\$75 - €70



Paul John
Oloroso Select Cask

DARK CHOCOLATE, DATES AND CLOVES.

Since 2012, Paul John has been the premium brand of John Distilleries' single malts from the Indian island of Goa, in India. After the 2018 limited edition, this regular bottling reached a smashing shape thanks to a two-year finish in rich sherry Oloroso casks. The total aging is seven years, and this Indian single malt is bottled at 46% ABV. It shows a marvelous natural and unfiltered mahogany hue. A rich and intense dram.

In the glass, it releases red fruit, cloves, and dark chocolate. On the palate it is peppery, with orange chocolate and dates. A mix of spices, with utmeg, cloves and citrus, is delivered in the finish.

90



300+
SPIRITS
TESTED
EVERY
YEAR

FIND SPIRITS





TOP 50 CIGARS



CUBA

1

Punch Double Coronas

*SWEET AND MASTERFULLY BALANCED.
FINE WOOD, CITRUS AND COFFEE.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	49x194mm (7 5⁄8")	N/A \$ - 18€	1h 40min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA

The Punch Double Corona belongs to the very few survivors of the prominente vitola. Yet the format still has a lot to tell, like this Punch Double Corona which positively surprised everyone during the blind tastings. The origins of its production date back to the pre-revolutionary period (a cajon of 100 was also produced), and it has remained the same without changing too much in its most characteristic features.

The cigars are wrapped in a bright Colorado leaf, with golden reflections, that is smooth to the touch. The structure is slightly box-pressed due to them being packaged in boxes. Construction and filling are always at the highest level.

What characterizes the smoke of this Double Corona is the underlying sweetness, a distinctive feature of the Punch brand, associated with a creamy smoke that is almost chewable. The flavor profile is complex since the aromas are always offered in an excellent mix that makes the evolution itself a continuous crescendo. The start is dominated by precious wood and citrus fruits, supported by a suave note of white pepper. Continuing, you will notice cocoa, hints of coffee, and toasted notes, the latter more present towards the end, with a long finish. The strength is of medium intensity, all to the benefit of a maximum flavor perception.

93



2

Bolivar
Belicosos Fino

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●●	52x140mm (5½")	N/A \$ - 13€	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



POWERFUL AND PERSISTENT. WOOD, PEPPER AND LEATHER.

A veteran of Cuban production who, between ups and downs, has become a fixture in the Habanos SA portfolio. It is also one of the few cigars for which it is possible to find packaging in boxes or cabinets.

It releases a smoke faithful to the brand's flavor profile: strong, intense, full-bodied, and with a very long persistence.

Aromas of wood, earth, but above all, pepper and leather, real distinctive features of the cigar. The strength is immediately very pronounced, but the intensity of the flavors does not allow the former to overwhelm it.

92

3

Cohiba
Coronas Especiales

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	38x152mm (6")	N/A \$ - 23€	1h 05min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



ELEGANT AND SWEET. WALNUT, HONEY AND SPICES.

The younger brother of the Lancero, this Laguito No. 2 shares the refinement and the broad flavor profile. It is a format that requires all the smoker's attention to deliver an excellent smoke.

The base flavor is sweet but turns towards sapid characters in the central part, traveling hand in hand with the evolution.

The opening delivers rich notes of walnut and honey, together with spicy and leather nuances, with the latter intensifying during the smoke, and becoming dominant in the last section, joined by a touch of cocoa as well.

91

4

Partagás
Capitols

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	42x127mm (5")	N/A \$ - 10€	45min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



RICH AND FULFILLING. WHITE PEPPER, WOOD AND LEATHER.

Officially presented in 2017, they reached world markets only in 2020, contributing to the relaunch of the image of Cubans packaged in metal tin, a way to sell cigars that was in vogue in the 1980s.

The format of the Capitols is perfect for an afternoon enjoyment or after meal, without sacrificing the quality of a Partagás.

White pepper and wood dominate the flavor profile but are also flanked by notes of leather and coffee. The strength increases during the smoke but never exceeds the medium level—a new product but faithful to the brand.

91

5

Cuaba
Divinos

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	43x101mm (4")	N/A \$ - 7€	40min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



COMPLEX & BOLD. PEPPER, WOOD AND MINERAL NOTES

The Divinos is the only representative of the Short Perfecto format present in the Habanos portfolio, not often chosen by aficionados because an unpretentious and straightforward smoke is expected from a small cigar.

Instead, the size allows the smoker and the cigar to warm up for a few minutes before exploding into a complex smoke.

On a sapid base, it develops balsamic, peppery, and woody aromas, enriched with mineral hints. Then the pepper becomes richer. Advancing in the smoke, an earthy note appears as well.

90

HONDURAS

1

Rocky Patel Number 6 Corona

*GREAT BALANCE AND EVOLUTION.
EARTH, INCENSE, WALNUT AND SPICES.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	44x152mm (6")	9 \$ - 9 €	1h

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA

Rocky Patel launches many new products each year that range from new cigars, line extensions and limited editions. Pair this with being in the business for twenty years, and sooner or later you'll run out of ideas on how to name your cigars. This was the case. So they simply decided on the "Number 6" name, which comes from the code that the blend had during the testing phase. Some of the tobaccos used to make this cigars have been carefully cultivated in Rocky's own farms.

The cigar is dressed up in a beautiful, and shiny Colorado shaded Honduran Corojo wrapper. The main large black band and the small one on the foot of the cigar, give it an elegant look. It is sold in black laquered boxes containing 20 cigars.

