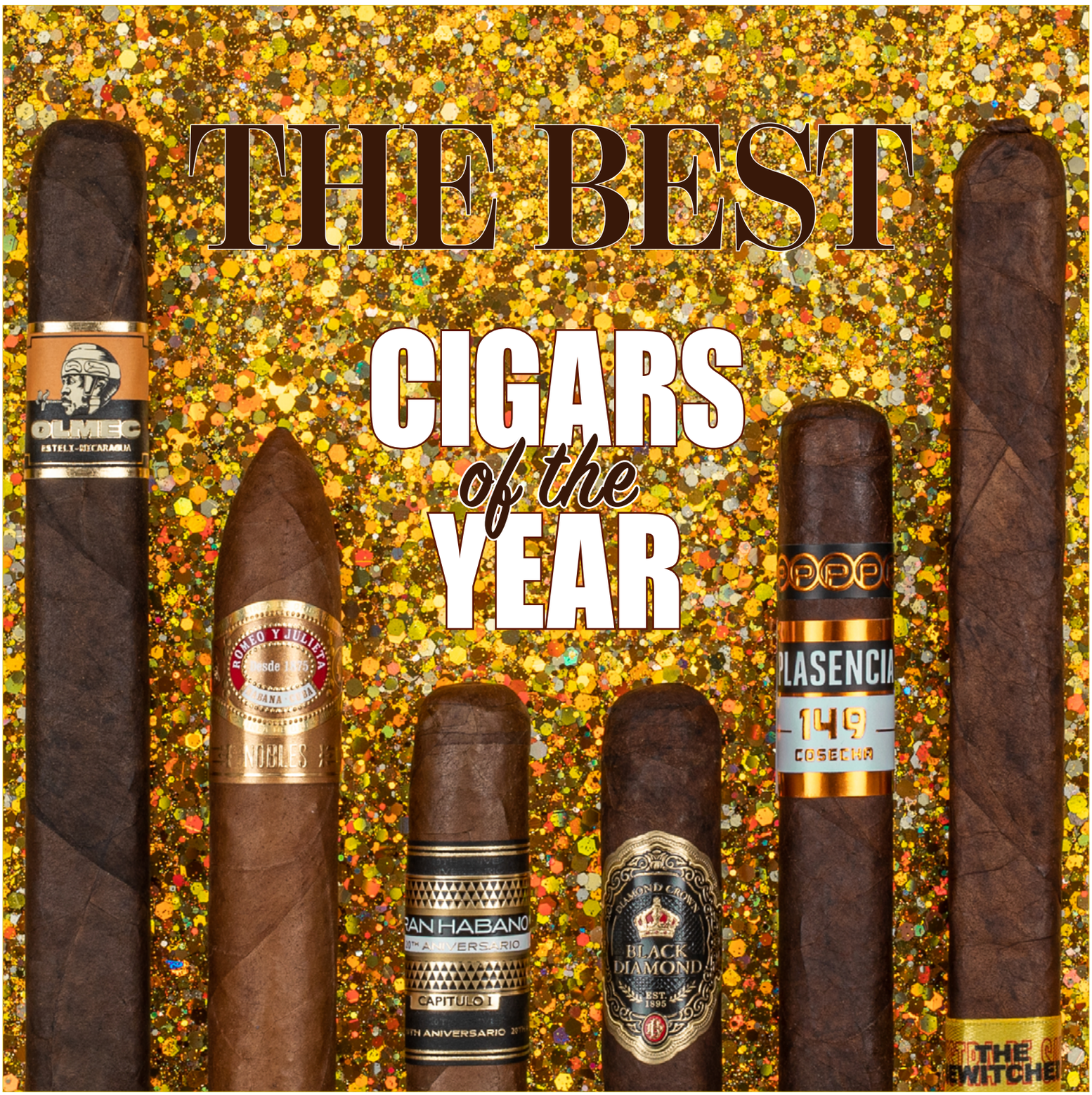
CigarsLover MAGAZINE

ISSUE 5 - 2022



THE BEST CIGARS of the YEAR

- LASTING GIFTS - DAVIDOFF: THE RABBIT - HIRAM & SOLOMON: THE INTERVIEW - CIGAR BOX OPENER - VEGAS ROBAINA
- RUM: WITH OR WITHOUT SUGAR? - VENENCIA - THE FOAM IN DRINKS - COCKTAILS: BLOODY MARY
- WINE: THE MYTH OF BORDEAUX - CIGARS & DESSERT - TOBACCO AND CHAMPAGNE PAIRINGS: PERLAGE & CIGARS

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Editor's thoughts

The End of the Year

We got to the end of 2022, and once again, it is the time to celebrate and go through every cigar we had the opportunity to try during the past twelve months. As usual, the final issue of the year is all about the best products, with special attention to the new releases that recently hit the market. This current issue makes no difference.

We are unveiling the best 50 cigars of 2022, with special attention dedicated to where the they come from in order to give the right relevance to each one of the main producing country. Following the terroirs, five brands are proclaimed as the best ones. As per tradition, we give space to boutique brands as well, with a list exclusively created for them. The same goes for pocket-friendly cigars. You are going to find the best smokes below 7 US Dollars/Euros. Moving to the spirits, twenty are the featured ones: the best ten whiskies and the best ten rums.

Get ready to discover more than 80 great products and the best brands behind them. But that's not all. This issue will first bring the classical cigar-champagne pairing, suggested gifts for cigar lovers and advice on which dessert to enjoy with your cigars!

Have a great read.

#refineyourtaste

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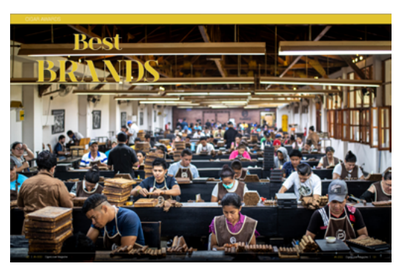
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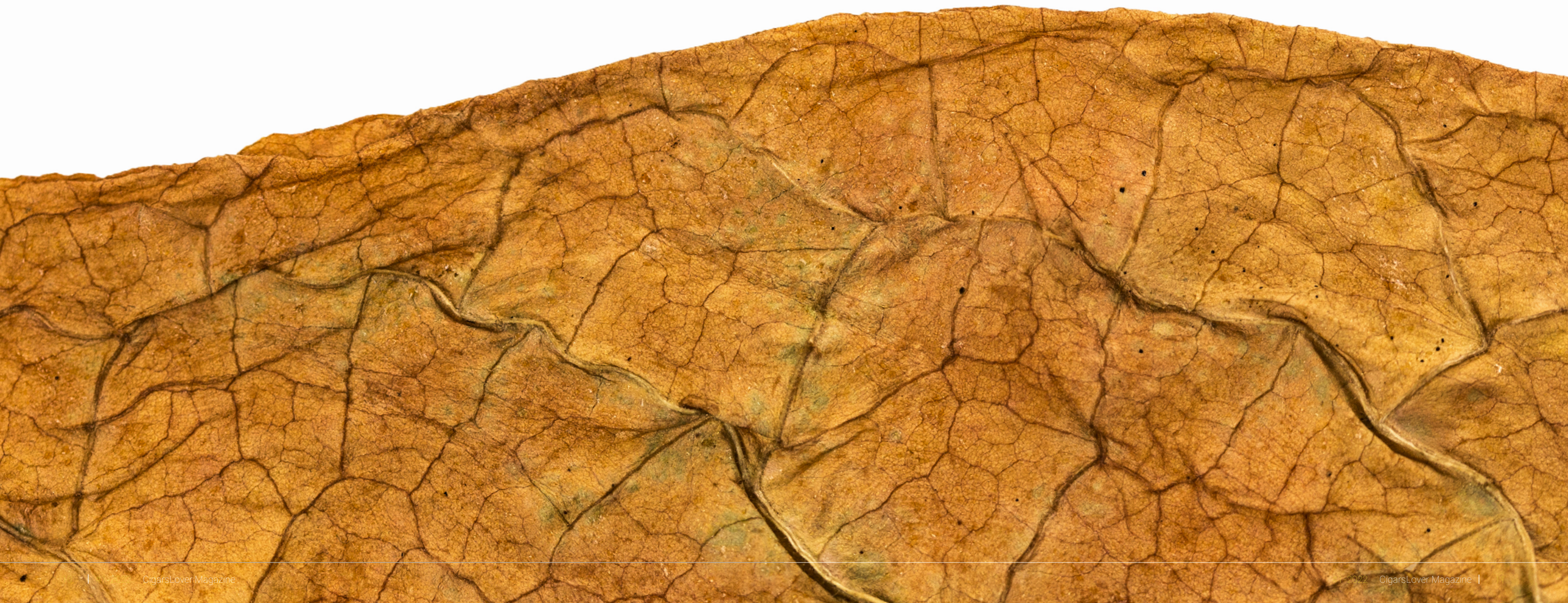
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CIGARS

"A cigar is as good as memories that you have when you smoked it."
Raul Julia



Lasting gifts

Surprising a cigar smoker with a present is not always easy.
However, there are perfect gifts, lasting over time, able to satisfy all tastes and all budgets.

di **Giuseppe Mitolo**



The last month of the year, also thanks to the Christmas holidays, is the period during which the highest budget is spent on gifts and the cigar industry is no stranger to this logic at all.

