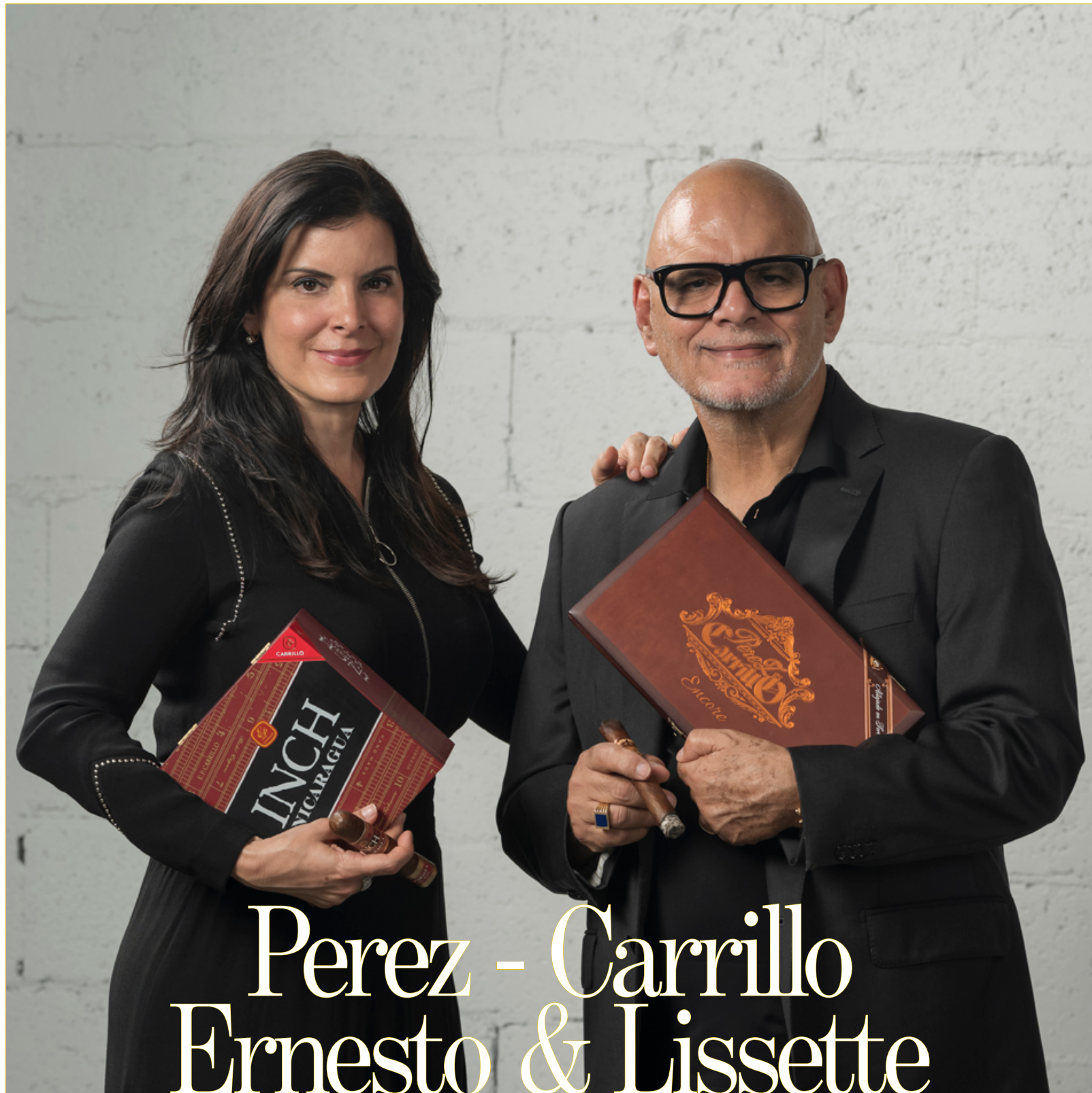


CigarsLover MAGAZINE

ISSUE 3 - 2022



Perez - Carrillo Ernesto & Lissette

- DAVIDOFF BLACK BANDS - DEFECTIVE CIGARS - TOSCANO MASTER AGED - INTERTABAC FAIR - HUMIDOR WOOD
- KAVALAN'S SHERRY SECRETS - SPICED RUM - HONEY IN DRINKS - THE PIÑA COLADA - PAIRINGS: THE SHERRY
- CHAMPAGNE: IF SIZE MATTERS - AGED FISH, THE NEXT FRONTIER - BEER: SOUR FRUIT COMPLEXITIES

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Editor's thoughts

The New Beginning

This issue is published right after the PCA, just held in Las Vegas. The PCA wasn't canceled the past year. However, due to the pandemic still going on and all the limitations and travel restrictions, it wasn't an easy task for everybody to participate, even for cigar lovers and colleagues based in the United States. 2022 seems to be the year where the events will come back, but the pandemic has already changed how consumers and producers interact. Nowadays, technology makes it easier to stay in touch, and physical events are now a sort of bonus, where people have more time to enjoy staying together and to share the experience, rather than having to deal with a lot of things at the exact moment because that is the time for all.

Another big event will happen in September: the Intertabac fair in Dortmund. For the past two years, the Intertabac was canceled, and for the European distributors and the producers, it will be a great thing to shake hands like it was before the world changed.

Digitalization improved many things, and the pandemic just increased the speed of all this happening.

Now, let's enjoy the moments, the stay together, the sharing the experience.

#refineyourtaste



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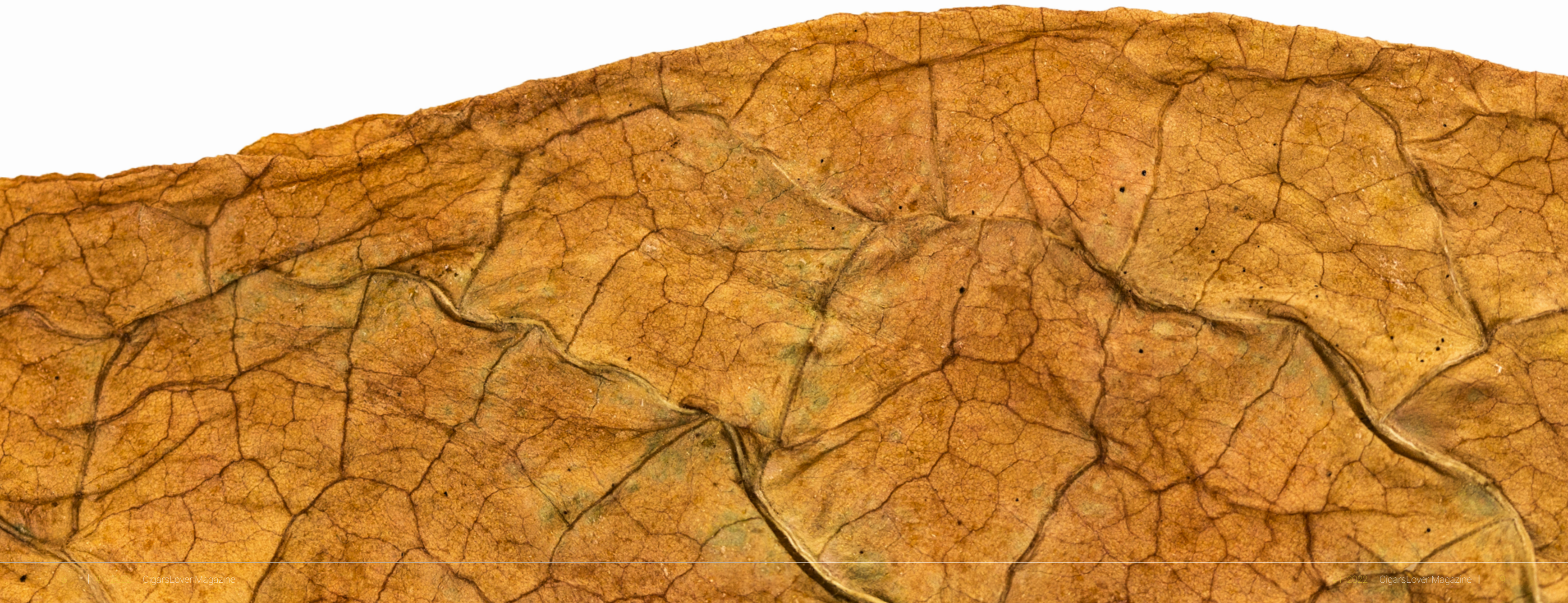


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CIGARS

"Any cigar smoker is a friend, because I know how he feels."

Alfred de Musset



Davidoff Black Bands

The Black Band Collection ushered in a new era for Davidoff.

by **Michel Arlia**

When you talk about innovation in the cigar industry, Oettinger Davidoff is definitely among the first companies mentioned. Oettinger Davidoff, whose brands are anchored around the flagship brand Davidoff Cigars, has always tried to push the boundaries of cigar-making, and it is remarkable what they have been able to achieve with “a bunch of dried up leaves.”

One of the monumental events for Oettinger Davidoff in recent memory was the introduction of the first line under the “Davidoff Black Band Collection”, the Davidoff Nicaragua. The line was launched almost ten years ago, in 2013, and it was nothing short of a game-changer for the Swiss brand. Before the Davidoff Nicaragua entered the picture, every cigar that had the name Davidoff attached to it came only dressed in the unmistakable gold on white bands. Going into the blends of such classics as the Davidoff Signature, Aniversario, Grand Cru, and many more, the company “limited” itself to using tobaccos from mainly two countries, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. Everything was flipped upside down with the Davidoff Nicaragua. The design of the bands changed from an elegant gold on white to a seductive silver on black. Not only was the design of the Davidoff Nicaragua unprecedented for the brand, but the Nicaraguan-only blend was also a complete departure from everything a Davidoff fan had come to love. Aside from being a well-received and sought-after cigar, the first Black Band line created a platform for Davidoff to experiment with different tobaccos that people were not expecting them to use.

Two years after the successful launch of the Nicaragua line, Oettinger Davidoff presented their next experimental blend in their Davidoff Black Band Collection, the Davidoff Escuro. Escuro marks the first time Davidoff had used Brazilian tobacco in any of their blends and said tobacco is included in the filler and as a binder. The Yamasá line completed the trio that makes up the Davidoff Black Band Collection a year later. The tobacco comes from a particular region in the Dominican Republic called the Yamasá valley. Cultivating to-

bacco in that region was a challenge that took the Davidoff Master Blenders twenty years of continuously working the soils to get the tobacco needed for the blend. This specific tobacco is used in the Yamasá line as a binder and filler. This year, the Swiss family company released the Davidoff Limited Edition 2022. The Master Blenders at Davidoff created a blend that combines the best of the landmark tobaccos of the three Black Band Collection lines into one gran toro-sized cigar. To celebrate this unique release, Oettinger Davidoff asked no one other than Star Chef Jeroen Achten (Jeroen Achten is the mastermind behind the «Sens» restaurant at the Vitznauerhof in Vitznau, Switzerland, and the winner of the “Rising Star of the year 2022” by GaultMillau), to create a pairing to go with the Limited Edition 2022. Jeroen went above and beyond and created not one but two pairings, a drink, and also a dessert. We had the chance to talk to Jeroen and Sam Reuter, Global Brand Ambassador/Head of Product Innovation at Oettinger Davidoff AG, about food, cigars, and more.

Hello Jeroen, you are a fan of cigars. What do you look for in a cigar, and what is an absolute no go?

I'm a big cigar lover. Of course, I don't have the experience of older men who have been enjoying cigars for 30 or 40 years. But I think that makes it also interesting because in a way I have a different point of view. For me, cigar smoking has to fit to the moment. Meaning that, when I'm sitting in a lounge somewhere, or outside if it's warm enough, I want to enjoy a fine cigar. The feeling is different when I come home from my dinner service and sit on the balcony to unwind with a cigar. It really depends. I honestly have to say that the Davidoff Limited Edition 2022 was a cigar that felt fitting for several different situations. Because it's pretty easygoing, but it also has a defined character. I cannot really tell you what I am looking for in a cigar. Sometimes look for spiciness, power, or leather, and sometimes more for caramel or coffee elegance. So, it depends on my current feeling. Therefore, it is nice for me that there are a lot of cigars on the market.



Oettinger Davidoff approached you to create something special to be paired with the Davidoff Limited Edition 2022. Can you explain the drink and the dessert to us and how you approached this unique task?

My first reaction was, "Seriously?!", thinking I would just create a pairing with fine food and a drink, with which we can enjoy the cigar. But then my thoughts started to travel and I took on the challenge and got creative. They gave me a few cigars of the Limited Edition 2022, which I enjoyed on my balcony – on my own. This allowed me to taste and take in the cigar with all my senses, focus on the flavors and think about how I could translate them into a dish.

This sounds like an interesting sensorial experience – what were your first ideas?

The dish that came to mind first really excited me. It is called Sükerbölle and originates from the region where I come from, the north of Holland. It's a sweet bread with tiny chunks of sugar inside. It is flavored with a little bit of cinnamon. To this sweet bread we added Buffalo blue cheese from Switzerland and created a kind of a bread pudding by combining the bread pudding with the layers of the skinny slices of the cheese. To round it up, we put the pudding in the oven to caramelize the sugar.

How does this creation match the Davidoff Limited Edition 2022?

The caramelized notes match wonderfully with the coffee notes in the cigar and the blue cheese adds to its spiciness. But we wanted to experiment even more. Hence, we made a gel out of fermented blueberries and created a blueberry chip. We topped it up with an ice cream made of caramelized bananas and a topinambur caramel. The topinambur contributes an earthy component, which you also get in the cigar. We also added a few chilies in this cheese dessert kind of dish, which we pickled in a sweet and sour marinade to slightly curb the spiciness, but preserve the flavor of the chili fruit. The cigar is quite mellow at the start, but you can slightly taste some chili flavors. If you start eating while you're halfway through or in the final third of your cigar, and bite on the chili, it will remind you of the beginning of the cigar. Next to this special dessert, we enjoy a beautiful cocktail, for which we used Zacapa XO rum. We mixed it with some Martini Rosso and Kahlua, and we finished it with topinambur foam and crumble on top. Pretty interesting flavors I never had before.

Pairings are usually created to enhance the respective products that are combined or, if possible, even create an entirely new flavor experience. What do your creations bring out in the Limited Edition 2022 that makes it such a unique sensation?

Good question. As you say, pairings can go in completely different directions. With this pairing, I tried to come as

close to the cigar as possible. While the drink also goes its own way at times, it always returns to the flavors of the cigar.

Fermentation is an intrinsic part of creating cigars, and it is also a significant part of your kitchen. What is it about fermentation that makes it such an essential component in your cooking?

For me, it brings a lot of deep and exciting flavors. By fermenting a product, you also change it. On the one hand, you change the taste completely, and on the other hand you also upgrade it. You still get the flavors of the product but in a completely different way. Fermentation also adds a certain depth to the flavors, and that's really cool.

What would you pair the Davidoff Limited Edition 2022 with if you did not have the means that you have in your kitchen?

I would say a bar of pure chocolate with salty caramel. Nowadays you can find this in almost every supermarket. You can also play around with it: take a chunk of chocolate at the beginning of the cigar, a piece halfway through the cigar, and one at the end. In my opinion, it actually goes well with every part of the cigar.

To go even simpler – it may sound strange – you can also eat a banana while smoking a cigar. The banana has fatness, sweetness, and fruitiness, and all these elements are actually interesting to combine with a cigar.

Have you thought about creating a dish, or drink, that includes tobacco in some way, and, if so, what would it be?

So far I haven't but I am always open to experiment. It would be exciting to make an ice cream out of tobacco.

Is there such a thing as a perfect pairing?

It's always challenging to come up with one, but for me the Sükerbölle dessert together with this Limited Edition matches perfectly. If both pairing components not only complement but enhance each other, then you have a winner. I think this was definitely the case in this particular pairing.

Lastly, Sam Reuter, how difficult was it to create a blend that is supposed to merge the characteristics of three different blends?

Creating the blends for our Davidoff Nicaragua, Yamasá and Escurio lines was already quite a challenge for our Master Blenders in the Dominican Republic. It in parts took them years to nourish the respective soil to grow tobacco in and then create blends that satisfied them. If you will, they now took on the extra challenge with the Limited Edition 2022, where they combined the lines' respective landmark tobaccos from Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, all coming together in a generous gran toro format. A big part was the rebalancing of the tobaccos to ensure a versatile yet smooth taste experience for our aficionados. By now, we have received first feedback from our customers saying they appreciate and enjoy the various tastes this cigar can offer.



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Defective cigars

*Samples affected by problems that are mainly due to the production chain.
Is this really the case or should the aficionado pay more attention?*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

W e Sometimes it can happen, the cigar burns badly, not have a good draw, or tend to quench, even the smoke in the mouth might become bitter or pungent. On these occasions, especially the novice smoker (but not only him), tends to blame the producer. If the cigar has mechanical problems (combustion, draw, etc.) the product is referred to as defective, the responsibility is addressed to the manufacturer and a mental note is taken, swearing never to buy the same again. But are these true defects, mainly due to production issues?

First of all, before going into the core of the discussion of the topic, it is necessary to start from an incontrovertible fact, made evident by the work of the Cigarslover Magazine team: during the various annual smokes, both in blind tastings and in the standard reviews, the percentage of incontrovertibly defective cigars is very, very low. What is then happening in lounges, private homes, clubs or any other space where aficionados light up a cigar?

Many of the mechanical problems that arise during the consumption of a cigar, at least for the largest part, can be ascribed to wrong storage of the product, whether by the retailer or, even more frequently, by the end users themselves. Other times the problem is not easy to diagnose, as in the case of malfunctioning hygrometers reporting a relative humidity level suitable for storage but actually providing a too high or too low humidification level.

We therefore want to review the most common problems that can occur during smoking, to fully understand when and if the defects found are to be truly charged to the manufacturer.