A complex and evolutionary smoke, equipped with an outstanding balance. A rich and fulfilling corona.

It develops notes of black pepper and earth, together with nuances of incense. Advancing in the smoke, the spicy component becomes more and more pronounced, culminating into hot spices. Then, roasted aromas and walnut are delivered, soon becomes the prominent flavor in the last section of the smoke.

94



2

Plasencia
Cosecha 146
San Augustin

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x159mm (6¼")	12\$ - 12€	1h 20min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



RICH AND FULFILLING. VEGETAL, ROASTED NOTES. WOOD AND PEPPER.

While the Plasencia Cosecha 146 is a celebratory cigar, it does not celebrate a birthday. "Cosecha", which means harvest in Spanish, commemorates the 146th crop that the Plasencia's have cultivated back in 2011-2012.

Balanced and intense, it boasts a pronounced structure. It is a very fulfilling cigar.

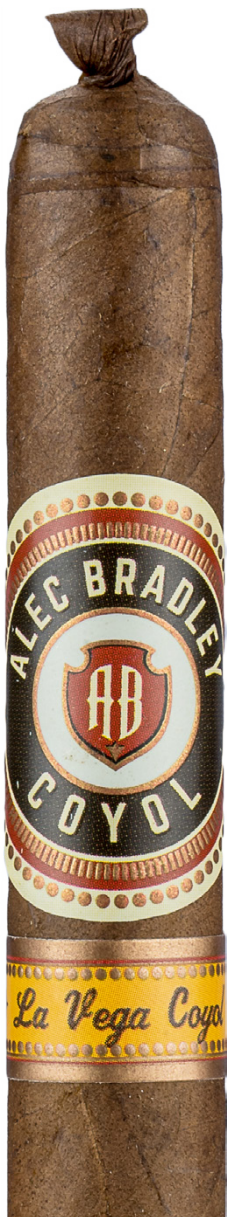
It releases earth and intense spicy notes, where black pepper stands out. Then seasoned wood is added, followed by cocoa. In the second half, the earth becomes the primary flavor, alternating with spices.

93

3

Alec Bradley
Coyol
Petit Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	41x165mm (6½")	7.5\$ - 7 €	1h 05min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



RICH AND CREAMY. WOOD, ALMOND, COCOA AND PEPPEE.

Launched in 2014, the Coyol is named after a type of tree, the Coyol palm, that is typical for the tobacco region in Honduras. There is also a farm with the same name owned by Alec Bradley, from where most of the tobaccos are from.

A rich and Intense cigar, equipped with a pronounced balance and a very intesting evolution.

It releases wood, a mix of nuts, where almond stands out, and hints of cocoa. Then earth and spices are added, which recall black pepper. Balsamic herbs take over in the second half as well.

92

4

Cavalier Genève
Black Series II
Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	38x178mm (7")	8.5\$ - N/A €	1h 20min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	MEXICO	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



HARMONIOUS. EARTH, WOOD AND PIQUANT SPICES.

The brand, with the golden diamond on their cigars, first introduced the Black Serie II in 2017, and the cigars are all box-pressed. In December of 2019, Cavalier Genève released this Lancero size, which is yearly made in small batches.

Balanced and with an evolution that clearly distinguishes the three-thirds of the smoke.

It releases fine wood, vegetal notes, and white pepper, which culminates with spicy tips in some puffs. About halfway through the smoke, the flavor profile sees the entrance of the walnut. The finish introduces a touch of balsamic herbs.

91

5

Aladino
Cameroon
Lonsdale

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	43x152mm (6")	8 \$ - N/A €	1h 05min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



COMPLEX. CINNAMON, WALNUT AND FINE WOOD.

The Aladino Cameroon line uses a Cameroon-seed wrapper cultivated in Honduras by Julio R. Eiroa. Through trial and error over many years, JRE Tobacco Co. was finally able to get a wrapper leaf they could use.

It is an incredibly balanced cigar, which boasts a pronounced complexity. Fulfilling.

The flavor profile revolves around aromas of fine wood and spices, which recall cinnamon. All this is flanked first by walnut notes and then by vegetal aromas, which are outlined starting from the middle section of the cigar.

90

NICARAGUA

1

Joya de Nicaragua Número Uno Le Premier

*COMPLEX AND DEEP.
HAZELNUT, EARTH, WHITE PEPPER, CITRUS.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	48x175mm (6⅞")	16.5\$ - N/A €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

What initially started as a cigar made as a diplomatic gift, with a simple band, turned in 2019 into its own cigar line: the Número Uno. After creating a new look for the line, Joya de Nicaragua introduced it to their Obras Maestras series, including the brands Cinco Decadas and Cuatro Cinco. In the beginning, the line contained only one size in the line-up, a Lonsdale vitola dubbed "L'Ambassadeur". After a year, Joya de Nicaragua expanded the line with the "Le Premier". Both cigars are named after embassy positions, and Le Premier, like the L' Ambassadeur, is finished in a fantail.

With its smooth golden brown Ecuadorian Connecticut Shade wrapper, the Le Premier has a classic and elegant look. Silky to the touch, and with an outstanding construction.

It delivers a well balanced smoke, with a deep and structured flavor profile, boasting also a pronounced complexity.

At first it releases notes of hazelnut and cedar wood, together with a suave spiciness, which recalls the white pepper, and culminates in hot spices in some puffs. Then rich incense and walnut aroms are exhibited, enriched with hints of citrus. The finish is fulfilling, and alternates earthy and spicy notes.