Treating yourself to a gift is rather simple, especially since it is possible to range from the necessary goods to the voluptuous ones. Giving something to an aficionado, on the other hand, can create headaches. This is especially true of those who are not smokers or do not know much about the smoking habits of the recipient. In both cases, dealing and discussing in advance with those who know the intended recipient well can simplify and narrow down the search drastically. Otherwise, the search for the right gift will have to be very thoughtful.

First, an aficionado doesn't necessarily have to be given cigars. This statement becomes even more true if you are not a smoker or, despite being one, you do not know the preferences of the recipient. In addition, sometimes those who do not smoke do not willingly accept the idea of donating an artifact that ... ends in ashes! An alternative that can satisfy both those who buy and those who receive is made up of lasting gifts, able to withstand time and, partially, wear. This is a category that includes the most famous cigar accessories but is not that limited.

Among the indispensable tools, one is undoubtedly the cigar cutter, which is also the first of the accessories that a cigar smoker has typically already purchased. In this case, it will be necessary to choose a particular model that can be distinguished in terms of material, function or use. In any case, the choice is very wide, fitting every budget. However it is worth mentioning that, usually, a higher price corresponds to a better quality of blades, able to maintain a sharp cutting edge longer than cheaper models. You can therefore choose among particular shapes (cigar knives, wooden movable parts and so on) or among functions which are different from the classic guillotine, such as a V-Cut or a cigar punch. Another subcategory, very interesting at least to take into consideration, is the one of table cutters, a useful element and, at the same time, an appreciable furniture, suitable for a man cave or for a desk. If we know the habits of the user of our gift and that he smokes permanently in his home, we can safely choose an ashtray. This artifact is part of a very wide array of devices, ranging from branded products (in this case, it would be necessary to know if the recipient has a favorite brand) to others that are true works of art. They are available in various materials, shapes, colors, with one to several spaces dedicated to holding cigars. Finally, if you know a craftsman (ceramist, cabinet maker, etc.), you could always commission an ashtray that meets the particular tastes and needs you are hoping to satisfy.



Another idea for a durable gift is leather cigar holders. On the market there are many models that vary depending on the cigars that will be housed. We leave out of this article travel models and cigar bags as they can be replaced by travel humidors, which are more suitable for long-term transport. We prefer, instead, models with two or three spaces, which, in addition to being easily stored in the inner pocket of a jacket, allow you to carry a few specimens even just for an elegant dinner or an event, all of this in an undiscussed style. Also in this case, the offerings are very wide and suitable for all budgets. We recommend, however, maximum attention to materials: a leather cigar holder must never have excessive perfumes to avoid spoiling the cigars themselves. Finally, the idea of donating a cigar holder, an accessory that is always useful, even at home, can be considered. It is possible to find foldable models in metal or finely worked wood or ceramic based products. It will be a useful gift and, above all, will offer the possibility of donating something very cheap or more expensive, but most probably within the given budget.

Another object that is not strictly part of the smoking of a cigar directly and that not all aficionados possess, is the distillate flask: a small steel bottle in which to pour whiskey, rum or other spirit, to be taken with you in short travels. It often happens, perhaps before leaving for a holiday, to think about the way to transport your favorite cigars and choose them carefully but not to have the opportunity to bring with you your favorite spirit. It is in these cases that a travel flask will allow you not to give up your dram. The market offers different solutions, from the most spartan models to the most elaborate ones, with built-in cup. You just need to deal with your budget and then choose the model to give.

In conclusion, the ideas provided are varied and suitable for different spending needs. All of them offer, potentially, both the possibility of giving something lasting and an accessory new or different from the classics.





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The Rabbit

The Year of the Rabbit release continues Davidoff's decade-long tradition of honoring the Chinese New Year and its zodiacs.

di **Michel Arlia**

I am in tune with the pulse of the universe. In my quiet solitude, I hear the melodies of the soul. I float above commonplace dissent and decay. I am subdued by my ability to conform. I color my world in delicate pastel hues. I epitomize harmony and inner peace. - Unknown.

Ten years ago, Davidoff introduced a pirámide-sized cigar to the Asian market that inspired what would become their Davidoff Year Of Series. That cigar was also known as the Year of the Dragon. Eleven consecutive editions later, it is the turn of the Rabbit's Zodiac sign.

The first official release of Davidoff's Year Of Series began with the Snake in 2013, and that has kicked off a trend that a few other manufacturers have followed in recent years. Davidoff's Zodiac releases are highly sought after, and the popularity of the release is also reflected in the production number, which has increased significantly over the years.

"Over the years, we stepped up in terms of packaging, and we stepped up in terms of blends and linked the characteristics of each zodiac sign even more. This makes what we are doing authentic," says Sam Reuter, Head of Product Development and Strategic Innovation and Global Brand Ambassador. "It's always a bit of a challenge to do better each year. Aside from the beautiful packaging and accessories, we know that the cigar always has to be the focus, and the consumers value the work we put behind the cigar.

The Rabbit (- tù, in Mandarin) represents longevity, depth, and charm. All these characteristics flow into the creation of Davidoff's Year of the Rabbit. Davidoff chose a perfecto shape for the representation of this zodiac, as the vitola is reminiscent of a rabbit's ear, and the multi-layered blend reveals its depth slowly due to the cigar's tapered head and foot. Seven different tobaccos, amongst which are filler tobaccos with an average maturity of 4,5 years, come together and invite aficionados to discover the cigar's complexity layer by layer. All these well-aged tobaccos are enclosed in a classic vitola that measures 54 x 151mm (5 15/16"). The color scheme of red and gold, traditional for the Chinese New Year celebration (both colors stand for good fortune and prosperity for the coming new year), is synonymous with the releases. It is no different for the Year of the Rabbit Limited Edition 2023, Masterpiece Humidor, Flagship Exclusive, and Accessories. Once the lid of the Limited Edition 2023 is opened, it reveals ten cigars that are placed in a uniquely cut-out tray. Alongside the Year of the Rabbit Limited Edition, Davidoff also relea-



ses a range of accessories (pipe, ashtray, and a cutter), pipe tobacco, and a Masterpiece Humidor. As with last year's Year of the Tiger release, Davidoff partnered with French artist Rose Saneuil again to create the Masterpiece Humidor. She employs her intricate technique of multi-material marquetry to create 25 pieces that contain 88 Gran Toro-sized cigars (56 x 152mm - 6") that share the same blend as the Year of the Rabbit Perfecto. In regards to the difference in taste in the two sizes, Sam Reuter says, "while the blend is the same, having a different format gives you a different taste experience. The Perfecto format gives you a more elegant taste experience with a peppery beginning. Whereas with the Gran Toro, you start with the creaminess."

If you don't get a chance to buy one of these humidors, fear not. Davidoff has heard the voices of the masses and made the Gran Toro size more readily available. For the first time, cigar lovers can buy that size with the Year of the Rabbit Flagship Exclusive. This limited edition is only available in Davidoff of Geneva since 1911 flagship stores and is limited to only 600 boxes worldwide.

To the question of whether the Year Of Series will continue once the cycle has come full circle, Sam said, "Yes, we do. Because we at Davidoff have initiated the whole Year Of editions, or let's call it initiative. So we plan to have the Year of the Snake and then see how we can link all others more together to have more consistency in execution. Because when we started with Year of the Dragon, it was more like a test release. Then the first official one, the Year of the Snake, we have already focused a bit more on the Chinese culture by having an octagon box, eight cigars in the box, and playing with the color red, which we have evolved since. So we started with normal painted wood, then went to lacquered red boxes, and so on. That's why we want to make it more consistent over the following 12 zodiac signs.



Davidoff created an exciting pairing for their Year of the Rabbit release with a Cranberry Old Fashioned, which was created by Maria Gerber, Bar Manager at the Bürgenstock Hotel in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Cranberry Old Fashioned Recipe

- *5cl Goldwäscher Rye Whiskey*
- *1.5cl cranberry syrup*
- *2 dash Angostura Bitter*
- *Garnish: half of the rim covered in sugar, rosemary, cranberries*



Smoking seriously harms you and others around you

Hiram & Solomon

A cigar for everyone

di **Michel Arlia**



Fouad Kashouty turned his hobby into a profession and, along the way, created a brand with as much mystique as the teaching of what they represent. But a mystique that anyone can discover.

How did you get into cigars, and why did you decide to create your own brand?