"The cigar burns badly"

Before analyzing the problems related to combustion, we need to distinguish the cases in which the wrapper burns on one side only from those in which the filler burns fa-

ster than the wrapper and vice versa. In the first situation, in the vast majority of the cases the cause is due to an inaccurate lighting up or poor management of a mild intensity flame (e.g. from a match), most probably in outdoor environment. Another factor that can influence combustion if you enjoy a stick outside, it is useful to remember it especially to young smokers, is the wind. In both cases, blaming the torcedor or the manufacturer is not only wrong, but will show us, in the eyes of other smokers, as an ignorant know-it-all. A slightly different case is when the filler burns with greater difficulty than the external leaves of the cigar or vice versa. Also in this circumstance let's make sure that the storage humidity is correct or, even better, that the cigar has not undergone sudden changes in humidity

and temperature. In the latter case it is good practice to observe the wrapper, which is the most sensitive (and the most visible) leaf of the cigar: if it appears dry or even worse shriveled, it means that the cigar has spent too much time in a dry environment or that, after a period of high humidity, it has been brought back to a lower relative humidity rate. Another alarm bell can be the info provided by the foot: if even the binder appears split, it has probably been subjected to the same stresses described above. If we are sure that we can exclude storage problems, sometimes the problem could lie not so much in the torcida, but rather in a too short escaparete period, which did not allow the product to dry out the excess moisture after to the rolling phase. These are very rare circumstances, especially for non-Cuban Caribbean productions.

"The cigar does not draw"

Among all the mechanical problems of smoking, this is perhaps the case for which manufacturers receive the worst words ... unjustly. Also in this case, before starting unnecessary invectives, it would be advisable to control the humidity level, both during conservation and consumption. Tobacco, as is well known, is hygroscopic, which means it has a natural propensity to absorb the moisture that is around it. By this effect, tobacco increases its size, and considering that the leaves are rolled together, their increase in volume occludes the gaps that allow the passage of air. The problem may lie in too high storage humidity in our humidor. To identify this possible cause of issues before lighting up the cigar, we will have to rely on experience: a wet tobacco has a slight increase in weight, but above all it is more

pungent to the nose. These are two examples that are difficult to detail in writing, for which only experience can give comfort. However, the ambient humidity at the time of lighting the cigar is also critical. Try to light up a cigar under a pergola during a strong summer storm: at first you will notice an ever-increasing difficulty of combustion, reaching later on a complete occlusion of the draw. Excluding these cases, for which the responsibility can only be of the smoker himself, there remains an infinitesimal possibility of error in the construction of the cigar: too much tobacco, poorly positioned filler and other problems of torcida. All circumstances almost completely relegated to the past because the bonche (sticks without the outer leaf) before being added the wrapper are tested, on a specific percentage of the overall samples, with a machine that checks the draw. It is easy, therefore, to understand how finding a cigar (and not a production batch) with such a manufacturing defect is almost like winning the lottery... of bad luck!

"The cigar tends to turn off"

This is a problem that goes almost hand in hand with the draw. We need to distinguish between situations when a cigar tends to turn off as soon as it is lighted up or when it shows this tendency after several minutes of smoking. In the first case, as already explained, it could be the effect of a too high storage humidity. In the second case, excluding a problem of overhumidification, or of ambient humidity that has become too high or of a change in the rhythm of smoking (we are interspersing the puffs too much), we could pursue different hypothesis. In fact, as a last option, it could be, even in this phenomenon, that the period of escaparete has been too short or problems related to the process of tobacco care took place, when physical-chemical reactions must play on the side of the smoker in order to make the tobacco usable for a smoke and pleasant to the palate.

"The cigar is bitter / pinches / tastes of dust"

True minefield of the cigar world is the tasting area re-





lated to the evaluation, not professional, of a product. This alone would be enough as a premise to absolve the producer from any aromatic / gustatory component that does not match our taste. However, in order not to leave this aspect lacking a deeper analysis, let's specify better. It is rather rare for a producer to have the precise intention of launching on the market a cigar that uses bitterness as its strong point. Very rare. That said, once again, the problem may lie in the relative humidity rate of storage. Moist tobacco burns with greater difficulty, returning a smaller amount of smoke and bringing to the palate sharp, bitter and sometimes pungent notes. A drier tobacco, on the contrary, develops a lot of smoke and in the mouth provides a feeling which resembles the one of sand or dust. The advice, in these cases, is to try another cigar again but at a different and more carefully controlled humidity. For sure the smoke will be different.

"Tunneling"

Another case we can include in this category is tunneling, that is, that particular combustion which, concerning a specific area of the filling, almost creates a tunnel between the rolled leaves (see the above picture for a big tunneling defect). This is also a very rare circumstance and, in this case, the problem is upstream, in the torcida, during which the torcedor did not distribute and roll the bonche at its best.

"The cigar is too empty/too full"

Personally, I have also heard this asserted by those who, weighing the cigar on one hand, decided not to light up a cigar with a lower than expected weight. Let's immediately dispel a myth: the torcedor of a galera has no margin of freedom in inserting more or less tobacco. The precise amount of leaves needed to make the number of cigars required from him are exactly the same for everyone. In addition, once the work is finished, each mazos made by him (or her) is weighed and, in the most rigorously controlled manufacturing facilities, a random cigar from that mazo is also weighed to verify that its weight is within a strict tolerance range. Therefore the weight of a cigar, alone, is absolutely not an indication of anything, especially of a more or less accurate manufacturing process. Eventually, in the case of a very heavy cigar, which at the foot seems to be densely filled, with a very tight draw and with no indications of moisture problems, only in this case you could recognize a production error. However, even in this case, these examples are real outliers.

In conclusion, as this analysis has tried to demonstrate, many of the "defects" that are often attributed to productions can be ascribed to management errors (storage and consumption) made by ordinary smokers, like us. Let's keep this in mind, before releasing our fatal wrath against those who, with so much sacrifice, have created a product that we have not been able to treat with the right regards.

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Toscano Master Aged

*The new premium line of the Italian cigar maker,
in combination with three spirits enhancing its Kentucky fire cured tobaccos.*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

The new premium line of the Italian cigar is available for the best global markets, paired with three spirits that enhance the roundness and body of the Kentucky fire-cured tobacco.

The Toscano cigar has been, for over two hundred years, the Italian cigar par excellence, one of a kind worldwide: made in a bitroncoconical form, without a binder, with fermented Kentucky fire-cured tobaccos, grown in Italy and North America. To underline this historical position, Manifatture Sigaro Toscano has launched the Master Aged line, consisting of three cigars identical in size but different in blend, distin-

guished by the name Series 1, Series 2, and Series 3. The three cigars, contrary to the past, are not sold in Italy but are distributed only in limited countries (Austria, Germany, Spain, Romania, Serbia, USA, and expansion to other countries is expected in October) to respond to a specific demand for premium Toscano products from large foreign markets, first of all, the States. This line of products aims to reach both the foreign smoker of Toscano and the smoker of Caribbean products looking for a full and satisfying taste. Both are eager, however, to try a premium Toscano cigar. The full flavors through the three blends aim to celebrate through the mix of the various Kentucky

crops, the Italian flavor (with Series 1), the marriage between Italian and North American tobaccos (Series 2), and the North American taste (Series 3). They are sold in elegant 30-count boxes.

What characterizes the Toscano Master Aged line, in addition to the specific blends, is its particular aging, of at least one year, entrusted to the position of the refiner. The idea of the new line and the refiner were born from the experience of the Toscano master blenders who, noting that some Toscano changed flavors and aromas according to the different temperature and humidity of the aging process, decided to crea-

te products specifically for the project Master Aged. The cigars were then entrusted to the refiner, who only takes care of the aging process, verifying the cigars, rotating them if necessary, and intervening in the conservation parameters, all in a special air-conditioned room specially created by Manifatture Sigaro Toscano. This figure, according to Manifatture Sigaro Toscano, is similar to that of the refiner of cheeses, who exclusively takes care of making them mature at best, being able to intervene only on the conservation parameters. CigarsLover Magazine team has thought of three pairings to enhance the uniqueness of each cigar best.



TOSCANO

Master Aged No.1

CIGAR BLEND
Wrapper: Valtiberina (Italy), Filler: 50% Tuscany (Italy), 50% Kentucky and Tennessee (USA)
PAIRING
Glen Grant 12 Year Old
ABV - PROOF
43% - 86
COUNTRY - PRICE
Scotland - \$ 40 € 40

Series 1 develops a smoke that is sapid on the palate. During the smoke, it releases intense spicy notes with earthy and woody nuances. Towards the middle, mineral and hazelnut aromas are also added. All are accompanied by a strength that remains stable on a medium-light level.

The accompanying distillate is an easy whisky to sip but with great satisfaction, the Glen Grant 12 yo. It has a rich nose, dominated by white fruity characters (apple and pear) and dried fruit, with citrus and darker hints of leather. On the palate, the apple note explodes, followed by caramel and vanilla. The finish is medium-long, with faint spicy notes present.

It is a gentle whiskey, which offsets all the flavor components of Series 1 very well, particularly the slight spicy sensations. In addition, the ABV and the short finish play on par with the contained strength of this Toscano.



TOSCANO

Master Aged No.2

CIGAR BLEND
Wrapper: Tennessee (USA), Filler: 50% Tuscany (Italy), 50% Kentucky and Tennessee (USA)
PAIRING
Woodford Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon
ABV - PROOF
45.2% - 90.4
COUNTRY - PRICE
USA - \$ 50 € 35

Series 2 brings a slightly sweet smoke to the palate with some sapid hints. In the first puffs, the spicy notes arrive immediately, leaving room for a strong woody component and nuances of leather and toasted walnut. In the central section, the bitterness fades, while the aromas are still outlined on spicy notes, of wood and walnut, with the enrichment of marked earthy hints. Strength goes from medium to medium-full.

The Woodford Reserve Straight Bourbon responds very well to the slight bitterness and the lively and vibrant aromas of the cigar. A distillate that echoes the Toscano with its nose of nuts, citrus, light spiciness, and nuances of cocoa. In the mouth, however, it surprises with its creamy and smooth feel, with the aromas of caramel, chocolate, vanilla, cinnamon, and cocoa. A sip and a puff until the end. The two products seem to have been created ad hoc to find themselves with their differences but to welcome each other with their strong points.

TOSCANO

Master Aged No.3

CIGAR BLEND
Wrapper: Tennessee (USA) Filler: Kentucky, Tennessee (USA)
PAIRING
Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva
ABV - PROOF
40% - 80
COUNTRY - PRICE
Venezuela - \$ 40 € 35

Series 3 starts with a delicately sapid smoke, enriched by a hint of spiciness. There are vibrant peat notes and less marked notes of leather and mineral. In the central section, the flavor increases while the bitterness remains unchanged. The aromas confirm the initial peat with the addition of bitter almond and wood. Strength starts from a medium-full level to become full.

A rustic and, in some puffs, edgy cigar, which fully benefits from the combination with the Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva rum. Its nose, rich in vanilla, fruit jam, and cocoa, seems to be able to keep up with Series 3. In the mouth, it manages to smooth out the edges of the Toscano, thanks to warm notes of caramel and cooked fruit, leaving a long and pleasant finish of chocolate and nutmeg. The rum's sweetness and its contained ABV were the winners over the strength and masculinity of the Series 3.



INSPIRADO



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



Coffin

*From boxes for the dead,
to packaging for products of particular value.*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**



In the world of cigars, one sometimes comes across terms that escape the standard classifications (Slid Lib Box, habilitada, etc.) in favor of nicknames that, nomen omen, through their peculiarity, even aesthetic, characterize it even better than an official term. Regarding the packaging, one of these cases is undoubtedly the coffin, a wooden case that, as the name suggests, houses one cigar. Despite various bibliographic searches, there are no specific origins as to when and by whom this name was used for the first time. Therefore, we find ourselves in the presence of those few cases in which a short technical term, used over the years by consumers and producers, has entered the cigarophile lexicon by right.

Historically in Cuba, this type of packaging was reserved for large cigars such as the Gran Corona (47x235mm) and the Diadema (55x233mm). For the first vitola de Galera, the Sancho Panza and Montecristo brands are recognized as the first to have made a Gran Corona: the brand of Don Quixote's squire had its Sanchos in production already before the Castro revolution, while the brand of swords fixed the birth of Montecristo A in 1971. In the 1980s, in Cuba, the Punch Diadema Extra No. 2, the Hoyo de Monterrey Particulares, and the Dunhill Havana Club were all products that had been out of production for decades. As for the Diadema size (a vitola that has now completely disappeared from the Habanos SA portfolio), over the years, there have been products such as La Escepcion Gran Gener, Punch Diadema Extra No. 1, Hoyo de Monterrey Monterrey, and the more recent Cuaba Diadema (2003 - 2013). For many of these products, the single case was placed in a box inside which there were four other cigars packaged in the same way. Furthermore, the peculiarity of the Diadema was that each cigar was wrapped in aluminum foil.

Coming to a more recent era and looking at the productions of other Caribbean countries, the coffin is used much more frequently than its use in Cuba (currently, only the Montecristo A benefits from this packaging). In the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and especially Nicaragua, this packaging is not reserved exclusively for large cigars but, rather, for cigars of great value. To cite an example, think of the Davidoff Oro Blanco, one of the most expensive cigars in the world. In the land of volcanoes, on the other hand, the coffin is often used

for commemorative editions (to name one: Don Pepin Garcia 10th and 15th Anniversary), limited (Muestra de Saka), or exclusive to some global markets (Nicarao Diadema Exclusivo Italia). In each of these cases, but also for all the other producers not mentioned, the box contains a cigar of particular value or rarity, aiming to impress the smoker with the atypical nature of its presentation to the public. From a commercial point of view, this type of packaging has several advantages, all to the consumer's benefit. First of all, the single packaging allows you to protect the cigar to the maximum, even when the sales box has more than one coffin. Crushed, damaged, or sudden changes in humidity will be found very rarely: the mechanical strength and hygroscopicity of the wood will act as a buffer to any accidental trauma to the cigar. Secondly, as far as aging goes, it is a type of solution that lends itself very well to periods of long refinement, as long as you have a high-quality product from the start. It is no coincidence that many of these coffins are lacquered externally: the particular paint minimizes air exchanges with the external environment, significantly expanding the aging times (also in this case, as long as the conditions of temperature and humidity are guaranteed, constant, and suitable for long aging).

The last feature, for the benefit of both the consumer and the producer, is the ease of sale of a single cigar. In many countries around the globe, the sale of single cigars is only permitted if each of them is stamped with the stamps of the importers or state monopolies. Considering that a product placed in this particular packaging almost always has a medium-high cost, the offer of a single box allows distributors a capillary sale, respectful of legislative constraints and not bound to the purchase of a box. At the same time, it translates into the possibility of obtaining a single cigar or opting for more for the consumer. Lastly, a special mention for coffins that contain two or three cigars. Often they are solutions adopted for events (such as the box sets of previews delivered during the gala dinner at the Festival del Habano) or particular sizes (such as Partagas Culebras or Tatuaje Fausto The Old Man and The C). Many producers consider them coffin because they would escape any other classification and because they are conceptually very similar to the idea of making the most of the content. Difficult to determine which side is right.





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E.P.C. Cigars

*A conversation with
Ernesto and Lissette Perez-Carrillo*

by Michel Arlia

Ernesto Perez-Carrillo needs no introduction. The man is a living legend with more than fifty years in the cigar industry under his belt, and still going strong. We joined him and his daughter Lissette for a conversation about E.P.C. Cigars.

You have been in the business for almost your whole life. How did it all start, and what are your first memories with tobacco and the industry back in the day?

E: Well, I started when I was very young. It was back in 1970. My father opened up a little factory in Little Havana back in 1968. And during that time, the only employees he had were a roller and my wife, Elena. We got married when we were 19.





So after school, she would go and clean up the factory, band the cigars, and do all that type of stuff. Because of the fact we had just started, there really wasn't any room for another employee. But I also enjoyed playing music. That's what I wanted to be—a musician, not a cigar maker. Being married, I needed to support the families, and during that period, the cigar business in Miami was very small, nothing like you see nowadays. Back in 1970, I would play music at night, and during the day, I would work in the factory with my father. At that time, there were about 20 middle-sized factories like us. Miami was like a Mecca for cigars. In 1976, my father came down with a disease called ALS. So, I started getting more involved in the business overall until 1980, when he passed away. Then I took all the business over, and that was the period of my beginning in the industry. Taking those numbers into account, I've been in the business for 52 years now. And then in 1992, that's really when we took off and the whole industry as well. And it was very similar to what is happening now. There is a demand for cigars like we haven't seen since those times. In 1999, we sold the business, and I started working with General Cigar, until 2009, when I decided to open my cigar factory again with my son, my daughter, and my wife. So that brings us pretty much up to the present.

So now, how have you seen the market evolve during all those years in the long career you mentioned before?

E: In the 1970s, when I started, the factories in Little Havana were about 20. Most of them were just family-owned, small

family businesses that used to sell cigars, usually locally. A few of the companies would sell nationally. So living through that era, probably about in 1974, people started going to Nicaragua and Honduras. You could see that they were beginning to come into the market, and you could already see that the business was starting to slow down for the manufacturers in Miami, with some of the small factories going out of business. We stayed because I remember asking my father "why don't we move to Nicaragua or Honduras?" He was maybe 73, I guess he was already feeling something. He said, "No, I don't want to do that because I'm up there in age." So even since that time, I thought it would be a good idea to move outside of Miami if we wanted to grow the business. Once I took it over in 1980, the responsibilities were, how do we keep the business afloat? Because it was hard to compete with the other people that were bringing in cigars from other countries. And basically, they had better prices. They had better margins. And Miami was getting expensive. And you also couldn't grow because there weren't that many cigar makers. Miami came back into life during the mass emigration from Cuba in 1980. And then later, there was another influx of Cuban cigar makers in the 1990s. So we were able to make more cigars at least. We had about 30 cigar makers during the boom, and we used to produce maybe 4 or 5,000 cigars a day. For us, that was very good. Then in 1996, I decided to move to the Dominican Republic and keep expanding the business. In 1999 we sold the company, and then we moved in with General Cigars with the big infrastructure.

You have seen many trends come and go. Are there any trends you think you are glad they are over?