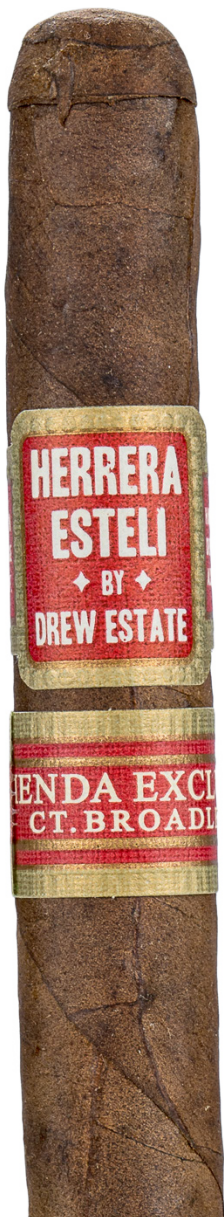
94



2

Herrera Esteli
Conn. Broadleaf Tienda
Exclusiva Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	38x178mm (7")	12 \$ - N/A €	1h 20min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	U.S.A.	BRAZIL	NICARAGUA



*INTENSE & FULFILLING.
DARK CHOCOLATE,
EARTH AND SPICES.*

The Herrera Esteli Connecticut Broadleaf Tienda Exclusiva Lancero was introduced in the second half of 2020. While the “Tienda Exclusiva” is Spanish for Store Exclusive, this release is not limited to one shop but sold nationwide.

Great intensity of flavors, it also stands out for its pronounced evolution. A spice bomb with a “chocolaty” finish.

It releases a riot of black pepper, joined by almond, roasted notes, and wood. Then earth, mushrooms, and hot spices. The second half turns to rich dark chocolate notes and light balsamic herbs.

93

3

Perdomo Reserve
10th Anniversary
Champagne Epicure

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	54x152mm (6")	9 \$ - 11 €	1h 10min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*RICH AND REFINED.
CITRUS, RIPE FRUIT
AND EARTH.*

Perdomo's 10th Anniversary Champagne was originally launched back in 2008. It wasn't the only available wrapper variation at the time. Some were discontinued and new ones were introduced this year, but the Champagne has stood the test of time. A classic.

It features a remarkable persistence and presents a broad and refined profile. The intensity is impressive.

It releases notes of citrus and cedarwood with a hint of white pepper. Then earth is added, and the spices become more pronounced. In the second half, a riot of ripe fruit and cocoa nuances appear.

93

4

J.C. Newman
Yagua

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	54x152mm (6")	7.5 \$ - N/A €	1h 10min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	U.S.A.	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*UNIQUE AND COMPLEX.
INCENSE, EARTH AND
COCOO. PEPPERY.*

J.C. Newman has turned 125 this year. They celebrated the occasion with some updated looks to certain brands and followed up the successful release of The American line with one of the most interesting releases this year: the Yagua line.

Marked complexity, this cigar releases an uncommon flavor profile. Interesting and unique.

Wood and earth, together with nuances of citrus, open the smoke. The central third alternates incense, earth, and cocoa, enriched with white pepper and cardamom. The spices then become the main flavors in the finish.

92

5

Fonseca
by My Father
Cosacos

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	43x137mm (5 3/8")	8 \$ - N/A €	45min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*LONG PERSISTENCE.
BLACK PEPPER, WOOD
AND HAZELNUT.*

Late last year, My Father Cigars announced that they had purchased the Fonseca brand's U.S. rights. Half a year later, they released the completely overhauled brand, featuring a completely new blend and design, to the market.

Rich, intense, and equipped with a long persistence, it delivers a fulfilling smoke.

It releases intense spicy notes, where black pepper stands out, together with wood, aromatic herbs and hazelnut. In the second half, roasted coffee notes also take over, along with balsamic nuances.

91

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



1

Adventura Royal Return King's Gold Robusto

*GREAT COMPLEXITY. INTENSE.
COCOA, EARTH, SPICES AND A TOUCH OF HONEY.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	52x127mm (5")	13.5 \$ - 13.5€	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	U.S.A.	MEXICO	U.S.A, NICARAGUA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Since the inception of the company, it has almost become custom for them to release a new line each year. This year, Adventura Cigars introduced the Royal Return but changed things up a bit. The line comes in two different blend variations, majestically named King's Gold and Queen's Pearls. They both share the same size, except for the Corona size that only comes in the Queen's Pearls blend for now. In true Adventura fashion, the packaging is another unique presentation, with the box resembling a treasure chest and the band being made out of pewter metal.

The Maduro color of the Connecticut Broadleaf wrapper of the King's Gold highlights the golden metal band even more. It is oily, with a decent amount of tooth to it. Complex and structured, it is masterfully balanced cigar. Satisfying.

It releases rich notes of cocoa and citrus, enriched with earth and a touch of incense. The base is honeyed. Advancing in the smoke, it continues with spicy aromas of white pepper, which gradually become more intense, culminating in hot spices. During the whole smoke, the balance between sweet and sapid flavors is outstanding. A pure pleasure.

95



2

La Aurora
107 Nicaragua
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x127mm (5")	8.5 \$ - 8 €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*RICH AND BALANCED.
WHITE PEPPER, EARTH
AND COFFEE BEANS.*

The La Aurora 107 Nicaragua is part of the Tobaccos of the World Collection from the brand. This series highlights various tobaccos from different countries, and this cigar is made exclusively with leaves grown in Nicaragua.