I have been enjoying and cultivating a taste for fine cigars for the last 40 years and fell in love with the lifestyle and the Friendship that came along with it. But it was not until eight years ago (2014) when we rolled our first 1000 cigars geared towards a charity in a Masonic lodge. It took us about six months to realize that we were about to create a brand unlike any other brand in the market, a brand with a unique concept of having great cigars that carry our Freemasons symbol with pride and donate back to charities. The reception and welcoming of the idea and the concept were huge and widely unexpected. Yes, the brand was initially created for the Freemasons, but soon enough, it became a favorite among cigar lovers worldwide.

Did you go all-in into the cigar industry from the beginning, or did it start as a side job?

After fleeing the civil war in Lebanon in 1988, I started a new life in the USA. It was a rough and ragged road, starting as a gas station attendant and building myself up from there with lots of sweat, pain, and tears, but I made it and became an entrepreneur in the gas station and convenience store sector. The creation of the cigar brand started as a hobby that turned into a short-lived part-time job that, immediately after that, took over our lives. We now breathe, dream, and live cigars.



The identity of the brand is tied with the Freemasons. How deeply is the cigar culture intertwined with Masonry?

The uniqueness of Hiram & Solomon Cigars' brand is that we represent the Freemasons worldwide with pride. In many cultures, like the native Indians, tobacco is considered a symbol of peace and healing and a sacred gift of the earth. Looking back into the history of Freemasons, we see that at a certain time back, only wealthy and very influential people joined the Fraternity that is known for having many kings, presidents, prime ministers, army generals, and surely many inventors, musicians, and artists as members, and many of these people used to smoke cigars as they could afford such a luxury. Many meetings were held after cigars were cut and lit, and it is not a surprise nor a Masonic secret that I would say, and many would agree that great ideas and great friendships would come while meeting and enjoying fine cigars. We did not create Freemasonry, nor did we create cigars, but we surely mastered combining both in a good harmony".

Were there any other brand names discussed during its creation, and why did you go with Hiram & Solomon?

After lots of research, "Hiram & Solomon" was the first name that came to mind, and we adopted it immediately as it related to what we wanted to create. It is taken from stories in the Old Testament whereby King Solomon, son of David, who wanted to build the temple as ordered by God, asked help from King Hiram, the powerful and wealthy Phoenician King of Tyre, who responded by sending him the materials and the men power needed along with the chief architect whose name also was Hiram also known as "Hiram Abiff" who opted to be killed than giving up a secret that according to legend was only supposed to be said if the three of them are together. Freemasonry adopted that story as a basis of our teachings and values.

How were the beginnings of the company and learning about cigars and tobacco?

Despite having neither a tobacco business background nor a family history of multiple generations of cigar making, I started the dream of creating Hiram & Solomon Cigars from the ground up shortly after rolling our first batch. We learned from our mistakes, and we are still learning. Some were very costly in time, effort, and money that was spent. No shortcuts are accepted. We listen to customers, accept criticism and praise, and try to change and adapt. Success does not come easy, it comes at a price, and it does not care if you are tired, sore, lazy, hurting, sad or mad. It stretches you beyond your limits and torments you at every turn, but having a manic tenacity, work ethic, and belief in what you are doing, everything else is teachable. But here we are right now, rated among the best newcomers in the cigar industry and surely the fastest-growing boutique labels.

The brand's co-founder, George Dakrat, retired in 2020, and your wife, Romy, came into the company. How has the dynamic changed with your wife on board?

With George retiring, the load was a heavy one to carry alone but having my wife Romy next to me (we met thru the cigar world) and her having an extensive worldwide connection thru her previous dealings in the financial world along with an unparalleled work ethic helped to elevate the brand to all new level of branding and expansion. She is involved in every aspect of the company, and as she likes to say, "we are the CEO and the janitors" of Hiram & Solomon Cigars.

A cigar blend is usually tied to a story. How do you connect the tradition and history of Freemasonry into a blend?

The brand name Hiram & Solomon has a deep root within the Masonic culture, along with the names, blends, and strength of every line created and geared to commemorate specific degrees, events, teachings, and Freemasons' philosophies. We wanted each name to recall some memories that affected one's life as a Mason or non-mason and, as such, to evoke an emotional response while smoking a specific cigar. Each name is carefully chosen to reflect the purpose, strength, and the idea behind it. For example, the Traveling Man line is chosen as the name signifies the search for the light, truth, and knowledge. According to our teachings, a Mason must travel toward the East, the place where the sun rises, the place of light, and the place of knowledge. Thus we chose the cigar as a medium blend with four kinds of tobacco from 4 different countries to remind the brethren that we all must travel (at least spiritually) from the four corners of the universe to seek the truth.

Recently, you moved your entire production from Nicaragua to the Dominican Republic. Why did you do it?

Many factors played a role in the most challenging decision that we had to take by moving our full production from one country to another. During Covid, we had a tough time getting production (cigars and boxes) from Nicaragua. Before that, we initiated an excellent relationship with Abe Flores (member of the ProCigar association) in the Dominican Republic, who at that time started rolling a few limited releases for us that were very successful of the highest quality tobacco and construction and delivered in a timely fashion. This move proved crucial in continuing to build on our successes, with the new rebranding of the boxes and bands but keeping most of the profile intact. We consider that having a factory willing to go the extra step with us is an essential component of building and keeping that relationship. So far, we believe that our requirements are well established at the new place.

What does the future hold for you and fans of the brand?

The touch of mystery curiously enough worked in the company's favor. Hiram & Solomon Cigars became a discussion topic among smokers and the media that discovered that our biggest secret is that you don't have to be a mason to appreciate the fruits of a creative process inspired by the Freemasons. We hope that the creation of these cigars will bring a positive experience to all types of people who love cigars all over. Our experience may inspire someone else to follow their dream and never give up. At the very least, we are confident we have provided a consistently tasty, quality cigar that appeals to everyone's palate. We will continue to do so with more complex varieties and unique cigar accessories and continue to donate back to charities.



PAGE

1000+
CIGARS
TESTED
EVERY
YEAR

FIND CIGARS



Cigar Box Opener

It is a very niche cigar accessory originally created for shopkeepers, as it allowed them to open boxes more accurately and quickly.

di **John Jeremy**

The cigar box opener (aka: CBO) is a small tool that combines, in a single body, a blunt part, a small lever and a hammer. Not very common among aficionados, it has a charm of other times and, as such, it has a history dating back to the end of the 19th century.

In 1868, the US Congress passed a federal law requiring the payment of a tax for each box of imported cigars. Against the payment of this duty, a paper seal had to be affixed to each box which had to be necessarily cut to view and sell the cigars. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the first CBO turns out to have been patented on October 13, 1868.

The very first models were made at the request of producers and distributors, complete with the engraving of the logo, who used to give them to traders, certain to donate not only a useful tool but also something that worked better than a business card, precisely for its customization. The cigar box openers came in various shapes and forms, but basically they combined a small tapered part to cut the seals of the boxes and pry the openings of the SLBs, a notched part to open the boxes and a kind of hammer to close the nail of the habilitadas. A few years later, even the end customers began to appreciate the CBO and it was then that the market began to respond to the demands of the end user, switching to more precious materials (silver, onyx, mother of pearl) and combining additional functions such as corkscrews, bottle openers. and cigar cutters (single-cut and V-cut). Today there are no large companies that produce them, precisely because of the almost zero market demands. However, it is possible to find them in antique shops and websites specialized in second-hand sales.



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Inspirado



Vegas Robaina

Born to celebrate the most famous among the Cuban vegueros, it is a brand that is progressively losing prestige.

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

Vegas Robaina is the only brand of the Cuban cigar scene created specifically to pay homage to the figure of Alejandro Robaina. However Habanos S.A., through the tribute to one of the most iconic (and best known) vegueros of the Isla, also wanted to pay homage to all the anonymous growers who, with their daily commitment, have made Cuban tobacco the best in the world for cigars.

There is little to tell about the man, shy by nature and refractory to any prestige given by worldliness. Alejandro Robaina was born on March 20, 1919 in a family of Canarian origin who had been growing tobacco since 1845. His finca, still exists today and is carried on by his nephew Hirochi Robaina. It is located in Cuchillas de Barbacoa and continues to produce the best wrapper leaves in the province of Pinar del Rio. In 1950, after the death of his father Maruto, he took over the finca to become its owner and direct farmer, until 1969. In the year of the Cuban Revolution, with the nationalization of the cigar industry and the establishment of producer cooperatives (always under government control), Don Alejandro lost his productive independence, bowing to the will of the Revolution. In a famous interview in 2006, Abuelo told the story of having met Fidel and explained to him how important it was the tabacalera production to remain under the control of the families who owned the land. In response to this note, probably in a captatio benevolentiae attempt, Fidel proposed him to lead a cooperative of producers but the proposal was declined. The quality of the production, however, in particular of the capas did not go unnoticed, to the point that, in 1990, the Cuban government recognized Robaina as the best tobacco grower in Cuba. Despite constant awards and recognitions, especially from abroad, Don Alejandro remained the wise, silent, patient man he has always been during his entire life. Sporadically he left the island to participate, as an invitee, in cigar events all over the world which he happily participated while preserving his humble approach. In everyday life he was the classic farmer of a now lost era, completely devoted to fields and family. His daysbegan very early, before the rising of the sun, which was Robaina's favorite time for personal meditation and to plan the day. At the table he followed a healthy and poor diet, but not for this miserable, precisely recognizing through eating the main reason behind his longevity, even at work. The days generally progressed like this always with a cigar between his fingers. In the evening, after a small and humble dinner he enjoyed his rocking chair on the patio while admiring the games and hearing the stories of his grandchildren.