E: Good question. I think what I've seen in the business, the transformation that has been good is that there's more data-oriented, more technology to a certain degree, better and much-refined tobacco growing methods, going more organic. There's been a lot of positive change all over, not only for the factories but also for people who work in sales, finance, and marketing. And I think the trends that have gone away, especially during the first boom, anybody that had any money got into the business. And there was such a demand for cigars that no matter whatever anybody made, they had a good opportunity to sell it because there was demand. But that's something that after the boom died out, I think all those people went away. This second boom is probably close to or bigger than the last one. You see that everybody out there is in the business because they've been in the business. You don't see too many new people coming in and say, "Hey, let's make a cigar because this is the thing now." Seeing people come in just to take advantage of the boom and make some extra money that's long gone, and I'm happy to see that.

Okay. You touched on the two booms, the one that happened in the late '90s and early 2000s. What are some of the connections or similarities that you see from the boom from the late '90s and the one that we have today?

E: I think nowadays it's definitely a more mature smoking

audience out there, not necessarily in age, but they know what they want. They know what they're looking for. They know what brands they like. During that first boom, any brand would sell off the shelf. Nowadays, it's a little bit more difficult because you have to be established to a certain degree and have a certain quality of cigars to be able to stay in the market. So, as I said, it's a more experienced, more mature audience than the previous one.

With that many years under your belt, you have probably created, not to understate anything, but probably over a million blends. Were you ever at a loss for ideas, and what keeps you motivated to continue creating new blends?

E: That's an interesting question because when you're blending a cigar, you're not necessarily thinking... I mean, let's say I smoke a cigar from Nicaragua or Cuba or Honduras or wherever and I find that cigar interesting, that to me is kind of a challenge of how do I make a cigar that maybe is not the same, but has those characteristic, but refine it to be better? So that's my challenge. I work for flavors and certain strengths depending on the blends we're looking for. And there has to be also some type of concept. Maybe Lisette or my son would come to me and say, "Hey, dad, we're thinking of doing this." It was the case with La Historia, with Encore, with Pledge. "We have this idea. We're going to blend and then see what we can develop." And then once that starts, we all get together. We have a team in the Dominican and here in the United States, and we start trying the





blends. And we may go through 7, 8, or 10 blends. Sometimes we just say, "Forget about it. This is not it," and restart. But it has to be something, that special moment when you're smoking the cigar that you say, "You know what? This is it." A blend takes anywhere from six months to a year, or two. You want to have something that will be in that caliber that we have with the La Historia, the Encore, and the Pledge.

You were also among the few that pioneered the big ring gauge cigars with the INCH line. Now that the INCH is a decade old, what do you plan to do with that line?

E: The INCH is a very strong line for us. We have a new release of the INCH Nicaragua, which is going to be in Europe soon. Yeah. So we have a lot of faith in those big ring gauge cigars. One of our biggest selling lines is the INCH 7 by 70 Maduro. So big ring gauge cigars are definitely here to stay. L: INCH Nicaragua is a partnership that we have with Plascencia. We wanted to make a cigar in Nicaragua because, like we were talking about trends before, Nicaragua's a very hot place now. So we turned to Plascencia because they have a lot of good tobaccos that we can use for this type of endeavor where we're talking about the big ring gauges. So we remain fully committed to exploring innovative blends and sizes and everything that has to do with big ring gauges.

Staying with the big ring gauge cigar. How difficult is it to create a large ring gauge cigar?

E: You've got so much tobacco that you put in there, and each leaf is just as important as the other one. So when you're blending a cigar like that, you want to have a specific taste, a certain strength. It's very difficult. You have to work on the blend and to find those right tobaccos that are going

to work with each other and not fight with each other. Especially using that much tobacco.

What are some of your favorite tobacco varietals? And is there one you can't work with no matter how much you have tried?

E: Well, this was the case with one particular tobacco from Nicaragua, from the island of Ometepe. And it's a funny story because we have about 3000-3.500 pounds that I bought because I thought I'm going to start using this tobacco. And we tried all kinds of blends, and how do we make this? And at some point I said, "You know what? I'm just going to see if I can substitute it." So we made some samples, which I brought up here in Miami. With this particular tobacco, I said, "You know what? Wait a minute. I got to keep this tobacco because this has some legs. This has something special that I don't find in other Nicaraguan tobaccos. So I'm going to keep this. And hopefully, if we can come up with a blend, maybe we can use it for special editions. You just have to find that leaf that's going to work with the other ones. And I think that you can get a good cigar. If you have well-fermented, well-aged tobacco, I don't think there's tobacco out there that you can't work with.

Touching on the marketing side for a moment, how have you, Lissette, seen the market shift in this unprecedented two and a half years that we have had with the pandemic that's been going on or is still going on?

L: I remember when this first happened, I guess everybody started worrying about human life and what would happen to people like your parents, ourselves, even if we're healthy. Then you started thinking about the business and how is it going to be affected? And one of the things that we were surprised was that we thought that this might have an immediate negative impact, with people staying at home. I guess that people started smoking more at home and the cigar sales were quite dramatic and went up significantly. I think that it's been kind of like a very eye-opening experience where many new consumers came into play. Many people that maybe that weren't smoking or only smoked on the weekend or only smoked after work were at home and probably sitting outside and having a cigar. It was a very big learning experience for us to see how this has, I guess, created a lot more smokers.

What is your personal favorite cigar that you make?

E: My personal? That's a good question.

L: Mine is La Historia.

E: One line I enjoy very much is the Encore. For some reason, I enjoy all the four sizes. Then when you go to Pledge, I enjoy the three sizes we have, but I tend to go more to the 58, the Apogee. And then La Historia, I think my favorite is probably the E-III. But to say that I have a favorite, it depends on the moment when I want to smoke that cigar. My everyday cigar, let's put it that way, is one of the Encore lines.

Do you happen to smoke other brands at all? Or do you check what your competition is doing?

E: I do that. Whenever I get a chance to go out, I'll pick up 10, 15 different cigars from competitors, and I'll smoke them





slowly. See where they're at, how they progress, how they age. Believe me, I do this with a lot of the lines that are out there. That's just part of the job because you have to know. Now there are some of those cigars that I enjoy very much. And so that gives me a challenge; how do I compete with this cigar? How do I make it better? It's all about being challenged all the time, I guess.

You have been working together for a while. How does your dynamic change when you are at home as a family and when you are actually at work?

E: Let me just say something there very fast before Lissette's answer. The three of us, we're at work 24/7. It's a shame to say that. I hate to say that, but even as a family, we're there, we're sitting, we're talking, we're having dinner, we are watching a movie, but there's always, "Hey, what do you think about this?" My wife says, "Stop talking about business, all right? You're here in the house. I don't want to hear about the business." But it's just something that it's in the three of us. I'll be sending them things at night, or they'll be sending me stuff at night. I'm blessed to have a beautiful family with the kids and the grandkids.

L: I think that there have been moments where there are disagreements. All of us specialize in different ways, different things. My dad's really good about that. Even if he might not agree 100% with our vision or something that we have in mind, he's pretty good at saying, "You know what? Let them go for it. Let them see for themselves what happens." And

sometimes newer generations might do things differently that actually work out. And he's always very good at saying, "Oh, you know what? That worked." So it's just a process, and it's a very enjoyable, I think, way that we get to spend more time together and communicate. And, as I said, it's a lot more of the positive than the moments of difficulty.

How do you guys see your company evolving in the next 5 to 10 years?

L: Well, I think my brother and I will be assuming more and more responsibilities. We do have a full plate as it is, but I think we will become more and more knowledgeable in different areas. Hopefully our children could be involved in this, and we keep growing and keep going strong for generations and generations. My dad has a unique talent and knowledge in blending that is pivotal to our success. And I feel that he's going to be around for many more years to come. So I think as time goes by, we just get better and better at everything that we're doing. I think in 5 to 10 years, we're still going to be evolving and learning. But, like I said, growing.

E: Like Lissette is saying, we're in it for the long run. And we want to be around for many, many years. I won't be as heavily involved in the business at some point. When that happens, I want the company to be as if I was there.

L: And we see that. He's very generous with his knowledge.

E: That's our goal. They still have a long way to go. We have a great company and a great brand, so we want this to be around for many years. Let's put it that way.

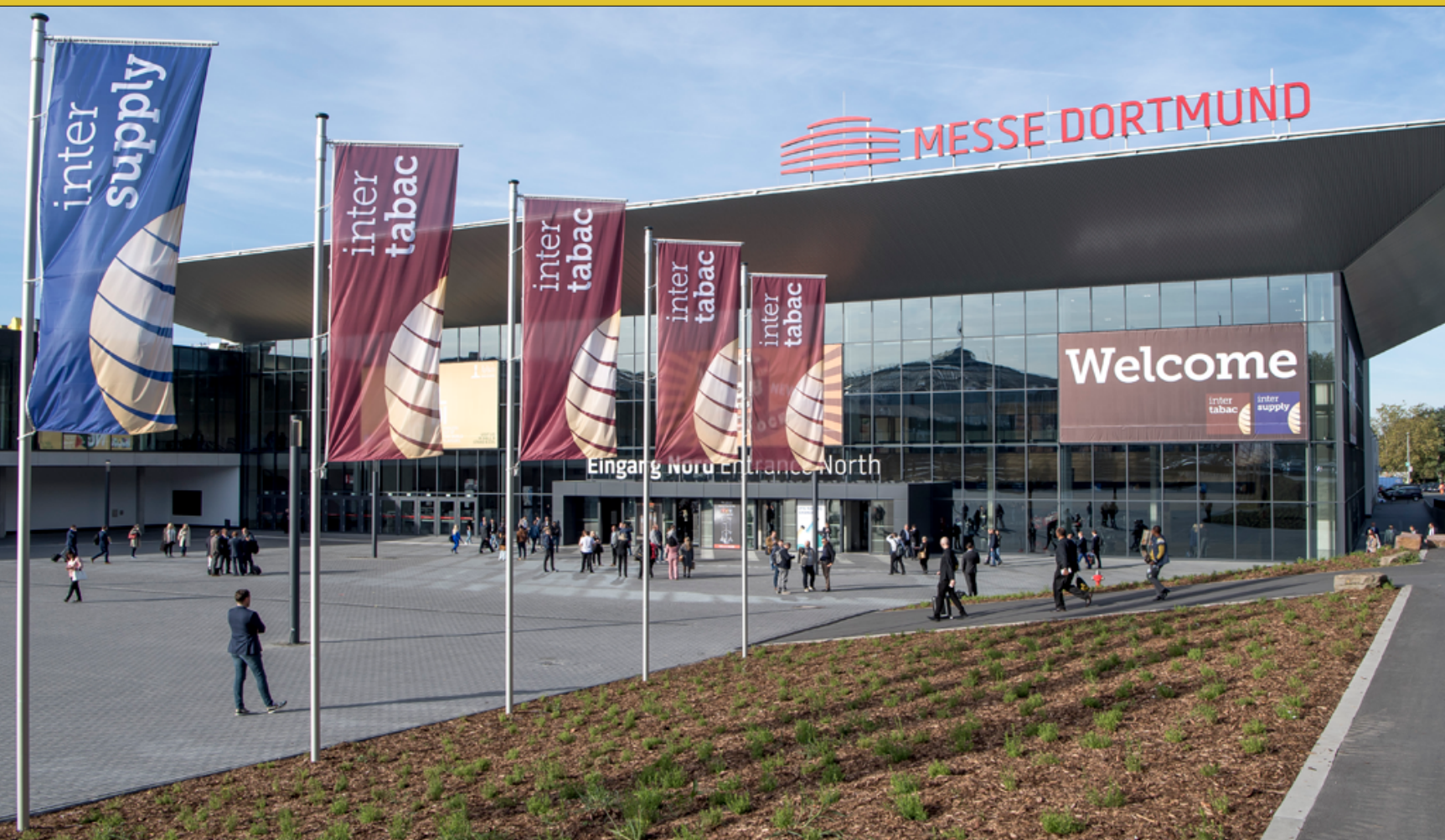
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Intertabac

*The world's largest trade fair
returns after a two-year hiatus.*

by **John Jeremy**

Over the last two years, the COVID 19 Pandemic has been an inescapable topic. Aside from all the aspects of the industry that were affected by it, the ones who have taken the hardest hits have been the trade shows, especially the InterTabac trade show, which had to cancel the in-person event two years in a row.

The first-ever InterTabac trade show was held on the 19th of August in 1978. At that time, the exhibition space measured 4,000 square meters, and 78 exhibitors were present. During the two days that the InterTabac took place, 1,750 visitors were recorded. Since then, the trade show has been held annually in Dortmund, except in 1986, when the then Inter-tabac was held in Hannover, and during the Covid pandemic, when the fair had

to be canceled. Up until 2019, the last time it was held, the trade show had grown to ten times its original size, 40,000 square meters. A similar growth was recorded for the exhibitors and visitors, increasing to 520 and 13,800 respectively.

During these two years, when no trade shows were held, some questioned the relevance of trade shows in modern times. Sabine Loos, CEO of the Westfalenhallen Group, tells us that "after more than two years of COVID, we all feel one thing very clearly: people want to spend their free time again. Visitors, exhibitors, and partners repeat this to us in the numerous discussions we had. In the future, the focus will continue to be on the physical trade fair or event experience – live and on-site. Because even if virtual events were able to generate intere-

sting contacts during the pandemic, the live experience remains an indispensable part of the events industry. However, for a look into the future, it is also worth taking a quick look back. Before COVID, 212 million euros were spent annually by visitors and exhibitors at trade fairs and events in Dortmund. Almost 200,000 overnight stays in the city are attributable to the business of the Westfalenhallen group of companies. Around 2,200 jobs in Dortmund depend on the Westfalenhallen, as the last ifo-study showed. The restart of the InterTabac is already underlining that people will be attending events of all kinds again."

Now that things seem to slowly get back to normal, the InterTabac and the InterSupply, the world's largest trade fairs for tobacco products and smoking accessories,

are set to return this September, from the 15 - 17, at the Westfalenhallen in Dortmund, Germany.

The dates on which the trade show is held are one of the more noticeable changes. "By postponing the trade fair duo InterTabac and InterSupply by one day, we are responding to a request from the industry, especially cigar manufacturers, who wanted more working days in the trade fair program. It is also advantageous for our international trade fair participants and exhibitors to travel back on a Saturday, as there are usually better flights and other travel connections to be found then," says Sabine Loos.

"We are also accompanying the two trade fairs for the first time on our 'Business Insights' internet platform,"



continues Ms. Loos and adds, "it offers current company information, product innovations and trends, industry insights, lectures, and specialist podcasts. Furthermore, Business Insights offers a comprehensive knowledge archive with international studies and webinars, and news on innovative developments or legal adjustments in the tobacco industry. Here, the stakeholders from tobacco products, smoking accessories, and manufacturing have their fingers on the pulse all year round, even beyond InterTabac and InterSupply. This addition to the physical trade fair duo in many areas of presentation, networking, and information and knowledge transfer is unique in the industry. And last but not least, we are once again offering trade visitors an interesting supporting program on-site, which picks up on the trend topi-

cs of 'Business Insights,' continues them, and enables personal exchange on them. So we offer a finely tuned blend of the new with the tried and tested."

Lastly, when asked about the expectations for this year, Ms. Loos concludes: "First of all, we are very pleased that InterTabac can and will take place again. We have a good booking situation, and the industry is behind us. We are currently working at full speed to ensure that the next InterTabac will again be an absolute highlight in the industry year. And we are very confident that we will succeed. Accordingly, we expect to see many familiar faces again, that we will have many good discussions on-site and that we will experience an all-around successful InterTabac."



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Humidor wood

Over the last few decades the Spanish Cedar has been celebrated, like the best wood for a humidor: is it really like that?.

by **Mario Amelio**

The moment marking the transition from occasional cigar smoker to learning aficionado is the purchase of a humidor. So, before proceeding with a purchase, immediately starts the search for information, on the internet, through the retailer or asking advice to a long-time cigar lover.

Very often these sources will return a very recurring information: Spanish cedar is the perfect material for a humidor. The “Cedrela Odorata”, better known as Spanish cedar, has always been the most used material for the construction of humidors. However, before understanding which wood is the best or whether Spanish cedar is unique and inimitable, it is necessary to deepen the concept of humidor, hygroscopy and the peculiar properties of wood.

The humidor is an airtight container that has the goal of storing cigars, keeping them in the ideal conditions for optimal conservation over a very long period of time. These conditions are made possible thanks to a humectant system and the natural physical-organoleptic properties of the wood used. Leaving aside the various humidifying systems and the various types of humidors, which range from travel humidors to walk-ins, it is good to focus on the characteristics that the wooden structure of the humidifier should have.

Any type of wood has a particular hygroscopic property that allows the wood to absorb moisture from the surrounding environment, to retain and release it. Just like this property, each wood has its own scent and it is more

or less resistant to the mechanical forces, fungi and insects of the wood. Using one wood instead of another in the humidor can affect the relative humidity, directly favoring the correct seasoning of the cigar, avoiding drying or over-humidification. The wood of a humidor, in fact, is the only material that effectively isolates the cigars from the outside, acting as a barrier between internal humidity and temperature and the environment in which it is placed. It can therefore be concluded that hygroscopic is one, if not the most important, of the characteristics that a type of wood should have to be used for the construction of a humidor.

Returning to the “Cedrela Odorata”, it is a type of wood that maintains its fame because it boasts the natural property of being able to resist very well to changes in humidity, to rot, to repel harmful insects and to release a pleasant scent. All reasons why it is no coincidence that many products are wrapped in thin sheets of “Cedrela Odorata” before being placed on the market. Also, a not secondary aspect to consider is the extraordinary ease in the processing of this wood as it has a very low hardness. A critical point of this wooden material is instead its poor aptitude for finishing, which is why producers always tend to cover it with veneers of the noblest woods. However, the real “problem” of this wood is its cost as a raw material, dictated by the exclusive and particular use and origin (usually Africa or South America): on average, the price is 3,500 Euro/m³. With this price, not all humidors can be built with cedrela odorata, especially those of the economic range.