It was introduced this year. Intense, balanced, and equipped with a great harmony.

Vegetal and roasted notes of coffee beans are followed by spices, among which the white pepper stands out. Then an intense seasoned wood note is added, enriched with nuances of cocoa.

93

3

Davidoff
Special «53» WRAPPER
Dominicana LE 2020

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	53x156mm (6½")	32 \$ - 31 €	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*BUTTERY AND BALANCED.
WOOD, CAPPUCCINO
AND NUTMEG.*

The Davidoff Special 53 Capa Dominicana LE 2020 was one of the latest releases from the Swiss company, but it wasn't necessarily new. Initially, the 53 was launched back in 2002 and was the first Dominican Puro Davidoff had made.

Balanced and complex, it is smooth and buttery. Very creamy.

It develops hazelnut and seasoned wood, followed by a touch of nutmeg, which work their way onto a sweet base. Throughout the smoke, herbal nuances and roasted cappuccino aromas are added to the flavor profile.

92

4

Arturo Fuente
Rosado Sungrown
Magnum R 58

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	58x133mm (5¼")	9 \$ - 11 €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*CREAMY AND INTENSE.
WHITE PEPPER, FINE
WOOD AND CITRUS.*

Arturo Fuente's extensive portfolio, some lines fly under the radar, especially when that portfolio includes the famous Opus X. While not being the newest line of Fuente, it is younger than others, with only a decade of age, but it has already become a classic.

A masterfully balanced smoke, paired with a pronounced harmony. Very fulfilling.

It releases intense notes of white pepper and fine wood, which alternate throughout the smoke, enriched with a touch of citrus. A mix of earth and hazelnut is then outlined in the second half of the smoke.

92

5

Laura Chavin
Classic
No. 99

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	38x178mm (7")	N/A \$ - 16 €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*WELL STRUCTURED.
WOOD, WHITE PEPPER,
EARTH AND CITRUS.*

After a tumultuous couple of past years, Laura Chavin is back under new ownership. While the factory has remained the same, the whole portfolio was redesigned and rebled, including the Classic line.

Equipped with a long persistence, it releases an intense and satisfying smoke, with a marked evolution. Elegant and balanced.

Seasoned wood and hazelnut are in the center of the flavor profile, enriched by a spicy base, which recalls white pepper. Halfway through the smoke, citrus fruits are added, while in the last section, the spicy component expands, with chili spice.

91

REST OF THE WORLD

1

Casdagli Daughters of the Wind Cremello

*COMPLEX AND CREAMY.
WOOD, HERBS, HAZELNUT, HONEY AND PEPPER.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	39x190mm (7½")	8.5 \$ - 14 €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
COSTA RICA	COSTA RICA	COSTA RICA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, PERU

Jeremy Casdagli, founder and owner of the brand, created this line in homage to his ancestors. They bought a horse stable from the Sheikh Obeyd in the early 1900 near Cairo, Egypt. They successfully bred Arabian racehorses that were famous for their elegance and power. Daughters of the Wind is the name of an Arabian poem from the sixth century, which describes the beauty of the Bedouin horses from the desert. The horse is the centerfold of the band, and most of the sizes are named after horse breeds. In 2019, the production was moved to Costa Rica.

The Cremello, a Lancero size, is as elegant as the horse breed it is named after. The wrapper is of a reddish Colorado shade that is smooth and oily to the touch. It delivers a creamy and elegant smoke, with a broad and well-structured flavor profile.

It releases aromas of cedarwood, white pepper, and herbs, all on a sweet and honeyed base. Advancing in the smoke, hazelnut notes are added, while the spice range expands, with the entrance of pink pepper.



93

2

Casa Turrent
1880
Colorado

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	55x165mm (6½")	20 \$ - 14 €	1h 15min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO



*GREAT BALANCE.
WOOD, HAZELNUT
AND LEATHER.*

The Casa Turrent 1880 (the year when the company was founded), was released in 2017, and saw the addition of not one but four wrapper variations to the line. Each of the four variants focuses heavily on Mexican tobacco.

It is balanced and round, with a prolonged persistence.

It develops wood, hazelnut, and vegetal notes, enriched with a hint of white pepper. In the central section, the leather is then added, and the smoke sees the base become progressively sweeter.

92

3

Casa Fernández
Aniversario Cuba
109 Maduro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	54x159mm (6¼")	13 \$ - N/A €	1h 10min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*STRUCTURED.
PEPPER, EARTH,
COFFEE AND LEATHER.*

The Casa Fernández Aniversario line commemorates the 35 years of the company. The yearly release is made in Miami, but this year's version has two distinct features, the Nicaraguan Corojo Maduro wrapper, and the 109 finished head.

Intense and structured, it releases an immensely satisfying smoke.

Black pepper, cocoa, and toasted coffee notes open the smoke, which is soon joined with notes of earth, leather, and cinnamon, together with a mix of nuts, which gradually becomes more pronounced.

91

4

Villiger
Do Brasil
Maduro Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	54x140mm (5½")	9.5 \$ - 10 €	1h 10min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	BRAZIL	BRAZIL	BRAZIL



*RICH AND FULFILLING.
WOOD, CASHEWS AND
GREEN PEPPER.*

The Villiger Do Brasil line launched in early 2020 and is named after the homonymous factory, which opened its doors in mid-2018. This Brazilian puro showcases this often overlooked tobacco to the fullest and in the best way possible.