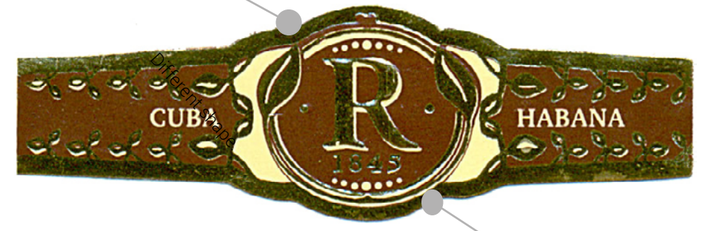
In 1997, in Spain, Habanos S.A. officially announced the new brand, Vegas Robaina. The news, it is said, was appreciated by the elderly veguero to the point that... he turned his back and went back to the fields to work!

At the launch, five vitolas were presented, quite representative of the sizes and shapes which were trendy at the time: the Famosos (vitola de galera Hermoso No. 4, 48 x 127mm), the Unicos (Piramide, 52 x 156), the Clasicos (Cervante, 42 x 165), the Familiar (Corona, 42 x 142) and the Don Alejandro (Prominente , 49 x 194). Currently only the first two have remained in production. The Clasicos and the Familiar were discontinued in 2012 and in 2017 the Don Alejandro.The brand was never used for the launch of Edicion Limitada, while only eight references, from 2005 to date, have been released as Edicion Regional. In this regard, the story of the Vegas Robaina Marshall ER Adriatico from 2008, is singular. Initially the cigar was to be released (and was announced) under the brand La Gloria Cubana. However, due to trademark problems in the reference markets, the cigar was later decided to be "dressed" with the brand's band. In addition, a metal plate was applied on the already produced wooden boxes, with the logo of the Vegas Robaina brand to cover the fire-stamped one of La Gloria Cubana.

Another singular event linked to the brand was recorded during the gala dinner of the fourth edition of the Habano Festival. During the evening special versions of Don Alejandro cigars bearing the second anilla Edicion Limitada 2002, the year in which no limited editions were officially released, were distributed to the participants. In fact, that cigar was never officially launched in the market, having been produced in only 800 examples for the participants of the Festival of that year.

Later, there were commemorative releases, such as the one for Don Alejandro's 83rd birthday (83 humidors) or for the brand's fifth anniversary. In 2005, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the importer 5th Avenue, a Robusto No. 2 (50 x 156) was also released for the German market only.

Vegas Robaina Band
In use since 1997



Fully embossed

Currently the brand is losing a bit of prestige, due to a lack of push by Habanos SA. The products still surviving (the Famoso and the Unicos), despite being appreciable cigars, do not reach the quality of smoke offered by Clasicos and Don Alejandro. Even the production, at the official launch entrusted to the Josè Martin (H.Upmann) manufacturing facility, has now been relocated to a factory in the province of Pinar del Rio. According to unofficial rumors the latest restyling drafts of the brand; the face of the abuelo Don Alejandro seems to have disappeared. News saddening smokers all over the world, who found in the brand a background sweetness combined with a strength never over the top, also the result of a production consistency far from frenzy demand. Noting these sad developments we almost seem to imagine the silent abuelo who, clutching his shoulders, turns to go and cultivate fields which no longer belong to this world.

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SPIRITS

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Ernest Hemingway

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With or Without Sugar?

The Thorny Problem of Rum Composition

di **Vincenzo Salvatore**

In 2014, after years of underground discussions, an unexpectedly vitriolic polemics burst online about the real amount of sugar added to most of the mainstream rums (even above 50 g/l) when the results of homemade analyses performed by aficionados were spread on Reddit and on other thematic forums. Soon after, the web sites of Alko, the Finnish alcoholic beverage monopoly, and of Systembolaget, the equivalent Swedish monopoly, recorded a sudden spike of international views on the pages listing the results of the mandatory chemical analyses performed on the bottles sold on the local markets. Internet users realized that these professional analyses clearly reported the real compositions of rums (and other alcoholic beverages), including the sugar content, among which were the most mainstream producers such as El Dorado, Zacapa, Don Papa, Angostura, Plantation, Matusalem, Bacardi, and many others. This discovery fueled enormously the polemic, and the quarrel among the supporters of sugared and non-sugared rums deflagrated into a proper technical dispute. Many accused producers of fraud and sophistication for bottles showing such a level of 'additives' (between sugar, caramel, colorants, and other stuff) that made it difficult to distinctively mark the difference between 'real rums' and the deplored 'spiced rums' (that is, the rum-based beverages that involve by label the addition of artificial aromas, honey, and sugar).

Initially, producers claimed that those were utterly false allegations and defended their products followed by a variety of tailored communicative strategies, ranging from the respect of old recipes up to imaginative justifications about the peculiar kind of sugar cane they use, or the style of cask aging implemented that would raise the sugar content. Eventually, they agreed to collectively defend a position based on the personal taste of drinkers: if consumers liked the smooth, sugared, taste of their products, why should they to change it?

In May 2014, Alexander Gabriel, master blender of Plantation rum (as well as of cognac and gin), presented a strong defense of the use of sugar in rum, claiming that sugar is an essential element for personalizing the style of these spirits in a similar vein to the fundamental dosage technique of various Champagnes. Simply put, Gabriel maintained that premium rum was a type of spirit fundamentally characterized by the vast differences in distilling and bottling styles, and that the only mandate for producers had to be the personal choice of drinkers. A few weeks later, Richard Seale, pot still rum's legend and Foursquare's owner (the most important distillery in Barbados), published an extensive article openly denunciating the sugar affair. He pointed out that sugar addition was the most embarrassing problem in the rum industry, so massive that it de facto was hampering rum to be technically considered a quality spirit like whisky and cognac (which had already faced, and sorted out, their issues with added sugar long time ago). In Seale's opinion, adding sugar was not a matter of personal tastes, but a technical one: it was necessary to impose a clear regulations and limits to this practice to safeguard the identity of rum. Seale stated that the absence of rules was delegitimizing rum's critical appraisal, as there was no clarity about the essential nature of the rums submitted for critical reviews. According to Seale, to rely on the websites of external agencies was nonsensical: a whole novel approach based on clarity and strictness was necessary to give a solid and faultless productive statute to quality rum. In fact, Seale was referring to a much thornier issue: if it is true that the world of rums is fascinating for the many possible styles, can we seriously consider within the same category a pot still rum and a column still rum, or a pure cane juice rum and a molasses rum? By stressing this distinction, Seale identified a much more important problem than the simple addition of sugar, a problem so massive that no one in the industry wanted to face in the fear of opening a can of worms, amidst endless legislative discussions and a dangerous mediatic uproar that would simply confuse the market.

The sugar polemics kept growing over the years. It split the rum aficionados between the lovers of smooth taste and the supporters of rum authenticity, but in doing so it clouded the much more important distinction between pot still and column still rum. True, just like whisky, the rum market has been drastically evolving over the past few years following the booming trend of craft breweries and distilleries, which of course ended up advantaging those producers who had been more attentive and interested in preserving artisanal and traditional techniques. Yet, the mainstream producers did not waste any time and immediately jumped across the pond of the new trend either by reworking their marketing strategies or by craftwashing their offerings through acquisitions and expansions.



Eventually, in 2021 there was a turning point on the European Market that influenced the whole sector: the European Union decided to set a sugar cap level for rum final composition. The new limit became 20 g/l (previously it was 100 g/l, a limit considered useless as it was near the sugar content of a Coca Cola), while above that value the alcoholic beverage had to be labeled as “Spirit Drink." Over the past year, all producers had to adapt their bottles to the new legislation, but such a change did not have the anticipated impact on the market. Indeed, all new rums now offer lower sugar levels capped at 20 g/l, but he change was mostly impossible to detect for the common drinker. Only a few producers, like Angostura, decided to substantially modify their rums: for instance, the 1787 moved from 30 g/l to almost zero. Others, like in the case of Dictador 12 and Diplomatico Mantuano, decided to raise sugar content to 20 g/l, probably to reposition the products in the new ranges.