But is Spanish Cedar smell really essential for a humidor? The answer is no. There are several other type of wood that can be used as a substitute and one of them is mahogany which, with its 2,000 €/m3, manages to satisfy the characteristics of a humidor very well. Unlike the "Cedrela Odorata", the mahogany is much harder, it has a good resistance to stress, it has a good degree of hygroscopicity and an excellent aptitude for finishing. In addition to this, it has a less persistent odor than the cedar, facilitating the preservation of the original organoleptic properties of the cigars. This characteristic, however, can also represent a weak point, as some parasites of the wood, but also of the tobacco, could attack it.

Continuing in the analysis of the most suitable types of wood to be used for the construction of a humidor, there is also the one from the walnut tree, with an approx cost of 2,500 €/m3,. It offers excellent hardness, good stability and resistance to stress, without leaving out the enchanting grain that bewitches everyone. It has a low hygroscopicity and therefore does not easily absorb moisture. This ensures that it has an excellent structure that does not tend to deform. Negative side: if placed in unfavorable conditions, it can be subject to fungal and woodworm attacks.

A less noble but well suited wood comes from the ash tree, which boasts a commendable hygroscopicity, medium hardness and good resistance to stress. Its surface is suitable for different finishes even if the most popular is the one called "open pore". Even the ash tree can be subject to fungal attacks or woodworms if badly preserved. The cost of this variety of wood is approx. 900 €/m3.

Sometimes even the cherry tree can represent an alternative, even if it is very hygroscopic and does not boast excellent stability and hardness. Very pleasing to the eye with its grain, the cost is approx. 1,500 €/m3.

And if you are looking for a more refined wood, you can opt for rosewood which boasts excellent hardness and resistance to stress. Its low hygroscopicity makes the creations made with this wood very stable, which is very suitable for different types of finishes. The only drawback, this time, is the cost which is around € 8,000/m3.

These are just some of the woods that can be used to replace the much acclaimed "Spanish Cedar". Each essence has its strengths and weaknesses as well as the "Cedrela Odorata". To this we must add that many other types of wood, also much more noble ones, can be used for the construction of a humidor, as long as they are kept in the best possible way and we make sure that the cigars have a safe origin, to prevent them from being a vehicle for parasites, like the bicho. In conclusion, rather than blindly trusting the dogmas handed down, we must be sure that in our humidor we will place only "healthy" cigars, because from a cigar acting as a vehicle for the much hated bicho, there is no Spanish Cedar capable of repelling such an ignoble and stealthy attack.



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PAIRINGS

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

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

The Rating Scale: 100 points. We have chosen to keep it in the pairings as well, to simplify the comparison of ratings. In this case, however, this scale only evaluates the pairing, and not the individual qualities of cigars and spirits. If you have both excellent

products, for example, but an unbalanced and inconsistent pairing, the rating will be low. On the contrary, the excellent marriage of two products of decent quality could give rise to a very positive evaluation.

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

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



Sherry

*Very frequent aging,
very problematic pairing.*

by Simone Poggi

After some journeys in the complex world of pairings we enter a true mined territory: the pairing of cigars with whiskies aged in barrels that have previously contained sherry. We would like to define this area as a very difficult one, a realm for experts, as there is a huge difference between spirits which have enjoyed exclusively first-filling barrels aging, perhaps for not very long times, with intrusive and persistent tannins, true "sherry-monsters", compared to "elderly" whiskies that have exploited for many years the gentle influences of refill barrels.

In the first case, the task of identifying a sufficiently intense tobacco is difficult, and is limited to real "powerhouses", mainly coming from Nicaragua: a Plasencia Alma Fuerte, a Padron Anniversary Line 1964 or even better earthy cigars with Connecticut Broadleaf capa (a Liga Privada by Drew Estate, a Mi Querida by Dunbarton Tobacco). In Cuba only a few modules could find a spot, for example a D4 of Partagas or a Royal Corona and Belicoso Fino of Bolivar; however we will talk later of Cuban cigars and aspects related to their initial young age "roughness" at purchase. Only these intense artifacts can impact on the blanket of red fruit, raisin and chocolate that pervades these spirits, whether Glendronach or Kavalan Oloroso

Sherry. These are important resonances, with cocoa in similarity and dark tobacco, earth and very animalistic hints of leather. However, a distinction is needed; there are currently on the market cask strength spirits whose vinous component is such as to reach quinine scents, which make any sort of pairing difficult; Kavalan Solist Oloroso is for example an excellent whisky, but the high ABV (over 59%) and the extreme tannins combined with the intensity of the fruity scents flattens almost any tobacco that you want to approach it with.

If, on the other hand, you choose, as is often wise, a middle ground, that is, a maturation of the whiskey again in sherry, whether it is Oloroso or PX, but with less active barrels, the final distillate will be more gentle and open to pairing, especially by adding a sweetness of red fruits that will help the tobacco not exasperating its contributions. There are drier sherried whiskies, such as some Benriach, austere and elegant, which go well in assonance with more woody cigars (as example some formats of Ramon Allones or Romeo Y Julieta) and softer, mellower, gourmandizer ones like some Ben Nevis and many Glenallachie, who prefer fat, tasty and rich Mexican capas San Andres Negro, like those that come from Turrent plantations, in such a way as to create a deep conversation

of interleaved chocolatey, spicy and complex tones. One of the peculiar characteristics of spirits aged in sherry casks is the capability of attenuating the most savory notes by a marked sweetness, with less fresh and fruity notes typical of ex-bourbon whiskies. Precisely for this reason some pairings that we had felt to advise against in other episodes of this column are more proving to be more effective; savory and high-pitched cigars, with notes of chili pepper such as AJ Fernandez Last Call or Joya Red by Joya de Nicaragua can now be very apt, if combined with distillates of good sweetness, avoiding the effect of hyper-sensitization of the tip of the tongue that you would have pairing them with a Bunnahabhain in bourbon. The products with marked "sherried" characteristics also allow you to "smooth" and "polish"

the roughness of cigars with tobacco of a certain character, but of young age, which still show off the typical impetuosity of adolescents; this is the case of many Cubans of recent production (Partagas or Romeo y Julieta Cazadores) for whom it is often proposed to wait a few years of careful aging before enjoying them. Such products should benefit from a pairing with a Glenfarclas or an Aberlour. Do you want to try and experience a dissonance pairing? Herbaceous and rather bitter cigar (we would say an Alec & Bradley Gatekeeper) and a distillate of good sweetness, cleanliness and freshness like those from Mannocho more distillery; the result can really be complex and out of the box... Ultimately the distillate in sherry is a real sea, but shipwrecking in this sea is quite a sweet experience...





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PAIRING

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WINSTON CHUR. LATE HOUR TORO

BALANCED. WOOD AND COCOA

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	\$ 20 € 18
DIMENTIONS	
52 x 162 mm (6 ½")	
COUNTRY	
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	

The cigar is very balanced, with notes of cocoa and earth, accompanied by a soft pepper note, which is kept in the background. The base is slightly sapid. Then there are aromas of wood and smoked echoes. The deep tones can help us to investigate the relationship with two different whiskies aged in sherry, one drier and more austere and one fruitier and sweeter.



JOYA DE NICARAGUA JOYA SILVER ULTRA

COMPLEX AND FULFILLING

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	\$ 6 € 11.5
DIMENTIONS	
46 x 159 mm (6 ¼")	
COUNTRY	
NICARAGUA	

The initial woody notes are followed by rich aromas of earth, hazelnut and black pepper. The cocoa then becomes the protagonist, with a finish of aromatic herbs and fresh balsamic echoes. The sophisticated nuances of the cigar could go well with two not too marking products, such as Caol Ila 12yo and Koval bourbon. The aromatic profile of the two whiskies is very different.



SAINT LUIS REY REGIOS

RICH AND CREAMY

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	\$ N/A € 13.5
DIMENTIONS	
50 x 127 mm (5")	
COUNTRY	
CUBA	

The cigar develops aromas of spicy pepper and coffee on a dark and earthy background, a fresh vein of aromatic herbs makes the smoke more vivacious. We test the pairing with a smooth and easy -drinking Cuban ron and a more loaded and fruity Jamaican rum.



GLENALLACHIE

10 year old batch 6 cask strength

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	57.8% - 115.6	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	10 year old	Sherry, oak, Rioja wine

Deep and complex, in which the most classic sherried notes (ripe black cherry, figs, raisins) are combined with a delicious dimension of chocolate, ripe orange, and a complex spiciness.

On the nose the pairing is rich, with the cocoa going well with the spices and the seasoned oak. Round and evocative. On the palate it is a vortex of dark, iridescent and deep sensations; the chocolate is integrated with the bitter orange, whose freshness is dampened by the character of the Mexican tobacco of the wrapper. The finish is long and almost chewable, with a mix of different cocoa and wet tobacco, togetherwith tar and earth. Excellent.

Pairing score 92

BENRIACH

15 year old 2005 Oloroso Sherry Butt

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	59.8% - 119.6	\$\$
TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	15 year old	Oloroso Sherry Butt

Austere sherried whisky. Dried fruit and dehydrated red fruit, all with a silky texture. A slight peppering and a woody aroma, not common ones.

On the nose it develops and deepens the theme of fine wood, with intriguing spices of rare pleasantness; the sensation is drier than the previous pairing, less round, but also more refined. On the palate there is a riot of dried fruit that creeps into chocolate, now less hazelnut-based and more bitter, without losing balance. Figs covered with bitter chocolate. The red fruit jam is relegated to the background by a punch of dark earth, which lasts in the finish. Sharper, for lovers of chocolate with important percentages of cocoa.

Pairing score 89





CAOL ILA
12 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	43% - 86	\$\$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	12 year old	ex-bourbon

Delicate, elegant, and persistent, with a measured saline and peated component. Lemon and spongy lemon cake, with butter biscuits.

On the nose sea and delicate lemon, with the woody tones and the cocoa of the cigar that keep their presence. At the first sip the whisky takes over, obscuring at times the flavor profile of the cigar. You must leave time to the most pronounced chocolatey and earthy notes of tobacco to express themselves. At that point the whisky is enriched, as if Caol Ila turned to Bunnahabhain. Peat stimulates the tip of the tongue, without covering other tastes. In the finish even coffee appears, less refined but satisfying. Multifaceted and surprising, with both products evolving dynamically.



Pairing score	88
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KOVAL
Single Barrel Bourbon

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	47% - 94	\$\$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Bourbon	12 Years Old	Virgin Oak

Nice intensity. Oak, cinnamon and balsamic notes. The entrance is spicier and warmer, with a sweetness in the finish.

The nose is centered on the wood; sweeter and sprinkled with cinnamon and brown sugar is the bourbon nose, more resinated and burned the cigar nose. Interesting, with the balsamic sides of the two products alternating. On the palate it is necessary to start from the distillate; the cigar is this way not so obscured by the sweetness of the orange with brown sugar and evolves towards the orange peel covered with bitter chocolate. The spices (black pepper in first place) are reinforced, with an overall effect that requires a sip of water. Long finish, bitter, between coffee and black pepper. Unexpected and a bit unbalanced.



Pairing score	85
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CONDE DE CUBA
15 year old

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

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Traditional Spanish Rum	15 Years Old	-

This rum is made with the medialuna variety of cane sugar from the Las Tunas region and undergoes a long sole-ra-style aging.

The sweet notes of canned fruit and vanilla pairs quite well with the more pronounced spiciness of the cigar. The darker and earthier base of Saint Luis Ray is balanced by the rum's nuances of milk chocolate and coffee cream. The pairing is straightforward and uncomplicated, but it lacks a bit of vigor. Overall, despite being a good combination, the cigar's fresher vein of aromatic herbs does not find a sufficient support in the spirit and takes over in the finish.



Pairing score	85
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HAMPDEN
8 year old

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

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Traditional English Rum	8 Year Old	-

This Jamaican rum is pot still distilled and marked by the typical Jamaican fermentation technique that develops a high concentration of esters.

The nose is dominated by the strong ripe tropical fruit of the spirit, but the first puffs of the cigar suggest that the pairing is going in the right direction: earth and leather meets well with the resinous and spicy notes of the rum, while the latter's patisserie scents increase the creaminess of the smoke. Over this creamy smoke the respective vegetal veins – more mature and pungent in the rum; fresher and more aromatic in the cigar – find a particularly good match. The only note out of tune is the alcoholic strength that takes over the more delicate and peppery finish of the cigar.



Pairing score	89
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SPIRITS

“Best ideas come while sipping rum.”
Pavol Kazimir

Kavalan's Sherry

*The secrets behind the
sherry cask*

by **Luca Cominelli**



Established in 2005 on the island of Taiwan, from the onset Kavalan has shown not only the potential of the tropical terroir for whisky making, but also, and above, an incredible qualitative symbiosis with sherry cask aging. In other whisky making traditions, sherry butts are used mainly for partial aging, if not for a brief characterizing finish. On the contrary, Kavalan chose from the onset to invest in fully matured sherry expressions. From the first Solist Sherry Single Cask Strength in 2009 to the release of the Triple Sherry Cask in 2021, Kavalan has thus been exploring all possible variations of sherry and whisky combination, releasing some of the most impressive sherry cask whisky on the market and accruing a praiseworthy amount of accolades and awards. We had the chance to interview Kavalan about their more recent releases, so we thought to ask them about their love story with sherry casks and what it represented for the development of tropical whisky.

The interview was held with Kavalan Senior Blender Zerosé Yang and Kavalan Brand Ambassador Sandra Tsai.

Since its foundation, Kavalan has had a special relationship with whisky fully matured in sherry casks. When and how was this love story born?

Zerosé: Our sherry cask story began with our late consultant Dr Jim Swan. With the help of his professional connections, we were able to purchase top quality Oloroso Sherry casks. After maturing the casks in Yilan's subtropical climate, we discovered an extraordinary sherry matured whisky. Moreover, Dr Swan boldly suggested importing top Fino Sherry butts to experiment with. It is usually difficult to fully mature Fino in cold regions. The lightest and driest style of sherry, Fino is matured under a layer of flor, and is known for its delicate texture. After a few years of maturation, the results met Kavalan's expectations. Compared to Fino Sherry casks in cold regions, our maturity is greater and showcases Taiwan's unique fusion of sherry with our subtropical fruitiness. When we launched the first edition in January 2010 before the Lunar New Year, the 500 bottles sold out immediately. The International Review of Spirits gave this exquisite expression full marks (100 points) in both 2013 and 2014. That's why Dr Swan praised the whisky as



"Taiwan Unique" and was considered one of his signature favourites. The success of making Fino sherry gave Kavalan huge confidence. If the driest sherry turned out so well at Kavalan Distillery, other types of sherries should not be a problem too. That's why we started sourcing more sherry types such as Manzanilla, Amontillado, PX and Moscatel. These single sherry casks display their own unique characters. It is our mission to bring a great variety of different sherry casks for sherry lovers to enjoy.

Where do you source your sherry casks? Do you work with a favorite bodega or collaborate with most of them to source the best specimen?

Zerose: Due to sherry regulations, the ageing and maturation zone, or Sherry Triangle, can only take place in the towns of Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa María and Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Plus, with the high demand in the Scotch industry, sherry casks are getting rarer, and hi-

gh-quality sherry casks are even more difficult to find. We are very lucky that through the introduction of Jim Swan, at a time when it was very difficult for distillers to find sherry casks in Spain and also in order to control the consistency of our sherry casks, we managed to buy from select reliable suppliers so that way the quality of our sherry casks can be fully controlled. Before the pandemic, we visited our suppliers twice a year to do on-site evaluations to make sure they can supply consistent sherry casks to us. We build up long term relationships with these suppliers and work on ongoing projects together.

Is there a scientific explanation for the relationship between Taiwan's tropical weather and whisky aging in sherry casks? Or is it mainly a matter of human expertise?

Zerose: Kavalan's high-quality new make spirit is one of the crucial reasons. Dr Swan instructed us that the ageing rate of the subtropical climate, according to the theoretical data,



is nearly 3-5 times faster than in the cold region. Therefore, the new make spirit filled into casks must be rich in fruity aroma and must not include any off notes. Otherwise, it is very likely to strengthen the off-note under the catalysis of rapid ageing. That's why the cut-point of our new make spirit is shortened by one third to even one half than the common cut-point in the whisky industry. On the other hand, if the weather is too hot and matured for too long, the whisky is very likely to become over oaky, in terms of having too much woody aroma or extracting too many oak tannins. As the result, the whisky will become too bitter. At Kavalan Distillery, because of the combination of high-quality oak casks, fruity new make spirit, and the catalytic effect of the subtropical climate, such problems do not appear. Conversely, Kavalan sherry casks transform into more intense fruity aromas and extract more sherry flavours from the wood. The last key reason is our water. The township Yuanshan in Yilan has a nickname, the hometown of water. It supplies

abundant pure, smooth, and uncontaminated water sources in all seasons. Our whisky retains a very sweet body and persistent aftertaste after a long and warm climate maturation. To sum up, even within a subtropical climate, all different types of sherry casks can turn their disadvantages into advantages. Based on technological knowledge and the belief of our CEO Mr YT Lee in the spirit of breakthrough innovation, we have reached a new level and will continue to make continuous efforts to move forward.

The sherry world offers so many possibilities in terms of cask profiles. After so many years of experimentations, what are the best whisky/sherry casks combinations?

Zerose: Our new expression, Kavalan Triple Sherry Cask Single Malt Whisky, is a rare combination of three exquisite sherry-aged casks — Oloroso, Pedro Ximénez, and Moscatel. It is not finished in sherry casks nor blended with other casks, so it has the pure and rich flavour of sherry



casks. We adopted an unsweetened Oloroso sherry cask as a base, and blended it with the extremely rare sweet sherry king, PX, and sherry queen, Moscatel, resulting in a deeper sweet flavour. We experimented day and night to decide on this inaugural 100% mixed sherry cask recipe. In order to combine three exquisite sherry-aged casks, Kavalan employs three stages of balancing of the casks. Firstly, we blend the whisky from the same type of sherry cask. Then, based on the recipe design, pour the spirits into a blended cask which is the second balancing. The third stage happens in the stainless steel tun before bottling. All these processes enable this whisky to have an extremely stable style and quality and also enable the sweet and unsweetened to go from collision to perfect fusion.

Can you guide us through the amazing story of the Solist line? What was the rationale for their creation? What does explain the differences in prices and availability?