Intense and satisfying, it has a broad and structured flavor profile.

It develops toasted notes of coffee, earth, and spices, where cinnamon stands out. Then wood and cashews, enriched with nuances of green pepper. In the last part, the wood alternates with vegetal notes.

91

5

Toscano
Duecento

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	46x184mm (7¼")	11 \$ - 6€	1h 15min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ITALY	U.S.A.	-	ITALY, U.S.A.



*BOLD AND RICH.
EARTH, WOOD, SPICES
AND SMOKY NOTES.*

The Toscano Duecento celebrated the 200th anniversary of the "Sigaro Toscano" in 2018. In 2016, the Italian brand started the distribution in the U.S., and this year the "Duecento" (two hundred in Italian) has made its way into U.S. stores.

With a rich and almost chewable smoke, it releases a satisfying and balanced smoke.

It delivers wood, walnut, and earth, enriched by a suave spicy base. In the second half, wood and spices are brought to the fore, becoming the primary flavors.

90



CALDWELL
cigar co.











BEST
















































50

CIGARS

of the

YEAR

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
95	1. Adventura Royal Return King's Gold Robusto		52 x 127 mm (5")	...	\$\$\$
	<div><div><div>RATING ON A 100 POINTS SCALE</div></div><div><div>POSITION, BRAND, LINE AND CIGAR NAME</div></div><div><div>PLACE WHERE THE CIGAR IS MADE</div><div><div> BRAZIL</div><div> CUBA</div><div> HONDURAS</div><div> MEXICO</div><div> U.S.A.</div><div> COSTA RICA</div><div> DOMINICAN REP.</div><div> ITALY</div><div> NICARAGUA</div></div></div></div>				
			<div><div>RING GAUGE AND LENGTH</div><div><div><div>•</div><div>••</div><div>•••</div><div>••••</div><div>•••••</div></div><div><div>LIGHT</div><div>LIGHT TO MEDIUM</div><div>MEDIUM</div><div>MEDIUM TO FULL</div><div>FULL</div></div></div></div>	<div><div>\$</div><div>\$\$</div><div>\$\$\$</div><div>\$\$\$\$</div></div> <div><div>BELOW 6</div><div>FROM 6 TO 10</div><div>FROM 10 TO 15</div><div>ABOVE 15</div></div>	

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
95	1. Adventura Royal Return King's Gold Robusto		52 x 127 mm (5")	...	\$\$\$
	2. Joya de Nicaragua Número Uno Le Premier		48 x 175 mm (6⅞")	••••	\$\$\$
94	3. Rocky Patel Number 6 Corona		44 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$
	4. Herrera Esteli Connecticut Broadleaf Tienda Excl. Lancero		38 x 178 mm (7")	••••	\$\$\$
93	5. Perdomo Reserve 10th Anniversary Chamapagne Epicure		54 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$
	6. Punch Double Coronas		49 x 194 mm (7⅝")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	7. Plasencia Cosecha 146 San Augustin		52 x 159 mm (6¼")	•••	\$\$\$
	8. Casdagli Daughters of the Wind Cremello		39 x 190 mm (7.5")	•••	\$\$
	9. La Aurora Nicaragua Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5")	•••	\$\$\$
	10. Alec Bradley Coyol Petit Lancero		41 x 165 mm (6½")	•••	\$\$
92	11. Arturo Fuente Rosado 58		58 x 133 mm (5¼")	•••	\$\$
	12. Davidoff Special 53		53 x 156 mm (6⅛")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	13. Bolivar Belicoso Finos		52 x 140 mm (5½")	•••••	\$\$\$
	14. Casa Turrent 1880 Colorado		55 x 165 mm (6½")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	15. JC Newman Yagua		54 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$
91	16. Villiger Do Brazil Maduro Toro		50 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$
	17. Laura Chavin Classic No. 99		38 x 178 mm (7")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	18. Fonseca by My Father Cosacos		42 x 137 mm (5¾")	••••	\$\$
	19. Balmoral Añejo XO Oscuro Gordito		58 x 102 mm (4")	••••	\$\$
	20. Diplomatico Petit Corona		44 x 114 mm (4½")	••••	\$\$
	21. El Güegüense 5th Aniversario		60 x 121 mm (4¾")	•••••	\$\$\$
	22. Padron Family Reserve 45 Years Natural		52 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	23. AJ Fernandez Dias de Gloria Robusto		52 x 140 mm (5½")	•••	\$\$
	24. Cohiba Coronas Especiales		38 x 152 mm (6")	••	\$\$\$\$
	25. Cavalier Black Lancero		38 x 178 mm (7")	•••	\$\$
	26. Macanudo Inspirado Black Canonazo		52 x 146 mm (5¾")	•••	\$\$
	27. Partagas Capitols		42 x 127 mm (5")	•••	\$\$
	28. Mil Dias sublime		54 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$
	29. Casa Fernández Aniversario Cuba 109 Maduro		54 x 159 mm (6¼")	•••	\$\$\$
	30. Rocky Patel ALR Second Edition Toro		52 x 165 mm (6¼")	•••	\$\$\$
90	31. Aladino Cameroon Lonsdale		43 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$
	32. Caldwell LLTK Mad MF Corona		43 x 146 mm (5¾")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	33. Sobremesa Brûlée Blue		46 x 159 mm (6¼")	•••	\$\$\$
	34. Tatuaje Black Label Corona Gorda		46 x 143 mm (5⅝")	•••••	\$\$
	35. La Galera Anemoi Eurus		48 x 140 mm (5½")	•••	\$\$
	36. Roma Craft Baka Pygmy		46 x 102 mm (4")	•••	\$\$
	37. The Oscar Maduro Corona		44 x 133 mm (5¼")	••••	\$\$
	38. Trinidad Esmeralda		53 x 146 mm (5¾")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	39. Picardo Reserva Familiar Habano		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$
	40. Stolen Throne Crook of the Crown Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5")	••••	\$\$\$
	41. Vikings Norseman Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$
	42. Davidoff Robusto Intenso LE 2020		52 x 130 mm (5⅛")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	43. Joya de Nicaragua Cuatro Cinco Edicion Asia		60 x 114 mm (4½")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	44. Cuaba Divinos		43 x 101 mm (4")	••••	\$\$
	45. El Viejo Continente Brevium		56 x 120 mm (4¾")	•••	\$
	46. Kristoff Pistoff Corona Gorda		48 x 146 mm (5¾")	••••	\$\$
	47. Eiroa Dark 50x5		50 x 127 mm (5")	•••	\$\$\$
	48. Toscano 200		46 x 184 mm (7¼")	••••	\$\$
	49. Aganorsa Leaf Supreme Leaf Toro		54 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$
	50. Camacho Liberty Series 2020		60 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$\$