It is difficult to assert if there has been an effective change in the quality of the spirits, as only a rigorous chemical analysis will allow evaluation of the new thresholds. There was no push for higher clarity on the bottle labels nor for a serious discussion about what would technically distinguish the nature of a rum style. Aficionados must still rely on external institutions to know the sugar content of the new bottles. If, on the one hand, the niche of artisanal productions have been substantially growing during these years (and of this trend Seale's Foursquare certainly took advantage, along with many other pot still brands), on the other hand, mainstream rums of smooth and “assembled" taste did not suffer from any market loss, thanks to the strong global presence of their brands.

Overall, it can be said that a whole new positive season came to fruition for rums' sales: the market trends suggest a 40% growth of the whole sector over the next five years. The availability of rums on international markets has been constantly growing, and there will be opportunities for all producers. Above all, rums can still offer a quite virtuous quality-price ratio, if compared to the speculations over the whisky's and cognac's markets. Yet, it remains to be seen how the current international difficulties will impact on prices. In the meantime, the best advice is to explore the various souls of this amazing spirit to find one's favorite bottle, especially as long as the favorable moment gives the possibility to buy amazing bottles at what is basically a bargain price.

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#CuriosityDrivesDiscovery

Venencia

The charm of an instrument that never ceases even in contexts far from the world of sherry.

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

During major cigar festivals worldwide or cultural promotion events, it is not unusual to find a barrel of rum, perhaps offered by a specific sponsor, from which one can draw a dram through a special instrument that resembles a long kitchen spoon.

This special tool is called venencia and, although native to Andalusia (Spain) and used in the production of sherry, it has been adopted, almost naturalized in the world of rum, in particular for its usage technique and its iconographic image.

Wanting to describe it, it is presented to the eye as a flexible rod, between 60 and 90 centimeters long, in fiberglass or metal, which culminates, at one of the two ends, with a cylinder container. On the other side, however, there is a hook, used both as a punch and to avoid its accidental fall into the barrel.

Although the historical dating is uncertain (there are, in fact, mosaics and vases of the fifth century that depict men in the act of using a very similar instrument for similar purposes), its use in the area of Jerez (Spain) is much more detailed at least starting from the mid XIX century. Over these centuries, even the construction materials have evolved, passing from sophisticated whale bones or wood to reach the most modern fiberglass, passing through a period during which the rod was covered with rubber or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) to limit breakage.

The etymology of its name would seem to refer to the Spanish term "avenencia", which stands for agreement. In fact, it was the widely spread practice of wine merchants to seal the purchase of large batches by sharing a glass, drawn from the best barrel of the production stock.

As part of the production of sherry, venencia is used by venenciadores, true specialists in its use, who drop it into the barrel through a hole, and then pour the contents of the cylinder cup into the tasting glass. This operation, which may seem simple when told in such a short way, in reality must be performed with a quick and perfect maneuver, according to a real art. First of all, the venencia must be lowered and extracted very quickly, so as not to break the veil of the sherry flor. Immediately afterwards it is rotated, overcoming gravity with the centrifugal force impressed by the rapid movement of the arm, to allow the wine to oxygenate. Finally, the sherry must be poured into the glass, an operation that is not at all simple if you use a 90 cm long tool, from which the hand must not be moved from the initial position (the other end of the venencia). If you add to all this operation a typical dress, trunk rotations and flamenco dancer movements, you will immediately understand why to become venenciadores you need years and years of practice and why there is even a world championship to reward the best of the performer.



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Foam

The great comeback of Irish distilleries between tradition and innovation.

by **Nicola Ruggiero**



Over the years and via different articles in this magazine, we have repeatedly read and advocated how the world of cocktails, while revolving around fixed and indisputable points (one of all, the balance of a cocktail), is always in characterized by continuous research and expansion. It is a sector in which experimenting never stops and, sometimes, behind a brilliant new idea hides a technique or a drink which is going to experience major success (think of the Moscow Mule, for example).

The use of foam can certainly be counted among these technical experiments. Not all drinks need it, and some do not require it at all. Others, on the other hand, need a thick and heavy foam, while others may benefit from a lighter structure one. Yet, everything starts from the classic mixing style, demonstrating how many aspects are not necessarily "new discoveries" but rather development or refining of a pre-existing technique. Everything comes from two cocktails where foam truly makes the difference.

The foam obtained from egg white was a fundamental part of Pisco Sour, invented in the twenties in Peru and today Peruvian national drink and the Ramos Gin Fizz, created for the first time in New Orleans in 1888 by the famous bartender Harry Craddock, also author of the renowned book "Savoy Cocktail Book", which used egg white and cream to obtain a compact and stable foam, a signature of that cocktail. The historical contextualization takes us back to the States, to the years immediately preceding the period of Prohibitionism, when this kind of drink was so trendy and fashionable that bartenders struggled to meet the demand of the public.

The reasons why eggs began to be used in cocktails were different and, from my personal point of view, all valid. At first it was believed that its use helped to make softer and less imperfect to the palate a drink made with spirits that did not shine for their excellent quality. Other sources would see in the use of the egg an addition motivated by its energizing properties (in the movie Cocktail with Tom Cruise they prepared Gin fizz with a whole egg exactly for this reason).

This way we come to what is called "modern mixology". Nowadays the addition of egg white to a drink is useful to give a drink a soft and silky texture and a sensation of pleasantness on the palate. Chemically a foam is the visible effect of the dispersion of a gas in a liquid. Without going too much into detail, surfactants do reduce surface tension of a liquid, which means the pressure value that a gas needs to exercise on the surface of a liquid to be able to disperse into it. All foams are composed of two parts, identifiable in the dispersed phase (gas) and the dispersing phase (liquid). The variation of the characteristics of one of these two phases changes the final texture, in fact influencing two essential elements of the foam: viscosity and creaminess.

Creaminess is a direct consequence of the size of the dispersed substance. Human tongue can distinguish particles larger than about 30 microns, and this means that, if all the bubbles in a foam are less than this size, the tongue will perceive a perfectly creamy foam. On the other hand, with bubbles of dimensions beyond 30 microns, the sensation will be more grainy or sparkling. Viscosity, on the other hand, is the property of liquids that is defined by the force

required to move a solid through the liquid itself. The overall viscosity of a foam is influenced by both the particle size and the viscosity of the dispersing phase. To sum up, trying to simplify a bit: denser liquids create higher viscosity foams.

I will share a little secret to creating a good foam. Starting from the white of the egg you will have to shake it without adding ice. The egg protein, in fact, tends to "whip" at room temperature. Then you have to repeat the action but with the addition of ice. Given the strength of the proteins present in the egg white, a more stable foam will form. Today's bartenders, however, have long since overcome the compulsive use of egg white, replacing it with new forms and more evolved ingredients, which we are going to review in the following lines.

One of the easiest and most convenient ingredients to store, is with no doubt the meringue powder, made of only two ingredients: egg whites and icing sugar. It allows you to create foam easily and with the same procedure as egg white. On the other hand, it is a substance that already contains sugar, a circumstance to be taken into account when we aim to balance the drink in term of sweetness.

Another substance which can be used is named aquafaba. Although the name may allude to who knows what sort of alchemy, it is simply the cooking water of legumes such as chickpeas and beans, trivially the one that is inside the boxes of legumes you buy at the supermarket. It is a good alternative to use with vegan guests or for those who do not like the smell of egg white in a cocktail. It is composed mainly of proteins and carbohydrates and has a high foaming power. This makes it perfect as a substitute for egg white for any drink to which you want to give a creamier consistency.

Sucroester is a food additive (E473) and is an emulsifier substance made from sucrose, formed from sucroester of fatty acids. Just use a few grams of the basic product and help yourself with a small air conditioner to obtain a good quantity of foam, which can be placed later on the drink itself. The goal is to incorporate air into the liquid, thus generating foam. However, the liquid to be processed must be alcoholic, even though a low alcohol content is sufficient. If, on the other hand, you have to obtain foam from a non-alcoholic product, it is good to use soy lecithin, a granular substance that is extracted from the soy plant. Usually used in the kitchen to combine products that are difficult to mix, such as oil and water, in the field of mixing it is an excellent ally for non-alcoholic preparations. Also in this case a few grams in the liquid are enough to obtain a foam called Aria that recalls the same consistency as the ones of bath foam. Also in this case the goal is to incorporate air with a minipimer or an aquarium aerator. With the use of sucroester it is also possible to make those textures which are technically called velvets. Velvet is basically a foam with a more important consistency, reminiscent of an Italian cappuccino and instead of the aerator, you will need a small whisk (like the one for the preparation of homemade cappuccinos). You will get a dense and compact foam that will be soft on the palate and that will give further aromatic boost to the basic drink, lying on it and dispersing, gradually, new flavors on the bottom part of the foam itself. This structure will also provide a pleasant tactile sensation on the upper lip, as a cappuccino or beer with a good foam would.

Among the other ingredients that help us create foam there is also gelatin. With the use of a whipped cream siphon, some gelatin and nitrous oxide cans it is possible to make what we technically call lather. Just insert simple gelatin powder or jelly with cream, add two cans of nitrous oxide and let it complete the chemical reaction in the fridge for a few hours. An excellent result is obtained with non-alcoholic compounds.