Sandra: After we opened our distillery on December 4th 2008, many whisky experts got the chance to visit our distillery and they were greatly surprised by the single cask strength whiskies in the maturation warehouse. They suggested to our founders to launch single casks for whisky lovers. We called our single cask cask strength series Solist. It is first filled, non-chill-filtered, natural colour, cask strength and fully matured in a single cask. Kavalan carefully picks and bottles the best performance cask as the Solist. In fact, less than one fifth of single casks are selected. Our aim was

to create a range in which every whisky lover can find their favourite. We age our whisky in bourbon, port, brandy, rum, red or white wine or sherry casks and counting. Because Solist depends on a single cask for ageing we go to great lengths to select only the highest quality casks. We purchase from the very best spirits makers, wineries and cooperages in the world.

Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry is the entry level sherry in the Solist series. This sherry type is the most common choice for whisky making all over the world. Oloroso sherry wine has a deep colour and nutty, spice and dried fruit notes from the full oxidative ageing and it is easier for whisky to extract more flavours from this cask. Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry is full-bodied and has a particularly strong style, with aromas of dried fruit, nuts and spices, and a slight coffee aroma on the palate. It is described as a "Sherry Bomb" that explodes in the mouth. Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry was awarded the "Best Single Malt Whisky" and platinum medal (99 points) at 2021's Beverage Tasting Institute as well as the "Best Other Single Malt Whisky" at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition. Kavalan Solist PX Sherry is the highest-priced in the Solist range. Pedro Ximénez grapes are predominantly grown in Montilla-Morilles in Spain. They are harvested at high sugar levels and sun-dried for weeks to raisinate and concentrate the density of sugars. Then, the grapes are pressed to generate a nectar-like juice with high residual sugar and shipped to the sherry triangle for ageing.

The process is complex and gives the wine an extra sherry sweetness, known as the king of sherry. The cost is higher and the quantity is lower.

What did you take from the exceptional experience of the Solists when making your core range releases Oloroso Sherry Cask and Triple Sherry Cask? What are the difficulties of making a mainstream sherry cask whisky?

Sandra: After Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry was released in 2009, Kavalan showcased our exceptional expertise in selecting and maturing high quality single sherry casks. Whisky connoisseurs have been enjoying discovering the characteristics of different sherry casks or even from cask to cask. As they are at the cask strength, we received feedback that some customers would like to taste our sherry casks at a lower alcohol strength. So we came up with the idea of blending a batch of sherry casks and adding spring water to dilute. In this way, the alcohol is not that strong but the texture is even smoother and the complex flavours are easier to distinguish. Our goal is to create a whisky for all drinkers. The challenges would be to maintain the dark amber colour after diluting to lower alcohol strength and to ensure flavour consistency from batch to batch. We have experimented many times to find the best combinations of the sherry casks. Also, some people like to drink whisky on the rocks so we need to make sure the quality retains well when the ice is added.

For Kavalan Oloroso Sherry Oak, there are multiple layers of

dried fruit, nuttiness and spices on the nose. Raisin, plum, brown sugar and caramel are on the palate with a hint of coffee finish. Although it has been diluted to 46%, the colour is dark mahogany; and Kavalan Triple Sherry Cask is the first time we've combined our whisky in three different sherry casks. It's all about multiplying and enriching the sherry flavours to make a distinct whisky. Like a smooth flamenco dance, its notes of cinnamon, candied smoked plum, and citrus, layered with berry, tropical fruit, and longan aromas, with a dash of honey, chocolate, and toffee playfully tease the taste buds. The alcohol strength at 40% makes the whisky approachable to all whisky drinkers. It is a rare multiple sherry cask in the market.

Which has been the most unexpected best-selling Kavalan sherry whisky so far? And which was the most neglected one to your disappointment?

Sandra: Kavalan Solist Amontillado Sherry Single Casks Single Malt Whisky is one of the best-selling Kavalans. Amontillado sherry starts out as a Fino or Manzanilla and after it has been aged for a period of time under flor, it is fortified to a higher alcohol strength to stop the flor from forming. In this way, Amontillado Sherry experiences both biological ageing and oxidative ageing so the characteristic of Amontillado Sherry is in between Fino sherry and Oloroso sherry, known as the best of both worlds! Kavalan Solist Amontillado Sherry won the World's Best Single Cask Single Malt at the 2016 World Whiskies Awards. It has also





won Gold Outstanding in the 2020 International Wine & Spirit Competition, scoring 98 points. Not many people know that Kavalan Solist Manzanilla Sherry has a completely different style from other sherry types. Especially, it has unique saltiness. It experiences full biological ageing, the same as Fino Sherry. The only difference is it is made around the port of Sanlúcar in Spain. Because it is produced near a sea, Manzanilla Sherry tends to have a saltier flavour profile than that of Fino sherries and also, surprisingly owns notes of chamomile. Kavalan Solist Manzanilla is like toffee apples. It has Kavalan's classic fruity characters like apple, pears and melon, wrapping the creamy salty caramel and toffee notes. The Kavalan Solist Manzanilla has won Gold Outstanding in the 2020 and 2021 International Wine & Spirit Competition, scoring 98 points in a row.

Over the past few years, whisky/food pairing has become a staple offering for whisky lovers and specialized bars. Yet, pairing is not an easy task, and there is often the risk of sensory overloading. What do you see as a great and infallible pairing for your sherry whisky?

Sandra: Sherry whisky has many flavour descriptions all depending on the type of the casks. As long as you know how to balance the flavour, it will be easy to do food pairings with whisky. For example, the latest launch, the Kavalan Triple Sherry Cask is best paired with desserts, dark chocolates, nuts, seafood salads, smoky meats and mildly spicy cuisine. As for the single casks, Kavalan Solist Fino Sherry is

best paired with appetizers, either cold tapas with cheese and olives or warm tapas with sausage and savoury fried foods. Kavalan Solist Manzanilla Sherry also works well with appetizers, especially heavier ones such as smoked meat and salt seafood. Kavalan Solist Amontillado Sherry can pair with soup and side dishes, for example, fish, chicken and cheese with a strong taste. The Spanish chorizo, a fermented, cured, smoked sausage, will also work well. Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry is suitable for main meals with heavy flavours. Especially red meat dishes like steak, plus the oiliness brought by the cooking method is perfectly matched with the richness of Oloroso. The floral and fruity character of Kavalan Solist Moscatel Sherry makes it very suitable for any citrus desserts, such as lemon meringue pie, orange tart, or coconut lemon cake. The sweetness and sourness level up the fruity flavour and floral fragrance. Kavalan Solist PX Sherry has a very high sweetness, strong aroma and thick body. It can be paired with classic desserts, such as vanilla ice cream, just like topped with alcoholic syrup. Or it can be paired with salty blue cheese, to have both saltiness and sweetness.

What are you currently working on? Are there any incoming releases of Kavalan sherry whisky in the future?

Zerose: The final piece of the Kavalan's sherry cask puzzle is still under maturation, and should be ready to launch in the next few years. It is rich in multi-layers with secret characters. Let's wait and see.





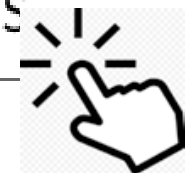
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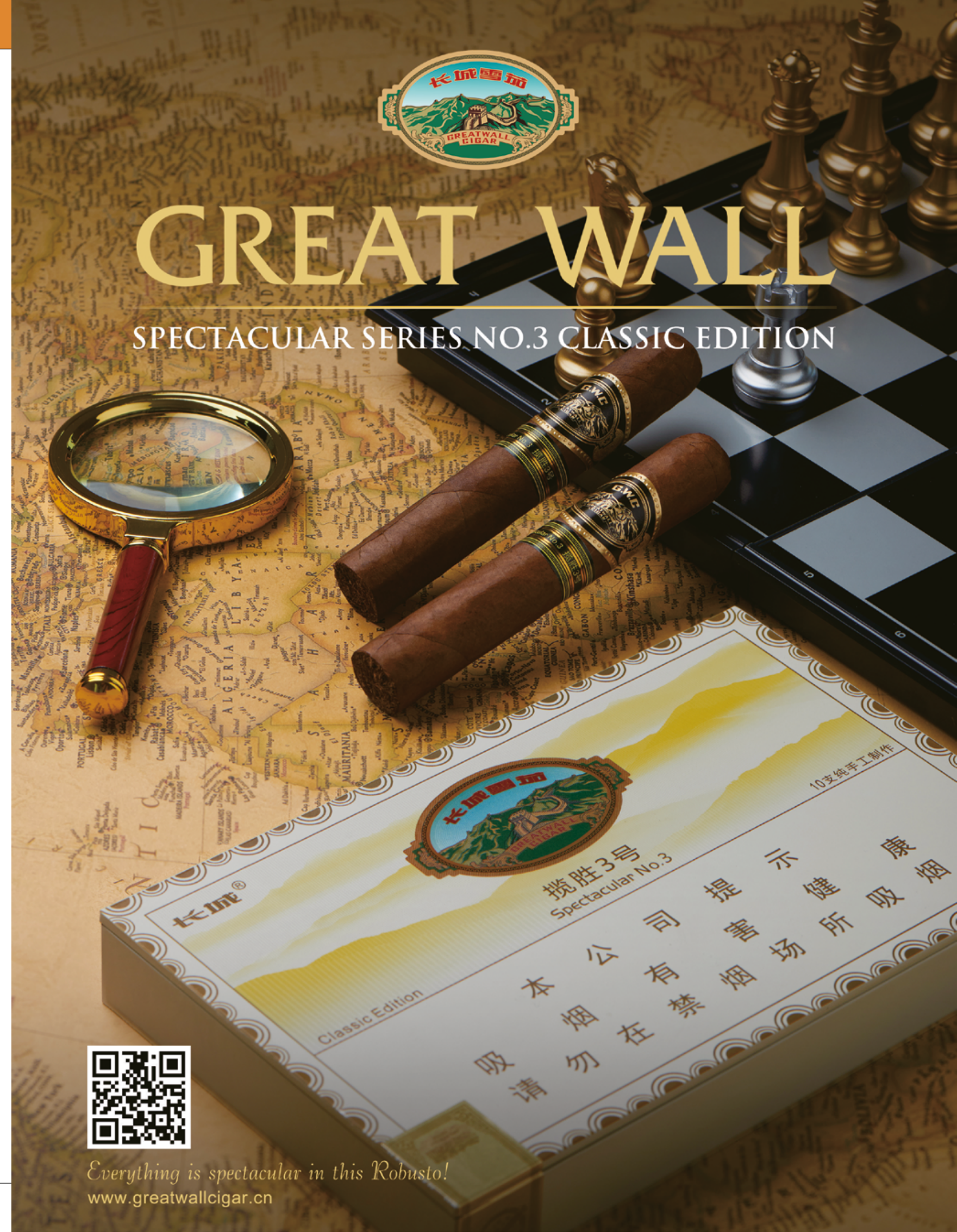
Spiced Rums

*Everything you wanted to know
and never dared to ask.*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

Despite being incredibly beloved and successful these days, spiced rums have been mostly neglected by the public until the mid-eighties, when major brands like Captain Morgan and Bacardi managed to create mass market products of global appeal. Their increasing demand on the global market has brought distilleries to present more and more spiced rums every year. Even some established producers of aged rums like Foursquare, Shipwreck, Botran, and Cruzan started to experiment with spiced variations presenting higher end bottlings, thus transforming what once was a niche product in a fundamental bottle of any rum core range.

Simply put, spiced rums are blended rums flavored, via infusion or maceration, with a selection of herbs, fruits, and spices. The distilling standards set a minimum of 2% of added flavors and the best products use only natural flavorings. Among the most common spices one can find: clove, cinnamon, vanilla, anise, citrus fruits, nutmeg, cardamom, allspice, ginger, all sorts of peppers, but also caramel, various roots, and fruits like banana, coconut, cocoa, berries, mango, and other tropical plants. If dark rums, they can be barrel aged in a variety of casks to offer more structure and wood spices, but in general they tend to be young spirits for easy consumption. Some countries mandate that spiced rums must be bottled at over 37,5% ABV (75 proof), but other distilling traditions set it to a lower standard like 35% ABV (70 proof). In general, these rums have a sweet, soft, flavorful, and easy drinkable profile, great to enjoy chilled or in cold and warm cocktail preparations. Classic serving ideas for spiced rums use sodas like coke, tonic water, iced tea, cold brew coffee, cider, and fruit juices, but they really shine when skillfully mixed by a professional bartender. If you were curious to experiment with spiced rums, you could not choose a better moment!



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Honey in Drinks

Stealing it from its purely culinary use and obtaining the honey mix, the mixology world has managed to enhance the best intricacies of honey.

by **Nicola Ruggiero**

Honey is the oldest sweetener known to mankind, a substance so natural that only hardworking bees are able to produce it, demonstrating the perfection and complexity of the nature we inhabit.

From a chemical point of view it is composed, on average, of 90% glucose and fructose, and the balance: water, vitamins and minerals. Fructose, in particular, is a source of energy that our body can exploit longer than other sugars, since, to be used by the muscles, it must first be transformed into glucose and then into glycogen. These peculiar characteristics, combined with contemporary food science have made its consumption very trendy again, even in the world of mixology.

Have you ever consumed a honey-based cocktail? Before indulging in a drink and understanding how to work out the best from honey in mixing, it is necessary to know about the natural product itself.

How many times has someone told you "You are sweet as honey" to summarize your loveliness and to complement you to the maximum? Well, it will be better to leave this phrase to poets and Valentine's Day cards and nothing more, because it is a scientifically incorrect statement. In addition to sugars, honey contains other substances such as vitamins, water, organic acids and enzymes. Consequently it is not a purely sweet product. In addition to an

undeniable, yet not exclusive sweetening property, honey is a highly aromatic food, which offers different flavors and textures depending on the types but also on the production area: a given type of honey (for example, a wildflower honey) will be different depending on the geographical location of the fields "cared for" by the bees. As product categories, the market offers a huge range of selections and the organoleptic differences (aromatic and sugary) are easily found even at home in many countries: try to taste a wildflower honey and a chestnut honey of local producers home. This long (compared to a cocktail) preliminary analysis is necessary to understand how we will not use honey only with the purpose of sweetening, but rather we will choose it specifically to give our drink the right contribution of sweetness and a specific aromatic nuance, the same which can be identified in the honey itself.

We answer a question that will introduce us to a second useful topic for a conscious mixing of honey: once you open a jar of this nectar is it appropriate to keep it in the refrigerator or outside? What happens to honey when exposed to different temperatures? Many will have happened to leave a jar of honey at the mercy of time and find it difficult to draw on it because it has become solid. This phenomenon is more correctly defined as crystallization, as glucose tends to separate from water and precipitate in the form of crystals. As a result, the more glucose is present in honey, the more it will tend to crystallize. Once





crystallized, the honey will be different from the original appearance and, even more peculiar circumstance, will appear of different structure depending on the type. This phenomenon, however, is not only related to glucose and its concentration but is also influenced by temperature and humidity. If we store our honey in the refrigerator at a temperature below 10 °C, crystallization will take place over a longer period of time. Otherwise, if we store it in the pantry, with an ambient temperature between 10 – 25 °C, it will crystallize faster. Above 25 °C, however, the process returns to slow down, but exceeding 40 °C the properties of honey undergo irreversible alterations, to the point that we would find the same modifications in the drink, mostly with unpleasant results.

It's time to try and challenge ourselves with using this food in our cocktails. At first it is necessary to dilute it to attenuate its viscosity and make it soluble with the other ingredients that make up the cocktail. This preparation is called, all over the world, honey mix. The quickest and most practical way to accomplish this at home is to employ the "water bath" technique. Remembering the temperature scale, it is good to work at a water temperature not exceeding 40 degrees, to avoid irreversible alterations that we would find in the honey mix. With this operation we will make the honey more fluid and it will be further diluted with warm water. The proportion I suggest, variable depending on the viscosity of the honey, varies between 60-70% of honey and 30-40% of water. Keep in mind, also, that adding water will reduce the sweetening power, which is the reason why I believe that honey is not really a worthy substitute for sugar. As a result, adding a little sugar in our recipe, although it is not always recommended, is not wrong either. Another aspect to take into account is the crucial contribution of water to the dilution of the cocktail: if we add too much or if the ice is not the best, we risk diluting our drink too much.

The procedure to make a good honey mix is very simple. It is necessary to take a pot with water and add a second metal container where to pour the amount of honey, already weighed, to make it dissolve. Keeping in mind the proportions between honey and water, the latter must then be added in the right amount and, keeping under control its temperature that must never exceed 40 °C, stirring continuously. An example: for a honey mix with a ratio of honey and water of 70/30, 60 ml of water must be added to 150 grams of honey (rounded even the few grams of difference). Once we have our solution, let it cool completely before its use.

The last attention to have concerning the honey mix is its preservation. Usually in a food a concentration of sugars equal to at least 65% guarantees a longer shelf life. The honey mix, which is obtained with water, no longer has the sugar content that honey had at the start, therefore it no longer possesses its initial capability of natural preservation. Consequently, it is advisable to store the honey mix in the refrigerator (for no more than three days) or, even better, prepare the quantity necessary for consumption strictly functional to the drink.

BALMORAL
SINCE 1895

Añejo XO

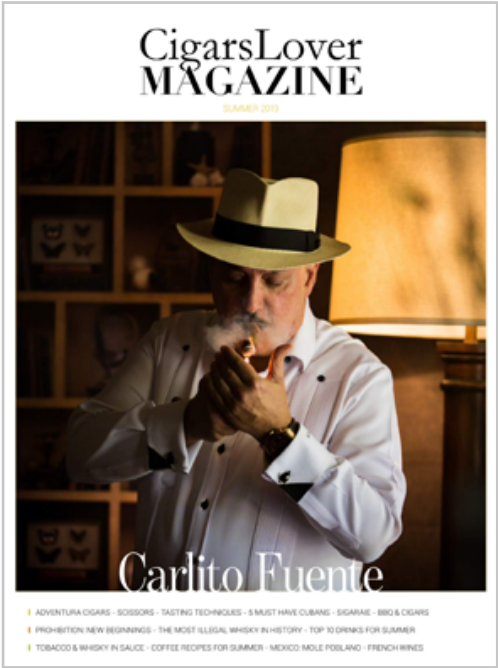
When was the last time
you experienced something
for the first time?