Best BRANDS



Best Brand Cuba

In 1997 the Trinidad brand was presented to the world with a single cigar, which remained in the Olympus of Cuban production: the Fundadores. Until that year, the brand remained shrouded in mystery: formally, there was no brand with this name. Only a Laguito No. 1 sized cigar (the same as the Cohiba Lancero) that was produced exclusively to become a diplomatic gift. Fidel Castro would gift this cigar to foreign leaders visiting the island. In 1997, as described above, the cigar was officially recognized and distributed to the markets. While maintaining the length of a Laguito No. 1 (192mm), the ring gauge was increased (from 38 to 40).

Later, in 2004, the portfolio was expanded and at the time included the Reyes, Coloniales, and Robusto Extra (the first two still produced).

Only in 2019, the portfolio was further expanded with the

presentation of the new Esmeralda, Media Luna, Topes, and the very limited Coleccion Habanos (or Habanos Book) Casilda. It would take until 2020 until all new products would reach the various markets in a widespread manner.

Trinidad's production has always been synonymous with consistency and reliability, also demonstrated by the three new references introduced to the regular production. Even after a long aging period, this brand's cigars improve considerably, showing that propensity for rest, typical for high-end Cubans.

All the brand's products develop a smoke tending more to sweetness, incredibly rich in flavor (the flavor profile is usually made of notes of honey, walnut, nuts, ripe fruit, and vanilla), and with a strength level never over the top.

Impossible not to appreciate a Trinidad!



Best Brand Honduras

Aladino might be a new brand, but the family behind it isn't. Non-other than Julio R. Eiroa is behind Aladino. Most cigar smokers have heard of the Eiroa name, mainly through Julio's son Christian Eiroa and the association to the Camacho brand that Julio helped build since the family acquired Camacho in 1995.

Julio R. Eiroa was born on January 11, 1938, in San Juan y Martinez, Cuba. He grew up in a tobacco cultivating family that had been growing tobacco since the 1900s. Due to the Cuban Revolution, the family was forced into exile and settled in Florida. In 1963, on behalf of Angel Oliva, he traveled to Honduras, where he decided to become an independent farmer and change the tobacco history in Honduras with his Authentic Corojo. After buying, building, and selling the Camacho brand in 2008 (while maintaining ownership of the fields and factory in Honduras), Julio focused on growing tobacco until his non-compete expired. In 2015, a 77-year-old

Julio called his eldest son, Justo Eiroa, with the idea in mind to start a new company. JRE Tobacco Co. debuted at the IPCPR of the same year and presented three brands, including their flagship brand Aladino, a Honduran Puro. The tobacco is grown on Eiroa's farm in the Jamastran Valley, and the line is made up of twelve sizes. Since then, JRE Tobacco Co. has introduced a couple of wrapper different wrapper variations, like the Maduro and Connecticut.

The Aladino line made it into our awards in 2018, with the Aladino Corojo Reserve. Since then, the line has regularly appeared in our blind tastings, and the cigars have always done well. This year they are back in the Top 5 with the Aladino Cameroon. The Aladino line underlines the time, work, and care that goes into each product, from seed to finished cigar. JRE Tobacco Co. continues to innovate while maintaining their consistency and their growing fan base is a testament to that.



Best Brand Nicaragua

Drew Estate has been one of the biggest come up stories of the past twenty-plus years in the cigar world. From rags to riches. They went from being a small retail shop in NYC to one of the most prominent players in the cigar world.