Finally, we must mention Xanthan, an ally of those who cook gluten-free; it is basically one of the ingredients able to make flour sticky just as gluten behaves in nature. It is convenient and effective to use with many products because it melts without leaving lumps at any temperature and a small amount can thicken a large quantity of liquid. As an example if we want to transform milk or a juice, just put in a container the liquid with a few grams of xanthan and "whip" with an egg mixer. You will be surprised by its texture!

At the end of our analysis, we can conclude that the foam is, at the same time, a garnish and a characteristic of certain drinks, able to offer a different consistency in the mouth compared to the liquid state that unites the vast majority of cocktails.

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Bloody Mary

From Harry's Bar to Maria Tudor I,
mixology classic, unknown to most. But watch out for apostrophes.

by **Davide Pertino**

There are famous drinks and iconic drinks. Depending on the point of view, the difference can be minimal or profound. A cocktail can be famous and renowned in the bartender world but unknown to anyone who is not a lounge and bar goer. There are also products made famous by films, novels, or commercials, simply because the latter put more or less important drinks in the spotlight. Then there is a third category, which arises when a product is both important in the world of mixing and iconic: one of these is the Bloody Mary, a star of our days, so much so that it appears in several films, such as Bridget Jones's Diary, Once upon a time...In Hollywood, Johnny English, and many others.

As (almost) always, the origins of a cocktail are halfway between history and legend, and the Bloody Mary is no exception. Historical sources identify the Bloody Mary as a cocktail born in the early 1920s. Legend has it (in fact) that the inventor of this drink was a French barman, Fernand Petiot, who would have prepared it for the first time at Harry's Bar, a bar in Paris. The Parisian bartender later moved to New York, at the counter of the St. Regis Hotel, where, according to some sources, the actor George Jessel christen the drink with that name in 1939, on vacation in Palm Beach. It is said that the American actor was one of the first to have tasted the mixture based on vodka, tomato, and various spices, but also the first to call it, Bloody Mary. He named it in honor of a waitress of another restaurant in Chicago, the Bloody Bucket, in which a so-called Mary served, who was by all renamed Bloody Mary.

To complicate the historical research, there are also other versions relating to the birth of the drink. According to other sources, the drink was born to commemorate Mary Tudor I, Queen of England, who, in order to re-establish Catholicism in England, let the blood flow, condemning Protestant opponents to death. For this reason, they gave her the name Bloody Mary.

Another story related to the drink, this time more dreadful than the previous ones, would be linked to the fate of an unfortunate girl named Mary. There is a rumor that the young Mary, buried alive by mistake, would have launched a curse: whoever had pronounced the words "Bloody Mary" three times in front of a mirror would have received a visit from a murderous witch.

Let's go back, however, to the most accredited source, that of George Jessel, as the one with the most documented provenance. In fact, in 1939, in the food and wine column This New York, Lucius Beebe wrote as follows: "George Jessel's new tonic, which is receiving attention from the city's columnists, is called Bloody Mary: half tomato juice, half vodka." It is good to contextualize the meaning of the excerpt of this article. The United States had come out of Prohibition in 1933, and in the years immediately following, there was a lot of creative ferment on the part of the bartenders, which corresponded to the attention and curiosity of the public along with food and wine critics. The Bloody Mary, for the use of tomato juice combined with alcohol, appeared a surprising novelty in the cocktail scene of the time.

As with all great classics, twists on the basic recipe were then born. The red snapper, for example, is the version with gin instead of vodka. In 1950 it was cited by the American newspaper The Lowell Sun as an imported English drink because of the Anglo-Saxon distillate. Other sources credit it as the simplest variant to prepare during Prohibition, given the difficulty of finding a Russian imported distillate such as vodka.

There are also other variations like the Cursed Caesar (same ingredients as the classic but with the addition of 4 ounces of Clamato, a mix of clam juice and tomato), the Bloody Elixir (by San Francisco bartender H. Joseph Ehrmann, where a combination of brine and pickled olives with a crust of bacon on the edge of the glass is added to the recipe) or Toro Sanguinato (with the addition of beef broth, which gives the drink a meaty note). Finally, the famous Michelada, a trendy drink in South America made with chili, lime, tomato, salt, and beer.
Bloody Mary, based on vodka, can be classified as an umami drink, a flavor that can be detected in our mouth with a bit of tasting exercise. The IBA (International Bartender Association) recipe includes Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, and tomato juice, all corrected with an acid part, lemon, and a flavor enhancer such as salt. Preparing this drink involves pouring all the ingredients into the glass and finally the ice.

Today it is still a very popular drink in bars all over the world, even if it is not easy to drink. However, if you can find the right balance between the tomato's acidity and the spices' sweetness, it can create an interesting mix; provided you want to overcome any personal limitations and preconceptions.

INGREDIENTS

- 45 ml of vodka
- 90 ml of tomato juice
- 15 ml of lemon juice
- 2 dashes of Worcestershire sauce
- 1 dash of tabasco
- Celery salt
- Pepper

GLASS

Collins.

PREPARATION

Pour all the ingredients into a collins, balance the acidity of the tomato with the lemon and finally add the ice.

ADVICE

I recommend preparing the drink in a mixing glass so as to be able to dilute the tomato juice more and not make the texture of the drink too stringy on the palate. I also recommend adding salt and sugar, preferably syrup, in order to enhance the umami of the cocktail even more.

A common trend among many bars currently is to garnish the drink with nearly an entire meal as opposed to the claswsic celery stalk. Hamburgers, shrimp, and even whole chickens have been used as a garnish in some establishments.

TASTE

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The Myth of Bordeaux

The charm of the immortal Bordelais wines stands at the test of time

di **Vincenzo Salvatore**

Bordeaux's wines boast a centuries long history of commercial success and of unparalleled charm and luxury. Yet, despite the apparent permanence of the 1855 historical classification of first growth chateaus, the history of Bordelais wines has not been a straight stairway to success, rather a sequence of great transformations, difficult challenges, and brilliant intuitions. Viticulture in Bordeaux dates to the Ancient Romans, but it was only in the 12th century that the area became the cradle of European luxury wine when the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry II marked the passage of the region under the English monarchy for the next three centuries and the official acknowledgment of Bordeaux producers as royal suppliers. Since then, the fame of Bordeaux's wines constantly grew thanks to the interests of the European aristocracy for the best productions, but also for the commercial success of cheaper wines like the claret first in England and then, once Bordeaux returned to the French Kingdom, in the Dutch Provinces. With the consolidation of the French Kingdom in the 17th century, Bordeaux became France's wine capital and one of the vital centers of modern viticulture. Each of these historical periods were marked by fearful difficulties, both technological and commercial, from the upheaval of the French Revolution to the terrible oidium and phylloxera plagues. The triumphs achieved by Bordelais producers not only consolidated their myth, but also contributed to the development of world enology.

The above mentioned 1855 classification, for instance, represented the first great modern operation of analysis and identification of terroirs, the best geomorphological distributions for viticulture. Bordeaux's wine region is as much fascinating as it is complex: it developed around the fluvial network of the Dordogne and Garonne rivers that meet in the estuary channel of Gironde, splitting in two 'banks' the vineyards and creating a fundamental zone of climatic interexchange with the nearby ocean. There are three main areas: the Left Bank – north of Bordeaux there is the Medoc, from where the most famous wines come like the AOC Pauillac, St. Julien, Margaux, St. Estephe, and Haute Medoc, while south of the city there are the Graves, where one can find the legendary AOC of noble rot wines Sauternes and Barsac; then the Right Bank – where one can find the AOC Pomerol, Saint Emilion, and many less famous but not less excellent ones; finally, in the inner region between the two rivers there is Entre-Deux-Mers – a zone where viticulture knew a more recent development and it is exclusively dedicated to white wines. Today, Bordeaux's wine production is much more diversified than in the past. In terms of red grapes, the Left Bank, and especially the Medoc, is the reign of Cabernet Sauvignon that gave birth to the famous "Bordelais blend" with small percentages of Cabernet Franc and Merlot, which on the other hand dominate in the Right Bank. Other historically important red grapes are Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Carmenere, while the ongoing climatic change brought in 2019 to authorize the cultivation of weather-resistant grapes like Marselan, Touriga Nacional, Castets, and Arinarnoa (a hybrid of Cabernet Sauvignon and Tannat). In terms of white grapes, the king is Sémillion that constitutes the base of the famous noble rot wines along with Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle. Other allowed white grapes are Sauvignon Gris, Ugni Blanc, Colombard, Merlot Blanc, Ondenc, and Mauzan, and from 2019 on also Alvarinho, Petit Manseng, and Lilorila.