BALMORAL AÑEJO XO

Born from passionate curiosity, Balmoral invites you to discover the optimal balance of sophisticated complexity and smoothness. Each meticulously crafted, extensively aged Añejo XO cigar blend is the result of a relentless global search for the top 5% of select premium tobaccos available, including our exclusive, signature Brazilian Mata Norte. Crowned with an Arapiraca wrapper from Brazil, Balmoral Añejo XO provides a luxuriously rich experience that embraces your palate with complex wood tones but also peppery notes that finish with a smooth, underlying natural sweetness.

#CuriosityDrivesDiscovery



CIGARSLOVERS MAGAZINE

DISCOVER ALL ISSUES



Piña colada

Rum, coconut, and pineapple: just as few elements were enough to reinvigorate a crew of pirates, it took a few years to make it one of the most iconic drinks in the world of mixology.

by **Davide Pertino**

Among the most iconic cocktails, immortal over time, transversal to latitudes, and incredibly cosmopolitan, it is impossible not to include the Piña Colada. It is very often represented in commercials for its DNA strongly suggestive of relaxed atmospheres, white sands, and bathing temperatures.

When we talk about Piña Colada, the mind immediately goes to the two tropical fruits that make up its main ingredients, pineapple, and coconut, which, mixed with Puerto Rican rum, return an interesting and highly appealing drink.

Legend has it that the creator of this drink was a pirate. It is said that Roberto Cofresi y Ramirez de Arellano, a Puerto Rican pirate, in the early 19th century, created a mixture based on white rum and pineapple to raise the morale of his

crew, tried by long navigations in the open sea and by multiple efforts made to cope with weather conditions that are highly unfavorable to navigation. With the death of Roberto Cofresi and the impossibility of finding certain historical traces of this story, the first real recipe for this drink was lost to time.

On the other hand, the most credible and even more recent story is that linked to the figure of Ramon "Monchito" Marrero, who, in 1954, at the counter of his Beachcomber bar in the Hilton Caribe in San Juan (Puerto Rico), found himself having to satisfy the request of his manager: to invent an exclusive drink, which would fulfill the request of the customers' palates, soft, silky, sweet and refreshing. After three months of study, testing, and research, Ramon created the drink we still know, ask for, and consume today.

The drink gained worldwide fame in 1978, thanks to a song by Rupert Holmes, wholly dedicated to the drink. "If you like pina coladas," quotes the singer-songwriter, a song that became very popular in all tropical bars of the time and certainly contributed to the worldwide success of the drink.

"Piña Colada" in Spanish means "Pressed Pineapple". Ramon's original recipe immediately became the typical drink of the island, so much so that it was even celebrated by a commemorative plate in old San Juan. The NY Times quoted: "West Indian cocktails range from the famous Martini-que Rum Punch and Cuban Pina colada. There are numerous lime and punch swizzles in Key west, and Grenadian people use nutmeg in their rum drinks". After almost seventy years of history and variations (the most famous variation to mention is the "swimming pool" with vodka, blue curacao, and cream), it refreshes and sweetens the palates of all those who require it, whether it is August or December. So famous that it is classified as the 12th most consumed drink in the world according to the list of 50 best drinks.

The preparation of the original recipe included white rum, clearly Cuban, fresh pineapple juice, coconut cream, and crushed ice, all placed in a shaker, to then be poured directly into the glass with the addition of more ice and a maraschino cherry. Nowadays, it is a drink that can also be prepared with a blender or as a smoothie if you want to give the drink a more palatal "texture", i.e., creaminess, volume, and uniformness.

A simple cocktail? That is not at all true. One of the leading experts in tiki mixing, Gianni Zottola, catalogs pina colada as one of the most confusing and unnatural drinks in the history of mixing, classifying it as one of the most underrated drinks to drink and prepare. This cocktail, in fact, over time, has had drastic changes not so much in the ingredients but in the method of preparation. It is impossible to think that more than one hundred and fifty years ago, they could have ice at hand, processing of coconut as cream, and therefore we will never know how "El Pirata Cofresi" had prepared the concoction for his crew. It is certain. However, rum processes and preparations have always existed. See the variations with Rum Arrangés or Batidas in Brazil.

The drink can be prepared blended or with a shaker, where we will put the crushed ice directly into the shaker and then pour the whole drink directly into the glass without filtering the ice.

It is a not a very alcoholic drink, but a simple, however, not trivial drink if the starting ingredients are very fresh and of excellent quality. The taste is in perfect balance between sweetness and acidity, perhaps with a slight prevalence of the former. What fascinates, however, is the tactile aspect on the palate: soft, creamy, enveloping, and incredibly refreshing. It is already perfect to sip like this, but the combination with a cigar, perhaps a little rustic and with intense and vibrant aromas, could make you think again about one of the most popular cocktails in the world, but not trivial or lacking in character.

INGREDIENTS

- 90 ml of fresh pineapple juice
- 30 ml of coconut cream
- 15 ml of lime juice
- a pinch of salt
- 60 grams of crushed ice

GLASS

Wide glass or in a special glass called Hurricane.

PREPARATION

Pour all the ingredients, finally the ice, into a blender (including immersion) and blend for about 25-30 seconds. If the quantity of ice and the quality of the ingredients are correct, foam or even a cream will form. Pour into the glass and garnish with a maraschino cherry and a slice of pineapple.

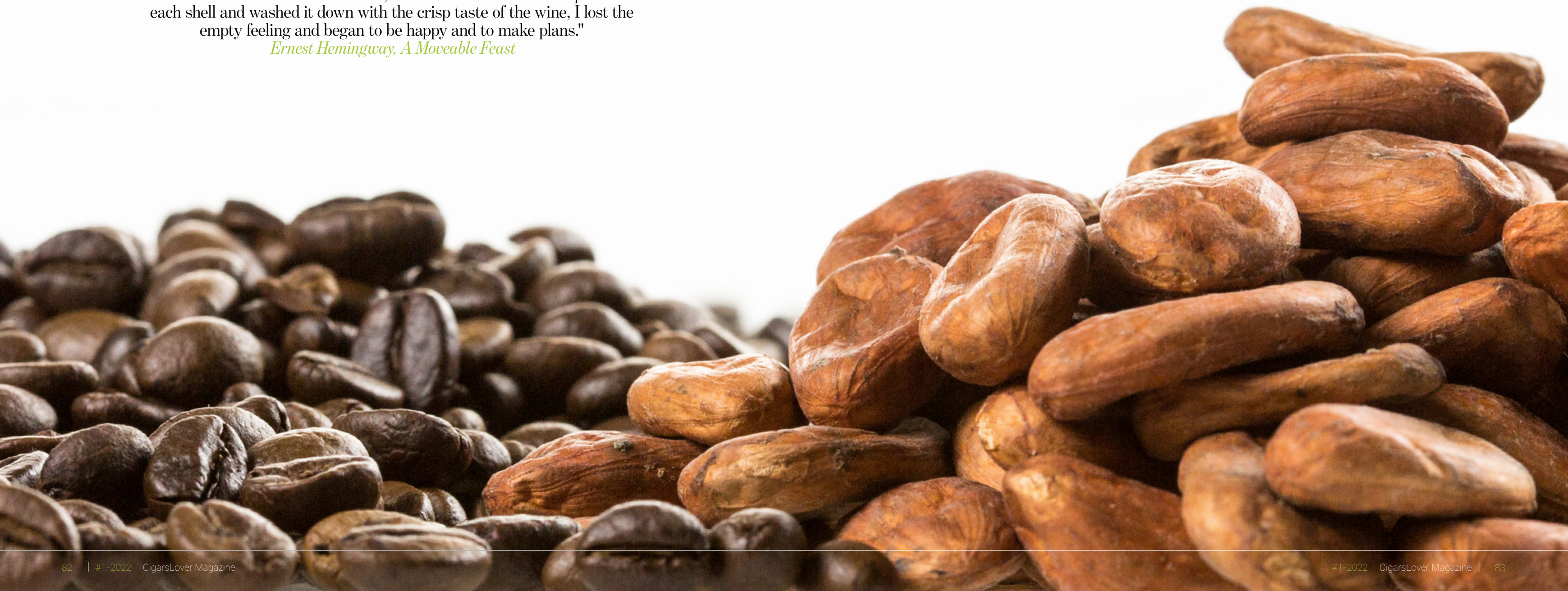
ADVICE

Use pineapple fruit and not juice. For the service, the straw is, if not mandatory, strongly recommended.

TASTE

"As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans."

Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast



Sour Fruit Complexities

*Going beyond the limits of
of beer sourness and fruitiness.*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

We already presented some important sour styles like classic lambics, grape ales, and saisons in past articles, but sour fruit beers are currently so successful that there are many more interesting new entries and experimentations to be acknowledged.

First a quick recap: the basic productive principle of sour beers is to intentionally expose the brew to wild yeast strains and bacteria that can stimulate acidity. The main bacteria that characterize sour beers are *Lactobacillus* for the clean lemony-tart puckering taste; *Pediococcus* for the funkier tangy notes; *Acetobacter* for sour vinegar flavors; and *Brettanomyces* for the dirtier and earthier

set of flavors. Managing old-fashioned spontaneous fermentation is a very difficult affair (and, obviously, results are entirely dependent on the autochthonous yeast preserved in the brewery's warehouse): thus, few brewers outside of Belgium ventured into those wild territories.

Yet, modern sour fruit beers are another matter: by adding all sorts of fruit to acidulated barley and wheat malt during fermentation, beermakers managed to obtain remarkable sour-tasting beers with a more reliable productive process and even more developed tart and tangy fruit flavors. As if that were not enough, some producers thought of combining sour fruit beers with other styles like wine yeasts, herbs, spices, and barrel aging techni-





ques. In this way they obtained some pretty intriguing beer specimens. Even if many of these beers are one-shots or limited editions, they undoubtedly contributed to the rise of the sour domination over the beer world.

Let's start with an instant Belgian classic to set the stage. Launched in spring 2020, Oude Kriek Jart-Elle is a quintessential young fruit lambic made with fresh cherries and barrel aged for six months, with a 6% ABV. Its nose is marked by notes of citrus, herbs, fresh red berries, green apples, almonds, and something earthy and leathery, the typical "cellar notes" developed by the Brettanomyces. The taste is incredibly tart, dominated by sour cherries and crunchy raspberries, bread yeast, lemon peels, wood tannins and a funky note of mushrooms. This beer requires time: on the shelf, after opening it, and in the glass. Moreover, it should not be served chilled, maybe around 12 °C, otherwise the sharp notes will cover everything. Enjoy it while eating exotic spicy food during a cool summer night as its lactic acid will wonderfully handle capsaicin.

The Flying Dutchman Nomad Brewing Company has proposed some really crazy beers over the past years. Gosh It's Posh is an elderflower white wine sour beer, dry hopped with Nelson Sauvignon and matured on French Oak chips. Basically, they added elderflowers and white wine grape in fermentation with champagne yeast, then dry hopped it, and finally let it rest with wood chips as if it were lightly barrel aged. The bacteria come from a specific type of Finnish sourdough bread starters, which makes of this beer the weirdest hybrid possible. As the ABV is only 5,6%, the result is an odd combination of a lightly hopped sour beer with a subtly barrel aged grape ale. The taste is in between a beer and a white wine: it starts elegant and well round before turning to funkier elderflower notes and a slightly sour aftertaste. It should be drunk quite chilled over any variety of light appetizers and hors d'oeuvre.

The final, and most incredible, beer we suggest is the Founders Más Agave Clásica Lime. This is more a beer cocktail than a simple beer, with all the ingredients of a classic margarita added to a brew. It is an imperial gose brewed with agave, lime, and sea salt, then aged in tequila barrels for several months for a final 10% ABV. It is strong, intensely dominated by tequila and lime, salty & sour, lightly toasted and caramelized. The low carbonation and the sweet finish make it more of a cheese beer than something to drink over a main course, though we can certainly think of some crazy burgers with blue cheese and caramelized onions that would pair wonderfully with this beer. Drink it chilled and carefully!

By definition, sour beers are artisanal crazy beers with no regulations nor limits. We highly recommend you try them, but only if you like experimenting and being surprised, if not even being tested by their weirdness and their constant attempt at going beyond the limits set by standardized taste. Beware the sourness otherwise!



La Trova
Ceno 52 x 166 mm de largo / 52 ring gauge x 166 mm length
INTERTABAK AG
OFFICIAL IMPORTER OF HABANOS IN SWITZERLAND

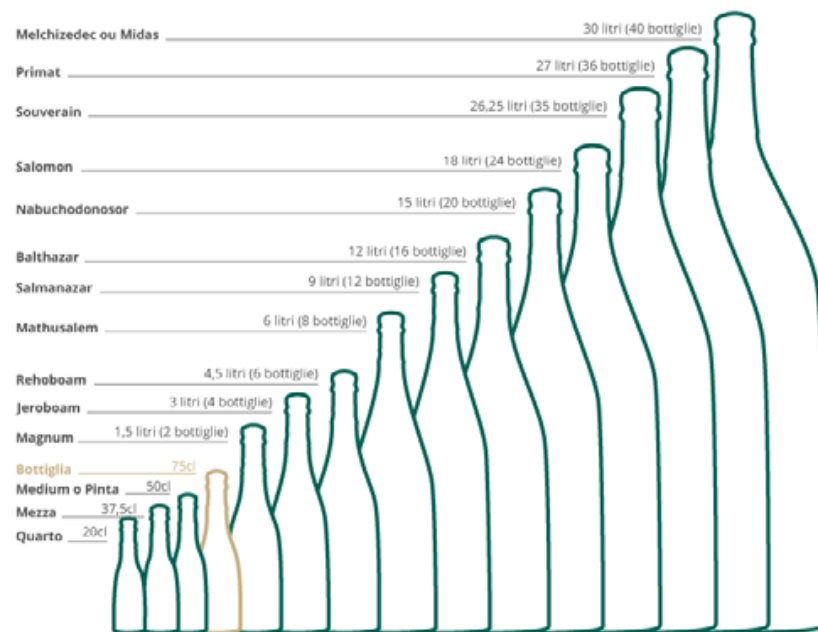
If Size Matters

*A Short History of
Champagne Bottle SizinG.*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

When talking about champagne, there is always a major fascination for the big bottles that showcase the wine grandeur at events and celebrations. If magnums are usually acknowledged as the best format even by the average consumer, the bigger formats named after the biblical kings are often considered to be just an advertisement gimmick... but is that so? In fact, there is an important productive factor of champagne that makes big formats particularly interesting.





The main feature of champagne is the secondary fermentation (or refermentation) in the bottle. Thus, the bottle is the fundamental vessel that allows the transformation of the base wine in proper champagne: the ratio between the bottle surface area and the contained liquid indicates the amount of oxygen that allows yeasts to slowly transform the wine in a sparkling marvel. By controlling wine oxygenation, winemakers can regulate how yeasts release aromas and polyphenols, how to balance vigor and texture, how to develop the silky mousse and the vibrant energy that will characterize the final champagne. From this perspective, magnums offer the best solution in terms of balance because the cork size is the same of the standard bottle, but the amount of oxygen is halved by the double volume of the bottle. This feature makes of magnums the most beloved format for great vintages, special editions, and important wines in general. From Jeroboam to Melchizédech format, the cork does not change, but the increase in the volume allows for a better protection from UV, temperature, vibrations, and other external factors. Obviously, the cost of managing the big formats must be factored in, making everything above magnum-size particularly expensive and rare. Yet, the huge formats should not be underestimated: the bigger surface area slows down refermentation and reduces oxidation, which potentially means that the wine may have a longer ageing perspective and a more complex and textured aromatic profile.

Unfortunately, due to the specificities of champagne making, it is difficult to directly compare a standard bottle and bigger one. In general, champagnes are made from cuvées, meaning a combination of base wines that can be of different vintages and grapes according to the balance and structure sought after by the cellar master. Such an intrinsic productive characteristic allows cellar masters to always find the best profile for the indented final products, but it also makes every batch of champagne quite different from another. Furthermore, the various formats may be bottled for refermentation at different dates, moving consequently their relative disgorging dates. Disgorgement is paramount in defining the consuming timeline for a champagne, as by ejecting the yeasts champagne starts to age and should be monitored for the ideal date of consumption. Finally, champagne makers are always, and rightfully, quite private about their creatures, and do not want to share many details about their production process. This privacy preserves the special allure of champagne, but in turn it makes difficult to understand how a bigger format impacts the result.

To offer a reliable comparative tasting, champagne makers should plan well ahead (more than a year) to release a batch of the same wine bottled in the diverse sizes. These tasting experiences are sometime arranged by the big maisons as unique events for their most faithful customers, as it would be impossible for private customers to organize something of the sort. Professional tasters underlined that the big formats may really offer a wine that is more vigorous and energetic, fresher, and richer with aromas, but, above everything else, they arouse an undeniable excitement! One thing is for sure: opening a big size bottle of champagne will always be an incredible emotion for its charm and symbolic value as one of the most luxurious wines in the world.



中国杂志

Available in:
ENGLISH
ITALIAN
CHINESE



Aged fish

How does the idea that a fish can be tasted "aged" make our synapses work?

by **Vincenzo Lopez**

For a long seafaring tradition, as well as in the collective idea of populations bathed by the sea, deciding to taste a succulent fish dish responded to an almost mathematical equivalence: fish equal to fresh. A simple, intuitive and correct concept, at least until proven otherwise.

Still, try to imagine a five-kilo mahi mahi caught off the coast of Tunisia, with a sparkling rainbow painted on its skin and dorsal fin. Imagine its white, tasty meat and its oily skin that will best express its gustatory qualities on a tightly-grilled embers, right flame, just sprinkled with salt to mitigate its strength. And after this image between barbeque, lawn, fresh beer, friendship and why not an excellent cigar between your fingers, try to imagine it in a fridge for maturation, hung to rest for thirty days in a controlled atmosphere, ready to be portioned and served in a dish expertly prepared for fine palates.

If I have not yet managed to scratch your skepticism, I will try to provide you with two other visions, both sentimental of course, but distilled from time and life experience (professional and otherwise).