Jonathan Drew started in the industry in 1995 by selling cigars out of a small kiosk, located in New York City's World Trade Center. Marvin Samel, Jonathan's former fraternity brother, joined him the following year. Together they founded Drew Estate Inc. They launched their first brand, La Vieja Habana, in 1998. Later that year, Jonathan decided to move down to Esteli, Nicaragua. While Marvin was holding things together in New York, Jonathan, and a handful of rollers, started their rebirth in the cigar industry. After a crazy year, Jonathan returned to Brooklyn in early 1999, with a blend that later became the ACID brand. These infused cigars became a mega-hit, but the premium cigar industry

did not take them seriously. It took another mega-hit to earn them their respect. In 2007, with the help of Nicholas Melillo and Steve Saka (who both worked at Drew Estate at the time), they launched the iconic Liga Privada No. 9 and, as the saying goes, the rest was history. In the same year, Jonathan realized his dream of building his factory. La Gran Fabrica Drew Estate is the largest factory in Nicaragua. Since then, they have successfully introduced premium brands, such as Undercrown, Herrera Esteli, Norteño, Nica Rustica, and many more. Last year, the Liga Privada 10 Aniversario placed first in the Top 5 Cigars of Nicaragua. Drew Estate has followed up the award's win with a great year, confirming their consistency with excellent ratings in our Blind Tastings. They also launched great new lines, brought back old classics, and introduced line extension, the stand out being the Herrera Esteli Connecticut Broadleaf Lancero Tienda Exclusiva cigar (which came in second in the Top 5 Cigars of Nicaragua this year).



Best Brand Dominican Rep.

La Aurora has a long-storied past that started towards the end of 1903. The factory was founded by Eduardo León Jimenes (only 18 years old) in Don Pedro, a Guazumal community in the province of Santiago de los Caballeros.

Eduardo's family were tobacco growers. In 1912, after moving the factory to Santiago de los Caballeros, the demand increased due to the cigars' high quality. The iconic lying lion of the La Aurora brand first appeared on bands in 1926 and became its symbol. The patriarch, Eduardo León Jimenes, died in 1937, and his brother Herminio, together with Eduardo's sons Eduardo León Asensio and Fernando León Asensio, takes over. During World War II, La Aurora stopped worldwide exports due to shipments constantly being attacked by warships. 1963 is an important year for La Aurora, as they moved their headquarters to Villa Progreso, on the outskirts of Santiago, and exports resumed. This marks the

company's growth, and many cigar lines followed, which became a staple in their portfolio. In 2007, La Aurora moved their headquarter to the Zona Franca in Tamboril. The company is now lead by the third generation, the president Guillermo León Herbert.

After many successful introductions of brands like León Jimenes, Serie 1903 Preferidos, La Aurora 100 años, La Aurora 107, and many more, it has gotten quit around the brand. However, in the last couple of years, La Aurora has returned to old form with releases like the 115 Anniversary, which won them our award for best cigar in the Dominican Republic in 2019. They didn't stop there and followed the success up with the La Aurora 107 Nicaragua, another release that did exceptionally well in the Blind Tastings this year and managed to place in the Top 5 Best Cigars from the Dominican Republic, underlining La Aurora's consistency. This stand out year has more than earned them this award.



Best Brand Rest of the world

Villiger Cigars is no stranger to Brasil and especially its tobacco. In the long history of the company, which dates back to 1888, the Brazilian tobacco was among the first leaves processed by the family since then. It started the love affair between Villiger and Brasil, which carried over to Heinrich Villiger, the company's owner. He continued the tradition of using this tobacco in many of their brands.

Fast forward to mid-2018. Heinrich Villiger stands in front of his new factory in Feira de Santana, which is in the eastern state of Bahia that he just opened and named Villiger do Brasil. Villiger's last factory was located in the same area. The new factory measures 700 square meters and is significantly larger than the old one. Around thirty rollers are responsible for approximately 3000 cigars per day. Contrary to the custom in countries like the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua of the bunching and rolling split

between two people, the rollers are responsible for both steps, like it happens in Cuba.

The factory produces exclusively Brazilian puros, including brands like the Corrida Brazil, the San'Doro Maduro, Celebration, the recently released Anniversary 2020. But the highlight out of this factory is the brand carrying the same name (which was also released this year), Villiger do Brasil. The Villiger do Brasil line comes in two wrapper variations: the Claro, which uses a Connecticut Shade seed varietal grown in Brazil; and the Maduro uses an Arapiraca wrapper. No matter which one you choose, both are excellent smokes. We have tasted both variants, in different sizes, in many blind tastings this year, and with the Villiger do Brasil Maduro Toro even placing second in our Rest of the World category. The excellent ratings speak for how good the consistency and taste are—a great representation of an under-rated type of tobacco.



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BEST BOUTIQUE cigars





DIPLOMÁTICO

By Mombacho Petit Corona

BOLD AND FULFILLING

Mombacho Cigars S.A. partnered with Diplomático Rum and created a line of cigars that was specifically blended to pair with the Rum. Part of the cigar sales are being contributed to non-profit organisations of each companies choosing. An intense and flavorful smoke. Notes of earth, nutmeg, and cinnamon are later joined by wood and nuts.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	44x114mm (4½")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	40min	\$ 10 € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



SOBREMESA

Brûlée Blue

REFINED AND SWEET

The Sobremesa Brûlée is a milder version of the regular Sobremesa line from Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust. A couple of months later, Steve Saka released a tweaked version of the Brûlée, dubbed Blue. A very smooth smoke with a refined profile. It releases sweet notes accompanied by wood, leather, and white pepper.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	46x159mm (6 ¼")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 10min	\$ 15 € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	MEXICO	NICARAGUA



EL GÜEGÜENSE

5th Aniversario

RICH AND STRUCTURED

Foundation Cigar company turned five years old this year and celebrated the occasion with a tweaked blend of the El Güegüense line, in a Perfecto size. A full-bodied smoke with an intense flavor profile. The cigar reveals notes of black pepper, hazelnut, leather, and earth throughout the whole cigar. Fulfilling.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	60x121mm (4¾")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●●	55min	\$ 15 € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	MEXICO	NICARAGUA