The historical grand chateaus are located along the banks of the Gironde, where one can find the best pedoclimatic balance in the region, that is the ideal combination of climate and soil composition: indeed, an old motto of the region says that "one should see the river from the best vineyards". The 1855 classification has zoned the area according to the best cru, the highest-quality single vineyards or particles among them. As mentioned, the classification has been only slightly modified ever since, highlighting the refinement of the enological culture reached in the region even back then. Among the red wines there were five levels of cru, crowned by the highly selected First Growth: Château Lafite Rothschild and Château Latour in Pauillac, Château Margaux in the homonymous AOC, and Château Haut-Brion in Pessac de Graves (the only one not in the Medoc). Among the white wines there were only three levels of cru crowned by a single unrivaled Superior Frist Growth: Château d'Yquem in Sauternes (back then a sub-zone of the Graves). For better or worse, this classification initiated the ascension of Bordelais wines in the enological empyrean, and it stood the test of time with one single substantial change: the promotion to First Growth of Château Mouton Rothschild of Pauillac in 1973. Year after year, hardly tested by pest infestations and world wars, Bordelais wines did not always meet easy successes, but always proudly overcame the challenges of modern enology by betting on sustainable viticulture choices (paying attention to the most suited clonal varieties and to non-invasive phytotherapeutic treatments) and on respectful vinification techniques of the features of the soil (the typical scents of tobacco and truffle in the Medoc's red, the earthy and smoky scents in the Graves' ones, and the difficult handling of the noble rot in Sauternes and Barsac).

The worst moment in Bordeaux's recent history was in 1972 when a terrible speculation led to a crash of market prices and a dire economic crisis in the region. A structural feature of Bordeaux was the negociants system, the middlemen that were in charge of buying the grapes from the producers and then selling the finished bottle on the international market: due to the price crash, producers could not recuperate any loss from the negociants and the whole system was cast in a downward spiral, except for the few bigger properties that survived without many sacrifices. It would take a decade of arduous work and the coming of the superstar wine critic Robert Parker to bring Bordeaux back to the top. The enthusiastic reviews of the 1982 vintage en primeur (meaning directly from the barrels, before auctioning to the negociants and bottling the wine) renewed the 'global thirst' for Bordelais wines, forever changing the function of the global wine market. The negociants could not ignore the critical evaluation of the vintages anymore and were thus forced to pay a much higher price to the producers before being able to bottle their wines. This change allowed many producers to invest in their property and improve the quality of their wines by reducing the crop quantity and lengthening the cask aging. At the same time, many producers saw this opportunity as the right moment to start bottling with



their own label, switching from being mere producers to developing into integrated winemakers. These overall ameliorations consolidated the fame of the region beyond the marketing skills of the various negociants. Another important transformation was caused in the same years by the massive raise of property and inheritance taxes for landowners that led to sale of many vineyards to big investing firms and larger properties, as small families could no longer meet the increased costs. Nevertheless, the combination of higher prices and larger integrated properties created the ideal conditions for technological advancement and the productive renewal of the whole regional wine industry. The unavoidable corollary of this search for quality over quantity to favor the new mechanism of vintage's evaluation was to make of the grand vins de Bordeaux into financial wine futures, stimulating a spectacular rise in prices that has kept going ever since.

For more than thirty years, Robert Parker's purview aroused great polemics (not only in Bordeaux) among those who benefitted from the system, those who lamented the strictness of conforming to the tastes of the famous critic, and those who accused the system of having created a massive speculation. Then, in 2018, Robert Parker retired from professional tasting and passed the torch to a younger generation, more interested into wine diversification and less involved market speculations. Parker's choice sparked fears of a possible new market crash. On the contrary, it seems that Bordeaux overcame this new great change by looking beyond the eternal myth (and speculation) of the Grand Vins.

A most significant development can be seen in the amazing improvement of the less renowned terroirs and among the smaller producers. Higher quality meant higher prices even for them, which in turns led to better economic stability: many tried organic or biodynamic viticulture, and in general focused on developing fresher, more concentrated, and ready to drink wines that would not need the aging time (and the costs) of the greater wines, while respecting the same principles of quality and respect for the terroir. Even the grand chateaus were not caught unprepared: on the one hand, they kept reducing the amount of their Grand Vins to achieve maximum quality (and thus constantly fueling the future market); on the other they launched a series of second, third, and even fourth lines of absolute interests for their characteristics and more affordable prices to move away from the sole luxury niche.

Today, Bordelais wines can occupy all market segments with excellent and strongly territorial wine typologies that at the same time bear the flag of a centuries long tradition. If global warming is causing some serious discussions about a possible crash of the Grand Vins' future market, it is also true that region developed a strong foundation of survival thanks to a rejuvenated industry focalized on the health of the soils, on the climatic trends, and on a sustainable vinification beyond any other productive diktat.

AWARDS LIST

Discover the past editions



INTERACTIVE

Cigars & Dessert

Experimenting with underwater aging for new taste and exclusivity

by **Vincenzo Lopez**

Velvety. You perceive the presence of a classy soul and clear notes of toasted hazelnut, a perception reminiscent of granulated ganache. The succulence recalls the Robusta variety of coffee, cocoa, and pepper. Fascinating this humble review of the Behike 56, isn't it?

Fun digression aside, an effective opening was a must to prepare you properly concerning the topic announced by the title, which is the excellent subtlety that exists between the pleasure of an elaborate dessert and lighting a cigar with tobacco that is not only of quality but which is also able to trigger the maximum pleasure.





Our gustatory craving needs associations: one pleasure is already satisfying in itself, but if combined with another, it is amplified in an exponential hedonistic charge.

We think of the choice of a cigar, which, alone, often gives us the joy of a chat with our trusted tobacconist, as if we were tasting a Vino de Porto. And if that ruby were accompanied by a dry biscuit made with butter and nuts or, more recklessly, by excellent quality chocolate, the pact between pleasure and pleasure would be sealed. But it is well known that pleasure is rarely not carefully selected in the modern era, so we celebrate this luck and luxury and try to choose the best dessert to be paired with the smoke.

It should be specified that tastes' subjectivity immediately undermines any gustatory association. This analysis humbly wants to try adding more information to a daily act, which is already satisfactory in itself.

Chocolate, easy victory. A quick, effective, and self-confident association. More shy is the tart with cream and fruit, which will tend to make the palate acidic and make you drink more water than you should. Final effect? Faster smoke.

Sweet dripping creams such as tiramisu or velvet cake (pay attention to it) will lead you to eat dessert as quickly as possible. The excess of sugars will distract your palatal attention, leading to a saturation of "addiction," which, in its apparent greedy success, has made the two pleasures travel at a different pace.

A good compromise are the candied peels of citrus fruits, as with their sugar concentration, combined with the citrus strength deriving from the essential oils already marked by character, they create an easy and surprising gluttonous satisfaction. This concept of a miniature dessert benefits those who do not want to spend too much time in tasting a dessert. It is no coincidence that those who typically choose this type will favor the version of the candied fruit dipped in tempered chocolate, a choice which, on the other hand, could be questioned by those who follow any diet.

What if the perfect dessert to associate with the smoke was simple, anachronistic, and at times childish? Slice of toast, but not that soft bread in its entirety. We are talking about that bread with a thick crust and expertly blunted crumb. Spread butter, sugar, and pears cooked with spiced water and honey, soaked in rum and cinnamon. The bite, due to the crust, triggers tenacious chewing. The crunchy sugar is in a slight squeal between the teeth. What follows is an increase in salivation. The soft, succulent pear dripping with cooking juices, will cleanse the palate from the excess of the remaining bread and will have the effect that most hoped for in choosing the proper dessert: keeping the mouth moist, essential between a puff and a bite to the sweet, a concept of principle to be able to enjoy, as long as possible, the parallelism of the two pleasures.

However, leave me room for advice. The importance of water in these situations stands as a great friend of our palate, as described in previous articles. Its cleaning action, even more, effective if fresh and effervescent, will make the battlefield free from obstacles and harshness. It will also allow you to be amazed by organoleptic details, making the approach to new bites more intuitive, perhaps the one in which the spice is most concentrated.

The tactile, gustatory, and olfactory sensations in the unanimous awareness of the experience enjoyed will seal the success of having decided to eat a dessert while smoking. Only the fitness conscience, or your wife or husband, can ensure that this masterful work of everyday life does not happen.