The first, as a son of a land suited to fishing, respecting the sea and its biological rhythms: fresh fish can't be beaten. There is no match: the image that a fish is caught, cleaned, filleted and cooked remains and will always remain the first choice. And if, by pure fantasy, it were possible to cook it even before it is caught, it would be the non plus ultra. The second vision is provided by my being an operator in the gastronomic sector and a lover of good food, and it is certainly more concise than the first: maturation is, indisputably, the future of flavor.

Wanting to deepen but without going too far into extre-

me technicalities, typical of food processing procedures, the aging of the fish, especially the one of large dimensions, is made in capacious refrigerators where the parameters of temperature, ventilation, humidity and oxygen they are managed by electronic control units designed and built by true pioneers of this extraordinary intuition. Well yes, intuition, because the only really innovative things are the machinery and the related science, as long-term food preservation procedures have been known for centuries. In fact, from a stoic point of view, there are many techniques, some of which almost handed down from father to son, designed to preserve meat as long as possible, during periods of seasonal lean. All while waiting for someone to invent a refrigerator and, before that, electricity.

In many islands of the Mediterranean, for example, since 1800 fishermen treated the gutted fish with a light



saline solution, and then hung it and left it to rest in the cold of the caves, where light and oxygen affected as little as possible. And perhaps it is no coincidence that one of the pioneers of the evolution of fish maturation is chef Luigi Pomata Jr., a native of Sardinia (Italy), who developed and refined this amazing technique.

Going deeper into the technique, the fish, preferably larger than 5 kg, needs precise precautions right from its first storage, that is, from being put on board. It is necessary that the fish follow the strict rule of cold, until it arrives in the kitchen, where it will be de liscid, gutted, carefully cleaned of its gills and bled (taking care to reach the intercostal veins). Immediately afterwards it will be hung in a ventilated refrigerator with very low humidity and left to hang for a variable time depending on its weight and the recipe with which it will be cooked. The fish is considered ready when it loses its tension, that is, when it stretches out completely, losing the curve that the battle for survival has generated. It should be emphasized that a sea fish, before being hoisted on board, fights with all possible energy and this generates stress and biochemical reactions on the entire nervous system, which leads to a stiffening of its flesh. This produces, in the phase of cooking close to the moment of fishing, a tactile effect that the mouth will register as stringy. On the other hand, aging regulates the homogeneous relaxation of proteins, drying the tissues and, at the same time, concentrating flavor and minerality to the meat.

But as for beef, the aging times allow for gustatory textures that lend themselves to the most disparate exercise of culinary style. The slightly matured meat will be mostly used to be blanched, having concentrated the juices in such percentages as to have uniformity and softness; for the effect, it will release delicate, evolved and decidedly unexpected flavors. The fillets that will instead be left to hang for longer, resembling real cured meats, will be more suitable for carpaccio with gargantuan facets, underlining how, a dried fish, can very well be eaten raw.

The risks of deterioration linked to post-mortem bacterial proliferation are very similar to those of a common loin of meat and, taking the necessary precautions, which pass from relying on true experts in this technique, I find that the only element that still arouses disappointment and reluctance towards this food practice is only the lack of knowledge. I am sure, however, as the past has already taught us, that when the aging of fish becomes a new culinary trend, everyone will overcome the initial resistance to compete to find the most particular and extreme preparation possible.

However, the experience of an amberjack sashimi, from fillet matured forty days, brushed with ponzu, combined with an emulsified air of wasabi and cedar juice, served as the first course of a tasting dinner, possibly combined with a Chateau Rossman Domaines Ott, I am convinced it can push anyone to trust innovation. Without any delay.



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

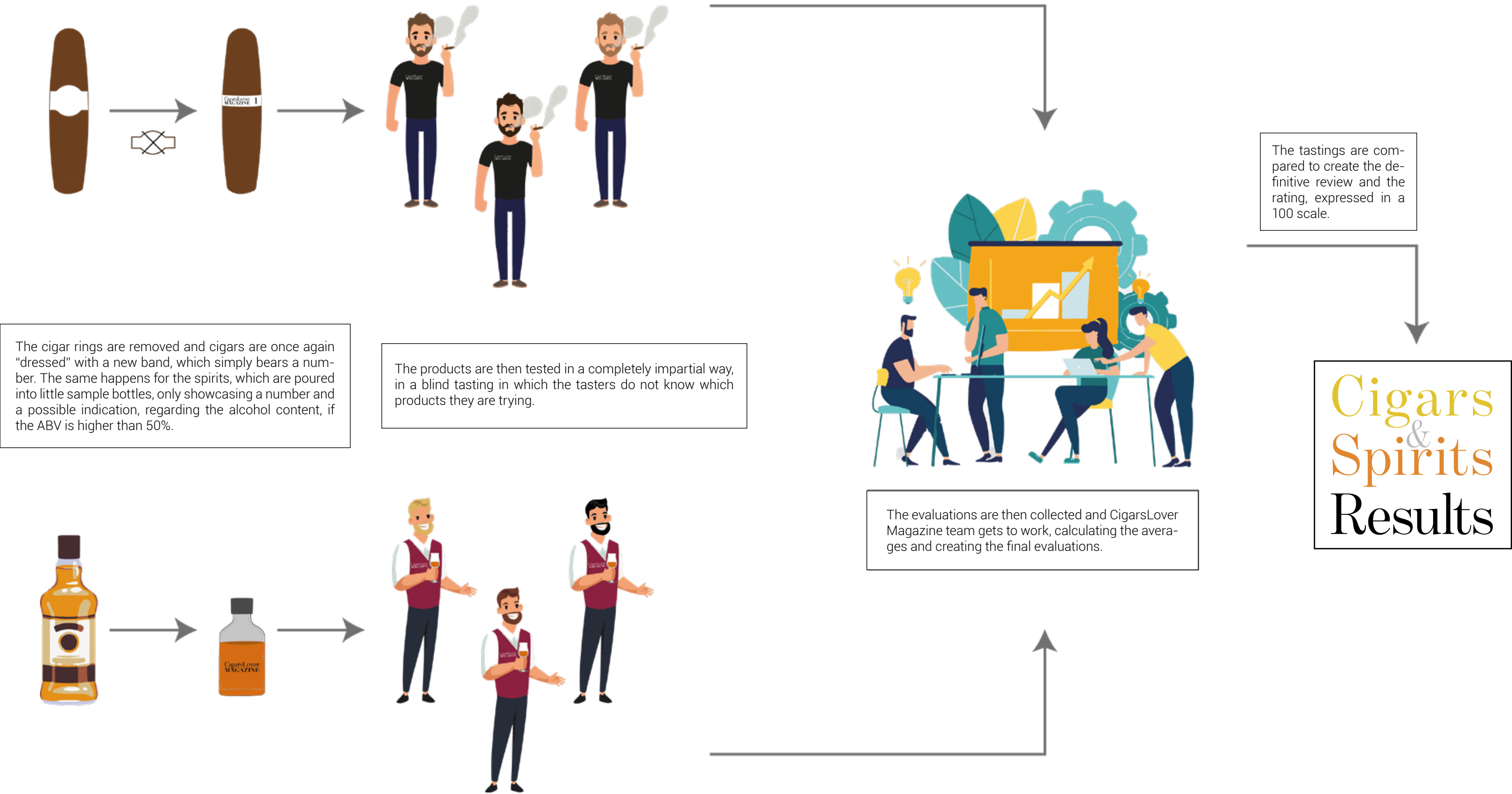
Blind Tasting



102	SPIRITS
104	Rum
110	Whisky
116	CIGARS
117	Churchill
120	Corona
124	Robusto
128	Toro



HOW ARE THE BLIND TASTINGS MADE?





KAVALAN
Solist Fino Sherry

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

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

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

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

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

94

Legend

All the information in the blind tasting

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

- 1 Spirit image.
- 2 Name of the spirit reviewed.

“yo” means “Years Old” and indicates how many years the product has been matured. If there is no indication of that, it is because the producer didn’t declare it.
- 3
 - COUNTRY: where the spirit is made.
 - ABV-PROOF: percentage of alcohol contained in the spirit.
 - PRICE:
\$ less than \$50
\$\$ between \$50 and \$100
\$\$\$ between \$100 and \$250
\$\$\$\$ above \$250
- 4 The tasting is divided in three parts: what is perceived to the nose, to the palate and in the finish. The final rows describe the overall experience that brought to the rating.
- 5 Rating scale: **95-100** memorable and excellent in every detail. **90-94** great quality and highly satisfying. **86-89** high quality and very pleasant. **81-85** decent, delivering a good dram . **Less than 80** not recommended.

SpiritsLover MAGAZINE

350+
SPIRITS
TESTED
YEARLY

Rum



The chosen 12

Twelve products coming from ten different country producer meet in this blind tasting, which includes rums ranging from below 50 dollars to 250.

Results

Three of the twelve rums tested registered 90 points or above score. Two of them scored great, going way over the ninety points level and distinguishing themselves from the rest.



APPLETON ESTATE 21 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Jamaica	43% 86	\$\$\$

— NOSE —
Scents of toffee and spices, enriched with cinnamon and orange peel. After a few moments, vanilla and cocoa.

— PALATE —
Rich notes of honey, followed by hazelnut, wood, vanilla, and cocoa. Hints of orange peel.

— FINISH —
Long finish, with honey and citrus, together with cocoa nuances.

Rich and elegant. A very fulfilling and harmonious rum.

93



OPTHIMUS 25 Year Old Whisky Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Dominican Rep.	43% 86	\$\$

— NOSE —
Ripe fruit, plum, dates, essential oils of orange, seasoned wood, and toasted nuts. Cereals and dark chocolate.

— PALATE —
Raisins, ripe fruit with plums and dates, panforte, and then dark chocolate and spices.

— FINISH —
Long. Dark chocolate, spices, hints of cloves, and a touch of malt.

Sumptuous and round, with a structured and deep flavor profile.

92



DICTADOR Claro 100 months aged

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Colombia	40% 80	\$

— NOSE —
Vanilla, nail polish, cedar zest, white flowers, starfruit, and candied apricot. Coffee beans and coffee liqueur.

— PALATE —
Licorice, stevia, and anise on a marshmallow base. Coffee liqueur, spice, and orange peel.

— FINISH —
Medium. Spices, licorice, and vanilla. Toasted.

Aromas are well defined, not deep, but the bouquet is broad and balanced.

90



THE REAL MCCOY
12 Year Old

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

—NOSE—
Seasoned wood, sawdust, and a touch of red fruit, followed by vanilla, caramel, and plum.

—PALATE—
Seasoned wood and vanilla, together with red fruit, and then spices.

—FINISH—
Medium persistence, with notes of spices and vanilla.

Well balanced and good structure. Round and easy to appreciate.

89



MEZAN
Jamaican Barrique
Xo

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Jamaica	40% 80	\$

—NOSE—
A mix of cedarwood, aromatic herbs, with rosemary and anise. Then notes of vanilla sugar.

—PALATE—
It is citrusy, with mineral notes and propolis candy.

—FINISH—
Medium. Slightly bitter, citrusy, sapid, with a royal jelly finish.

Light and drinkable rum for creative cocktails or for a disengaged drink.

88



DIABLESSE
Caribbean
Rum

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
England	40% 80	\$

—NOSE—
Intense notes of green olives and a hint of brine. Vegetal and intense, but not pungent.

—PALATE—
Brine, caramel, burnt sugar, wood paint, and marshmallows. Then, hints of mezcal.

—FINISH—
Medium. Brine and sugar, together with an intense vegetal note.

The flavor profile delivers a good intensity but is not that structured.

87



ZACAPA
Xo

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

—NOSE—
It develops scents of caramel and chinotto, together with balsamic aromas that recall cloves.

—PALATE—
Sweet, with notes of cola, cinnamon, and salted caramel.

—FINISH—
Medium persistence. A touch of china ink.

Simple to appreciate, due to a marked sweetness. Round.

87



RHUM J.M
Épices
Creoles

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	46% 92	\$

—NOSE—
Aromas of fresh wood, candied ginger, and citrus essential oils. Vegetal and balsamic nuances.

—PALATE—
Fresh wood and vegetal and balsamic aromas are confirmed, as well as candied fruit.

—FINISH—
Medium long. Balsamic and vegetal. Slightly dry.

Good complexity, although the profile is not one of the broadest.

87



BRUGAL 1888
Gran Reserva
Familiar

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

—NOSE—
Caramel and cocoa, together with spices and wood varnish. There is also a walnut touch.

—PALATE—
Rather round, with caramel in the foreground, followed by walnut and dark chocolate. Very sweet.

—FINISH—
Medium. A little dry. Notes of caramel.

Very sweet. The caramel is the undisputed protagonist. The flavor profile is contained but with a good structure.

86



EL SUPREMO
 12 Year Old

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

—NOSE—
 Fruity, with scents of honey, pecan nuts and vanilla, together with a rich hint of ginger.

—PALATE—
 Round, with notes of wood, toasted aromas, and candied fruit. There are also some spices.

—FINISH—
 Medium persistence. Fruity and with wood spices.

Round and harmonious flavor profile. Good persistence.

85



MALECON
 12 Year Old
 Reserva Superior

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Panama	40% 80	\$

—NOSE—
 Floral and medicinal herbs are revealed in the glass after a few moments. Chamomile flowers.

—PALATE—
 Sweetish, with caramel notes and sugary nuances. Fruity hints na then toasted aromas.

—FINISH—
 Medium short, with caramel and spice hints.

Limited flavor profile. Unbalanced on the sweet side. It lacks in structure.

83



DON PAPA
 Small Batch

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Philippines	40% 80	\$

—NOSE—
 Rich orange peel scents, together with kumquat, and orange essential oils.

—PALATE—
 Orange peel, grapefruit, and sugary notes. Sweet.

—FINISH—
 Short. Orange peel.

Simple to appreciate, thanks to the sweet base. The profile is contained and unbalanced to the orange.

82

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Whisky



The chosen 12

Five are the producing countries which take part in this whisky blind tasting. There are some new releases and some core range bottlings.

Results

Three whiskies reached the 90 points level with two of them touching 92 points. One is a classic Scotch, aged 25 years, the other a straight rye, another classic.



GLENFARCLAS 25 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	43% 86	\$\$\$

— NOSE —

Aromas of sherry, vanilla, and nuances of petrichor. Seasoned wood and balsamic hints. Dehydrated apricot.

— PALATE —

Intense, with seasoned wood, citrus peel, spices, butterscotch, and pepper peaks.

— FINISH —

Long. Spices, balsamic, mineral, and smoky nuances. Dark chocolate. Dry.

Complex, structured and deep. Balanced and satisfying.

92



PIKESVILLE Straight rye

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	55% 110	\$

— NOSE —

Honey, vanilla, and pecans, enriched with rosemary and thyme. Then butter and crème caramel. Fresh.

— PALATE —

Sweet and round, with rich woody notes, apricot, honey, and vanilla. Balsamic herbs.

— FINISH —

Medium-long. Honeyed, with a balsamic touch and cinnamon.

Intense, balanced, and fulfilling.

92



RITTENHOUSE Straight rye

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% 100	\$

— NOSE —

Scents of balsamic herbs, together with orange, candied orange zest, toffee, and spices.

— PALATE —

Orange peel notes, with spices including, cinnamon and nutmeg. Vanilla. Slightly peppery.

— FINISH —

Medium. Orange peel and spices, with some spices.

Balanced, intense, and somewhat complex. Interesting.

90



FOUR ROSES
Single Barrel

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% 100	\$

—NOSE—
 Pear, vanilla, and a balsamic vein. With time the minty note gets more evident. Mild wood varnish.

—PALATE—
 Spices, ripe plum and cherries, orange essential oils (with a minor bitter note). Rich vanilla notes.

—FINISH—
 Long. Spicy, orange essential oil, balsamic herbs, and oak.

Intense, easy to drink and satisfying.

89



KAVALAN
King Car Whisky

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

—NOSE—
 Chocolate ganache, ripe fruit, strawberry, figs, sweet dates, and tropical notes. Almost sulphuric hints.

—PALATE—
 Cocoa, ripe tropical fruit, dark chocolate, the latter with a nice bitterness to it, balancing the sweetness.

—FINISH—
 Long-lasting. It delivers notes of spices and ripe fruit.

Intense and fulfilling. Aromas are bold and classic.

88



KAIYO
Mizunara Oak Peated

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

—NOSE—
 A burst of smoke, backed up by toffee and sweet lemon cake. A waxy sensation is then paired with candle wick.

—PALATE—
 Citrus and fruity, with the smoke still present yet not overwhelming. Wax. Herbal hints.

—FINISH—
 Medium long. There are mineral notes, together with candlewick.

Not really complex or extremely deep, yet pleasant and never boring.

88



SMOOTH
 AMBLER
Contradiction Bourbon

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	46% 92	\$

—NOSE—
 Orange, brown sugar, and apricots. Spices, cinnamon, and star anise. Little oaky and a minor varnish hint.

—PALATE—
 A burst of toffee covers a sweet orange core. Spices are still present. Then vanilla.

—FINISH—
 Medium. Orange and apricots on top of vanilla and toffee.

Neat, clean, pleasant. Not overly complex, but smooth and intriguing.

87



BALVENIE
*Caribbean Cask
 14 Year Old*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	43% 86	\$\$

—NOSE—
 Sweet scents of ripe fruit and caramel, together with honey. There are also some roasted aromas.

—PALATE—
 Vanilla, wood and spices. The honey is still present, together with roasted notes. Sweet.

—FINISH—
 Medium. It delivers notes of spices, wood and vanilla.

Warm and round. Harmonious and easy to appreciate.

86



HIGH WEST
*American Prairie
 Reserve*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	46% 92	\$\$

—NOSE—
 Intense woody and vanilla scents, with wood varnish. Toffee and a persistent orange peel note.

—PALATE—
 Alcohol is quite present. Spices, toffee, apple crumble, and vanilla pod. A touch of anise, slightly bitter at times.

—FINISH—
 Medium. It delivers wood and toffee notes, together with spices.

A little sharp, but delivering a very good intensity.

86



HINCH
 10 Year Old
 Sherry Cask Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	43% 86	\$\$

— NOSE —
 Sherry scents, cereal biscuits, and a touch of vanilla. Fresh.