PICARDO

Reserva Familiar Habano

BALANCED AND HARMONOUS

A.C.E Prime, founded in 2019, made a big splash at last years PCA with launching a plethora of different lines, that also includes the Pichardo Reserva Familiar Habano cigars. A harmonious, rich and round smoke. It develops vegetal notes, with earth, white pepper, and nuts, mainly hazelnut, develop throughout the smoke.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	52x152mm (6")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	1h 10min	\$ 11 € 12

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	DOM. REP., NICARAGUA



MIL DIAS

Sublime

CREAMY AND WELL BALANCED

Mil Dias refers to the thousand days it took Jon Huber, together with Luciano Meirelles and Eradio Pichardo, to get to the final blend. It is the second collaboration of Crowned Heads and Tabacalera Pichardo. It is a well balanced and complex smoke. It develops notes of nuts, wood and earth. White pepper and herbs follow in the second half.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	54x152mm (6")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 10min	\$ 11.5 € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	COSTA RICA, PERU, NICARAGUA



STOLEN THRONE

Crook of the Crown Robusto

BALANCED AND RICH

Stolen Throne is a brand born last year and presented to the public with the Crook of the Crown line. A special feature worthy of mention is the use of a Mexican San Andres wrapper aged for ten years. It is round, with an intense flavor profile. It develops mineral notes, walnut, and wood, followed by spices, cocoa, and balsamic notes.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x127mm (5")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	\$ 10.5 € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	INDONESIA	INDONESIA, NICARAGUA

BEST BUY cigars



WIR WÜNSCHEN
GENUSSVOLLE
FESTTAGE



CHARTER OAK
Habano Rothschild

BOLD. COFFEE AND PEPPER.

Foundation Cigar Co. introduced the Habano blend in the second half of 2020. This is the third wrapper variation to their wallet friendly Charter Oak line. Compared to the other two variations, the Habano has an additional Torpedo size. It is a spicy yet balanced smoke. It develops notes of black pepper, leather, nuts and coffee.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x127mm (5")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	5.5\$ - N/A €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



MONTOSA
Robusto

SWEET. ELGANT AND CREAMY

The Montosa brand belongs to the Arnold André Cigar Company, founded more than two hundred years ago and is the largest cigar producer in Germany. They have worked over three years on this blend before releasing it to the market. Creamy, with a good complexity. It reveals aromas of wood, cappuccino, and white pepper on a sweet base.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP	50x127mm (5")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●	50min	N/A \$ - 4€

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



SAN PEDRO DE MACORIS
Brazil Robusto

RICH. COCOCA AND COFFEE.

During the IPCPR of 2018, Royal Agio introduced the San Pedro de Macoris line to the public, named after the homonymous city located in the Dominican Republic. This line comes in three different wrapper variations, including the Brazil. A balanced and smooth smoke. It brings aromas of coffee, wood, cocoa, and pepper to the palate.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x130mm (5½")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	5\$ - 4.2€

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	BRAZIL, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



A.J. FERNANDEZ
Blend 15 Robusto

RICH. WOOD AND WHITE PEPPER.

Introduced in the second half of 2020, it is the first bundle cigar sold under the A.J. Fernandez brand. This Nicaraguan long-filler puro is sold internationally, except in the US. A flavourful and medium-bodied smoke. It delivers wood and white pepper aromas, on a creamy and sweet base.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x127mm (5")	88

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	- \$ - 4 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



JOYA DE NICARAGUA
Joya Red Short Churchill

BALANCED, LEATHER AND COFFEE.

Joya Red was launched in 2014 and was the first line under the newly launched Joya family of blends. The modern look introduces the smoker to the Joya de Nicaragua portfolio. A smooth and vibrant smoke. The flavor profile is made up of pepper, nuts, leather, and roasted coffee.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x127mm (5")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	6 \$ - 6 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



ASYLUM
Schizo 50X6

BALANCED. WOOD AND PEPPER.

The Asylum Schizo launched back in 2012 and was created by Kevin Baxter and Tom Lazuka, in collaboration with Christian Eiroa. This Nicaraguan puro is a medium filler cigar, and it includes the tobacco cuts of the regular Asylum blends. It is a rich and flavorful smoke. The profile consists of roasted coffee, cocoa, wood, and pepper.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x152mm (6")	88

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h	3.5 \$ - 3 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

Credits

2020 Epilogue

picture by: Renz A. Mauleon

Sait Luis Rey

foto di: Mario Amelio - Cubancigarwebsite.com

Ricky Rodriguez

picture by: Mario Amelio

The future of lounges

picture by: Renz A. Mauleon - designmynight.com

Table cigar cutters

picture by: Renz A. Mauleon

Hakon Aanonsen

picture by: Hakon Aanonsen

Nicholas Melillo

picture by: Foundation Cigars Company

Las Vegas

picture by: caesars.com

B.i.B.

picture by: Renz A. Mauleon

Blended Whisky

picture by: Chivas - Renz A. Mauleon

Blood and Sand

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Glencairn

picture by: Glencairn

Perlage & Cigar

picture by: Mario Amelio - Renz A. Mauleon

Truffle

picture by: stock.adobe.com - elements.envato.com

Highest Proof

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Medals of Wine

picture by: concoursmon- dial.com

Blind tasting - Spirits

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