— PALATE —
 Mineral notes, with cereal biscuits and vanilla. A little earthy. There is a nice tang in the background.

— FINISH —
 Medium long. It exhibits aromas of vanilla and honey.

Balanced. The flavor profile is not among the widest but it is structured.

86



GUN FIGHTER
 Bourbon

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% 100	\$

— NOSE —
 A mix of honey, vanilla, and oak. Caramel and hints of plum, the latter taking some time before appearing.

— PALATE —
 Deep oaky notes, a touch of vanilla, and dark chocolate, together with roasted coffee notes.

— FINISH —
 Medium long. It delivers oak, spices, and cinnamon.

Intense. The oaky flavors are the protagonist.

84



HATOZAKI
 Blended

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	40% 80	\$

— NOSE —
 Vegetal scents, honey and citrus, where kumquat stands out. Hints of cut grass and a floral touch. Fresh

— PALATE —
 Fresh. Kumquat and floral notes, as well as honey, flanked by a hint of vanilla and hints of spices.

— FINISH —
 Medium. Spices and citrus fruits. It is balanced and harmonious, with an elegant profile.

Balanced and harmonious Elegant.

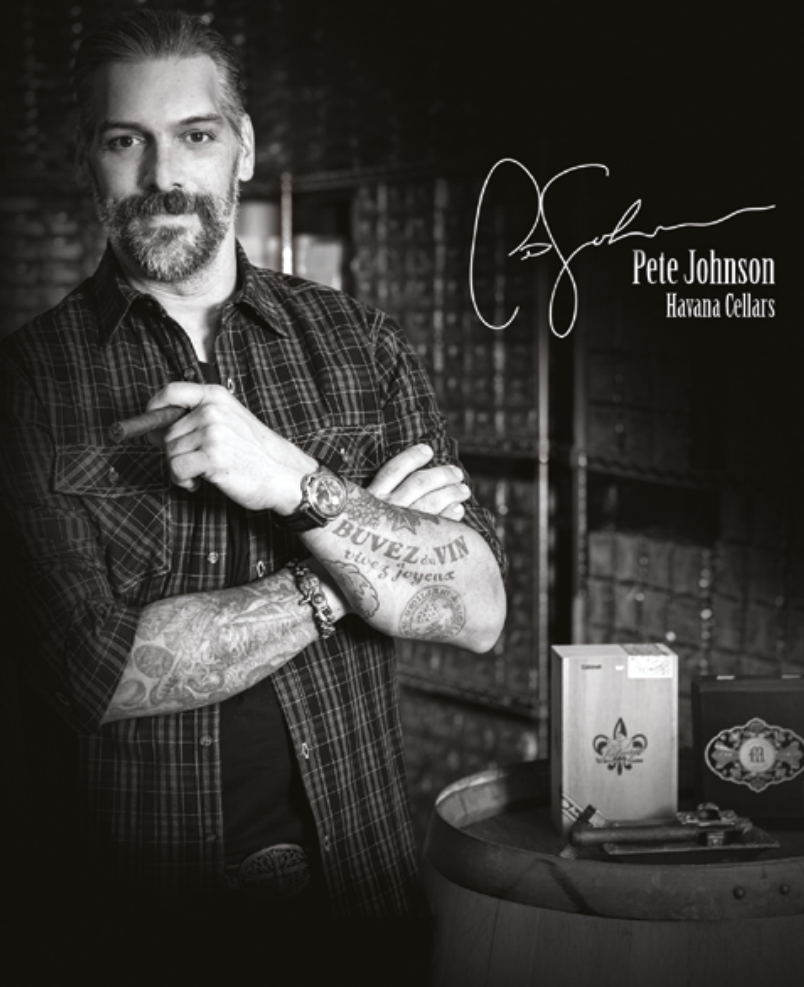
82



Discover
 Our Secrets
 hiramandsolomoncigars.com



tatuaje



havanacellars.com

@tatuajecigars @latelierimports

Legend

All the information inside the blind tastings

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



1

ADVENTURA
Royal Return King's Gold Robusto

COMPLEX AND RICH

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

3


95

4




5


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

- 1
- Cigar picture.
- 2
- Cigar tasting notes: the flavor profile delivered throught the smoke.
- 3
- Rating scale: **95-100** memorable and excellent in every detail. **90-94** great quality and highly satisfying. **86-89** high quality and very pleasant. **81-85** decent, delivering a good smoke . **Under 80** not recommended.
- 4
- Flag identifying the country where the cigar is made.
- 


Cuba




Dominican Rep.




Nicaragua




Honduras




Brazil




Mexico
- 


U.S.A.




Costa Rica




Italy



Philippines



Cina



Panama
- 5
- STRENGTH: described on a scale from "●" (lightest) to "●●●●●" (strongest).
 - SIZE: ring gauge (1/64 of inch) and legnth, written in both millimeters and inches.
 - PRICE: cigar price in US Dollar and Euro.
 - WRAPPER: the external leaf.
 - BINDER: the leaf under the wrapper.
 - FILLER: the leaves inside the cigar.

Churchills



The chosen 12

All the four big country producers are present in this Churchills blind tasting: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicragua.

Results

The Honduran cigar in the blind won the tasting with an impressive score, followed by a Dominican and a Cuban.



ALEC BRADLEY
PRENSADO CHURCHILL

RICH AND CREAMY

Intense ripe fruit notes, leather, cocoa, white pepper, and some earth. The base is sweet and in some puffs, piquant peaks are perceivable.

93

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	48x178mm (7 ½")	\$ 12 € 8.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



ROMEO Y JULIETA
CHURCHILLS

LIMITED EVOLUTION

The flavor profile comprises vegetal and roasted notes, together with earth and a touch of wood. In some puffs, smoky aromas are perceivable as well.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	47x178mm (7")	\$ - € 17
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



DAVIDOFF
CHEF EDITION 2021

BALANCED AND CREAMY

It delivers nutty notes, cocoa and earth, with some nuances of undergrowth. Then fine wood, citrus, and vanilla, with ripe fruit.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	48x178mm (7")	\$ 39 € 39
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP.



SIEMPRE ROSADO
CHURCHILL

ROUND AND STRAIGHTFORWARD

Earth, leather, and black pepper make up the main flavor profile throughout the smoke. Later on, the core profile is supported by nuts and some sweetness.

87

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	48x178mm (7")	\$ 13 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, USA



H. UPMANN
SIR WINSTON

BALANCED AND CREAMY

It delivers notes of cedarwood and vegetal aromas, together with precious spices. In the second half, the base becomes sweet, and the spices intensify.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	47x178mm (7")	\$ - € 22
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



JUAN LOPEZ
LCDH SELECCIÓN ESPECIAL

CONTAINED FLAVOR PROFILE

The cigar starts with a light sweetness with a hint of wood. Notes of leather are added in the second half, with a black pepper aroma appearing towards the end.

86

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x170mm (6 ¾")	\$ - € 29
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA REP.	CUBA



SIN COMPROMISO
PALADIN DE SAKA

BALANCED AND INTENSE

Coffee bean, leather, and wood open up the smoke, with black pepper and cocoa following right behind. Earth notes are added in the second half.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x178mm (7")	\$ 28.8 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	ECUADOR	U.S.A., NICARAGUA



LA FLOR DOMINICANA
LA VOLCADA

INTENSE BUT LIMITED EVOLUTION

Well-defined notes of earth, wood, coffee, and cocoa are present throughout the smoke. A bitter aroma appears in the second half, with spices closing the cigar.

86

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	48x178mm (7")	\$ 13.6 € 15
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP.

Coronas



The chosen 12

Four countries are involved. There are some new releases and some classics. Corona is not that a popular size nowadays, but there are some interesting new cigars.

Results

Three products stand out: two of them are made in Dominican Republic, the other one in Nicaragua. All the three scored 90 plus.



LAURA CHAVIN CONCOUR CORONA

ROUND AND SMOOTH

Creamy hazelnut notes are joined by wood and ripe fruits. Aromas of herbs and pepper come through in the background. An evident sweetness appears in the second half.

92

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	43x140mm (5 ½")	\$ - € 16
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



CASA MAGNA LIGA F PETIT CORONA

INTENSE AND FULL-BODIED

The spicy mix of black pepper and cinnamon are the prominent flavors throughout the smoke, and they are supported by coffee, leather, and wood.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●●	40x108mm (4 ¼")	Price: \$ 5.8 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



UNDERCROWN 10 CORONA VIVA

BALANCED AND FLAVORFUL

Black pepper is the undisputed main aroma. The flavor profile is rounded out by coffee, leather, and hazelnut notes. Chili spice closes out the cigar.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	43x127mm (5")	\$ 10.5 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	U.S.A.	NICARAGUA



ADVENTURA KING'S GOLD CORONA

BALANCED AND FULL

Creamy leather and earth are supported by hazelnut in the beginning. Black pepper is present in the retro-hale. A vegetal nuance is added in the second half.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x152mm (6")	\$ 13 € 12.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA, U.S.A.



RAMON ALLONES
SMALL CLUB CORONAS

RICH AND CREAMY

It delivers nutty notes, together with cedarwood and walnut. In the second half, the smoke becomes spicy with rich black pepper and some chili aromas.

89 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	42x110mm (4 ¾")	\$ - € 7
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



LA GALERA
IMPERIAL JADE CORONA

FULL AND DEFINED

The profile is made up of citrus, wood, and leather notes as the main flavors, joined by aromas of cinnamon and herbs. The latter becomes balsamic towards the end.

87 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	44x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 7 € 9.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



MAESTRANZA
BARON

GOOD COMPLEXITY

It delivers nutty and woody notes, with a nice splash of mixed spices. In the second half, wild pepper on a drier nutty and woody background.

88 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	42x130mm (5 ⅞")	\$ - € 9.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	COSTA RICA	NICARAGUA



QUAI D'ORSAY
CORONAS CLARO

ROUND AND SMOOTH

White pepper opens up the smoke, followed by ripe fruits, wood and citrus, and vegetal notes. A sour cream aroma is added in the second half.

86 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	42x143mm (5 ⅝")	\$ - € 9.7
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



FERIO TEGO TIMELESS
STERLING MAREVAS

A LITTLE HARSH FINISH

It delivers toasted notes and wood, together with white pepper. In the second part, the flavor profile is enriched with walnut. The finale is a little on the bitter side.

87 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	42x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 11.5 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



SANTA DAMIANA
CORONA

A LITTLE DRY

It exhibits notes of peanuts, hay and dry wood, together with a gentle touch of pepper. There are also some nuances of espresso.

86 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	45x140mm (5 ½")	\$ - € 5.6
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



SANCHO PANZA
NON PLUS

RUSTIC BUT INTENSE

The flavor profile is made of roasted notes and rustic aromas of wood, together with some vegetal nuances. Coffee and hazelnut are added in the second part of the smoke.

87 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	40x130mm (5 ⅞")	\$ - € 7.2
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



AMENDOLA SIGNATURE
SERIES CANNOLI GREEN

HARSH

The first part of the smoke delivers roasted notes and earthy aromas. The base is a little on the bitter side, for all the duration of the smoke.

81 |

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	2x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 9 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
SUMATRA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

Robustos



The chosen 12

The cigars featured in this blind tasting come from six different producing countries, including Costa Rica and Mexico.

Results

Four of the cigars tested scored at least 90 points. Two stand above all the others. One is from Cuban, the other from Nicaragua.



STOLEN THRONE CALL TO ARMS ROBUSTO

COMPLEX AND INTENSE

Cocoa, earth, leather, and black pepper make up the core flavors in the first half. The main profile is supported by coffee, wood, and walnut throughout the smoke.

92 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 10 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



ROMEO Y JULIETA WIDE CHURCHILLS

BALANCED AND COMPLEX

Ripe fruit, hay, and cereals open up the smoke. Wood and cinnamon spices are added further into the cigar. A honey nuance appears occasionally and toasted aromas close out the cigar.

92 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	55x130mm (5 1/8")	\$ - € 12.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



PARTAGAS SERIE D NO.4

SATISFYING AND BOLD

It delivers rich earthy notes, together with black pepper and seasoned wood. In some puff there are piquant peaks, with some hints of leather.

91 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x124 mm (4 7/8")	\$ - € 14.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



ADVENTURA THE NAVIGATOR PINZON

INTENSE

Seasesoned wood and earthy notes open up the smoke, followed by cocoa, spices and vegetal hints. In some puffs, mushroom aromas are perceivable as well.

90 

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x140mm (5 1/2")	\$ 7 € 11.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP., ECUADOR, NICARAGUA



PLASENCIA
COSECHA 149 LA VEGA

BOLD

It delivers aromas of cocoa and earth, together with cedarwood and hints of black pepper. Nuances of red fruits.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x127 mm (5")	\$ 13 € 13
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



CAPA FLOR
MADURO ROBUSTO

STRAIGHTFORWARD

While the cigar opens with light hay notes, the profile changes in the second half to aromas of black pepper, bread, and leather.

86



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ - € 3.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO, NICARAGUA



BRUNDEL RÉ BICENTENARIO
LIMITED EDITION ROBUSTO

BALANCED AND SMOOTH

The cigar opens with fresh wood and leather notes. Further into the smoke, a nutmeg spice is added, together with herbal and charred nuances.

89



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x127mm (5")	\$ - € 10.9
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	COSTA RICA	COSTA RICA



ROCKY PATEL HAMLET
LIBERATION ROBUSTO

LIGHT AND LIMITED

The cigar opens with very mild aromas of wood and white pepper, which remain the main flavors throughout the smoke. A mild cocoa aroma appears in the second half.

84



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 10.5 € 8.8
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



A.J. FERNANDEZ BELLAS
ARTES MADURO ROBUSTO

WELL BALANCED

It delivers aromas of earth, black pepper and a mix of spices, together with some vegetal notes. In the second half, cocoa and mushrooms are added.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 14 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	MEXICO	NICARAGUA



PADILLA FINEST HOUR
SUNGROWN ROBUSTO

UNBALANCED

It delivers aromas of earth and leather, together with vegetal notes. The base is a little bitter.

82



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 8.5 € 7
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



CASA TURRENT
ORIGIN NICARAGUA

INTENSE

It exhibits notes of earth, leather and spices, with the black pepper being the most relevant. Then hints of hazelnut and vegetal aromas are added.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 7 € 6.6
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	NICARAGUA



FRATELLO
CAMO ROSSO ROBUSTO

UNBALANCED AND ROUGH

Bitter and dry wood notes are present in the opening. Earth and a rough black pepper spice are added later on. The smoke is pungent and becomes overwhelmingly bitter towards the end.

79



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x127mm (5")	\$ 3.25 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP.

Toros



The chosen 12

Many recently added cigars, together with some previous releases, are featured in this Toros blind tasting. Four are the producing countries involved.

Results

Two cigars scores reach the 90 points level. One is made in Dominican Republic and the other in Nicaragua.



DAVIDOFF LIMITED EDITION 2022 GRAN TORO

GREAT BALANCE

It delivers spicy notes, with the black pepper standing out, seasoned wood and leather. Vegetal nuances. In the second half, piquant peaks are perceivable in some puffs.

92

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	58x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 32 € 25
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	BRAZIL	BRAZIL, DOM. REP., NICARAGUA



LA PALINA 125 AÑOS TORO

BALANCED AND ELEGANT

Leather and earth are the main flavors in the beginning, followed by hazelnut and white pepper. A subtle creaminess and a balsamic herbal note are added later on.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x165mm (6 ½")	\$ 25 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



ALEC BRADLEY TRILOGY NATIVE CAMEROON

BALANCED

The first part of the smoke is sweet, and delivers toasted notes and cappuccino, with some vegetal hints. In the second half, rich spices aromas are added.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x152mm (6")	\$ 15 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



CAO SESSION TORO

BOLD

The flavor profile delivers earthy notes, together with a mix of spices, where cinnamon and black pepper stand out. The flavor profile is completed with roasted notes.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	49x152mm (6")	\$ 9.8 € 9.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
USA	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



VILLIGER LA LIBERTAD
GRAN TORO

CREAMY AND SMOOTH

The profile is spicy and creamy with nutmeg in the first half. The spiciness is a mix of chili pepper and white pepper, followed by charred wood and leather in the second half.

88



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x152mm (6")	\$ - € 8.5
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP.	NICARAGUA



ILLUSIONE CIGARES PRIVÉ
BOX PRESSED TORO COROJO

COMPLEX AND FLAVORFUL

An evident sweetness starts out the smoke, with hazelnut, leather, and herbal notes being added further into the cigar. White pepper notes join the profile halfway through the cigar.

87



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	56x140mm (5 ½")	\$ 9.25 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



AMENDOLA
CREMOSO

ROUND AND SMOOTH

A combination of wood, leather, and bread, are the core flavors throughout the smoke. Honey is added later on, with some spice coming through towards the end.

87



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x152mm (6")	\$ 10 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



20 ACRE FARM
TORO

BALANCED BUT MONOTONOUS

The cigar opens with hazelnut and wood which are barely perceptible and light in body. A herbal note, together with some spice, is added in the second half of the cigar.

84



STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	52x152mm (6")	\$ 13.4 € -
WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	HONDURAS	NICARAGUA, U.S.A.

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.

Credits

Cover page

picture by: Alvaro Mata

Davidoff Black Bands

picture by: Simon Kurt

Defective cigars

picture by: Mario Amelio

Toscana Master Aged

picture by: Mario Amelio

Coffin

picture by: Mario Amelio

Intertabac

picture by: Intertabac Fair

Humidor wood

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Pairings:

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Sherry

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Cigars & Spirits

picture by: Mario Amelio - Renz A. Mauleon

Kavalan's Sherry

picture by: King Car Group

Spiced Rums

picture by: Renz Mauleon

Honey in Drinks

picture by: Tochok.info, Pinterest.com

Piña colada

picture by: Nicola Cima

Sour Fruit Complexities

picture by: Renz Mario Amelio

If Size Matters

picture by: 2ch.hk, Trinus.com, Champagne.fr

Aged fish

picture by: Facebook.com, Fastvoicemedia.de

Blind tasting - Spirits

picture by: Renz A. Mauleon

Blind tasting - Cigars

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