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SPIRITS

威士忌標籤

怎麼找出來
你喝的是什麼

Federico Bosco



所有威士忌飲用者經常進行意匠分析，偶爾或熱情，瓶子一直是購買的主要吸引力，但是有一個更精細的細節，必須知道，能夠起示許多有用的訊號：標籤。

無論是人的還是个的，有時用玻璃挑剔，有時是雙面（正面和背面），有時岩幾的信息，有時更簡潔，標籤傳說給我們所有的信息，以了解更多的東西，而不僅僅是內容。它並不總是正確的，但一般的一些事情總是有用的。

受期關生產將其瓶子命名為威士忌-這同標準用於美國世界。相反，在蘇格蘭有世界其他地方，我們認論沒有"e"的威士忌；在蘇格蘭的情況下，在稱謂大了蘇格蘭語。單一麥芽蘇格蘭威士忌保證了單一釀酒廠的原產地。一些蘇格蘭釀酒廠增加了生產商城，以強調產品的地域性。

"歲月"之後經常出現的數字與產品的最低年齡有關。最低年齡四為，與幾種不同桶的混合相比，最年輕的數字是相信的。示例：使用三個桶分別都達8年，12年和26年的威士忌將顯示"8歲"字樣，無論舊桶的老化情況如何。

公司有責任報告其他桶的年齡，但這不是強制性的。有時，您可以找到沒有年齡的威士忌：沒有恐懼，沒有夢假或假冒產品，它們是開頭的NAS（無年齡聲明），其中通用於最低2年歲水的簡單法則。製片人選擇不提年齡，這仍然是未知的；它將由我們的口味來驗證味道和愉悅。

在標籤上，始終報告酒精含量，必須至少為40%-在這個數字下我們不能說威士忌。如果等級更高，有時公司會報告"Cask Strength"（英國世界）或"Full Proof"（美國世界）：我們在沒有用水稀釋的產品存在，因此，好像它們只是從桶中裝瓶。然而，某發使您可以使用用水稀釋的威士忌的較低等級的木桶強度威士忌，特別是如果前者個有一定的年齡。

"Un Chillfiltered"這個詞讓我們知道威士忌沒有被冷過濾，以及"沒有顏色"，或"沒有添加焦糖"（偶其他類似的詞），解釋說沒有添加焦糖以上顏色。

在特殊情況下，我們還可以找到所用桶的陈水，甚至是桶/桶的數量。這種情況經常發生在非常有限的版本中，或者在獨立裝瓶商的情況下使其成為驗證的來源。此外，我們可以找到Single Cask或Single Barrel這兩個詞，它們強調了它的獨特性。又一個詞歸是Small Batch，它仍然是一個更廣泛的概念：您可以從兩個桶中取出，但仍然比規范小一些（舉一些例子：獨立的Cadenhead的裝瓶商為自己的小批量結合了兩個或三個桶，而奧本小潤沒有宣布使用的桶數量，但他們肯定會把更多的桶放在一起）。

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

桶的組合符合精確的標準：您可以將來自同一釀酒廠，不同釀酒廠，甚至蘇厚（大蘇）和小蘇（酸物）桶的麥芽威士忌混合在一起。在第一種情況下，沒有詞歸（或是一種常見稱法），在第二種情況下，我們將有混合蘇厚威士忌（多年前它被稱為Vatted），第三種情況是混合威士忌（或混合）。還有Grain Whiskeys：這個術語是指用各種穀物生產的威士忌。在美國世界，我們經常遇到兩個行銷物組歸的各種詞語，或者使用的唯一酸物（黑麥威士忌，玉米威士忌）。

我們試圖解釋各種標籤上最常用的術語；沒有絕對的紀律，每個製造商都會自己的事情。但是，遵循這些指導原則，在這個瘋開的獨特的世界中，您將更容易品嘗。

Perlage & Cigars

Five great champagnes paired to five great cigars

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**
& **Luca Cominelli**

Let us abandon ourselves to memories, to return to a distant Christmas. It was the time when gifts and sweets were received to varying degrees for multiple reasons. Let us pause to contemplate the emotions that pervaded us, the aromas and flavors that we associated with Christmas, rich in spices, sweet tones, and that warmth, almost palpable to the nose, of the notes of oven cooking. Although the years have passed, that inner child remains latent, ready to be awakened by the slightest memory, as small as that little piece of the madeleine in tea, which allowed Proust to perfectly narrate the breaking point of the dichotomy between past and present. The cigar smoker is a seeker, not only of the pleasure related to a good cigar but of the emotions connected to the smoke itself. The holiday season can add more time to allow us to enjoy that childish glee latent in us. To do this again this year, we suggest five exciting combinations of champagne and cigars. Our way to always wish you the best. Prosit!

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LAURENT - PERRIER
The Cuvée

GRAPES
Chardonnay 55%, Pinot Noir 35%, Meunier 10%

DOSAGE
9 g/l

AGING
At least 4 years

PRICE
$ 40 - € 40

The Cuvée is perhaps the most versatile of the Maison's references. For its versatility and balance, it is perfect for an aperitif combined with shellfish, white meats, and a cigar. About a third of it is obtained from reserve wines. The nose is characterized by a fruity bouquet (white fruit) and slight citrus, without neglecting the minerality that brings to mind the craie. Sometimes it is also possible to perceive light touches of pastry and bread crust. In the mouth, it is characterized by a well-defined, elegant and lively bubble, resulting particularly large and suited to fruit, citrus in particular. Elegance that goes perfectly with the Romeo y Julieta Linea de Oro Hidalgos with its aromas of fine wood, nuts (especially walnut), white pepper, and coffee, all enclosed in a balanced and very dense smoke. A pairing that convinces for its liveliness and complexity.





BRUNO PAILLARD
Blanc de Blancs

GRAPES
Chardonnay 100%

DOSAGE
5 g/l

AGING
4 years on the lees plus
10 months after disgorgement

PRICE
$ 70 - € 80

Limited production (between 15 and 20 thousand bottles every year) for this Bruno Paillard reference, created with extreme care: only Chardonnay grapes grown in the Côte des Blancs and the use of 25 blended wines (from 1985 to more recent) in a proportion that can reach up to 50%. The nose is characterized by citrus (grapefruit and greener characters) and floral aromas. After a few moments in the glass, it also returns refined notes of nuts and pastry and a delicate minerality. On the palate, it strikes for a very elegant and classy bubble, which calls to itself the minerality typical of the Maison, but also for aromas that confirm the white pulp fruit and almond. Citric components and mineral notes are well rounded out by the Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Belicoso NT, with its aromas of hazelnut, dried fruit (raisins), and wood, combined with an almost chewable and creamy smoke. The evolution towards peppery notes and toasted bread will find a truly appreciable balance in the retronasal aromas of the champagne.





JM SÉLÈQUE
Solessence Rosé

GRAPES
Chardonnay 45%, Meunier 40%, Pinot Noir 15%

DOSAGE
2 g/l

AGING
18 months

PRICE
$ 45 - € 55

This Rosé by JM Sélèque uses grapes grown in seven villages of the Valée de la Marne and Côte des Blancs. In the blend, it is expected that 10% comes from Meunier wine left to macerate on the skins and 5% from red wine based on Pinot Noir. 40% of the total is obtained from reserve wines aged in wood. The nose captures delicate aromas of small berry red fruits on a broader fruity background and good minerality. On the palate, it is denoted by great vivacity and freshness, highlighted by a pleasant and captivating bubble. It confirms the red fruit (pomegranate also emerges) and typical mineral tones. The Davidoff Limited Edition 2022 Gran Toro is characterized by a strength slightly higher than the canons of the brand and by aromas of black pepper, seasoned wood, and leather, all combined with spicy sensations halfway through the cigar. A flavor profile that finds a perfect balance with the fruity background of Solessence Rosè and with the liveliness of its minerality and bubble.









CHARLES HEIDSIECK
Brut Réserve

GRAPES
Chardonnay 40%, Pinot Noir 40%, Meunier 10%

DOSAGE
11 g/l

AGING
3 years

PRICE
$ 45 - € 50

This Charles Heidsieck is an intriguing reference and has an excellent drinkability at a very attractive price. Added to this is a skilful blend that is characterized by 40% of reserve wines with an average of 10 years. The nose is surprisingly rich, with aromas ranging from yellow fruit (mango and apricot) to light floral notes with hints of nuts. In the mouth, it is fully representative of the Maison with a vibrant minerality and a good acidity, aromatically recalled by fruity scents. It also manages to be soft and creamy. In the presence of a bottle like this, a Plasencia Alma Fuerte Sixto I Hexagono Colorado Claro can be a rash choice. Yet its impetuous character (but not aggressive in terms of strength) with aromas of wood, coffee, leather, spices, and hazelnut will benefit from the softness and creaminess of the perlage, like a warrior who, after a long search, meets his betrothed.

MOUSSÉ FILS
L'Or d'Eugène

GRAPES
Meunier 80%, Pinot Noir 20%

DOSAGE
3.5 g/l

AGING
2 years

PRICE
$ 45 - € 40

L'Or d'Eugène is the house's entry-level, created in 1923 under the name of Carte d'Or, then renamed in 1990 with the name of the founder. This champagne is obtained with 50% of the wine of the last vintage and the remainder with a sort of "Solera method", with wines dating back to 2003. At the first olfactory approach, it is immediately fresh and lively, with a fruity base but enriched by well-integrated spicy hints. On the palate, minerals with great depth and suited to the fruit, but also leave room for more decisive tones of nuts. The bubble is silky and enveloping. With its spicy tones, the Alec Bradley Kintsugi Corona Gorda recalls L'Or d'Eugène but also manages to bring its vegetal, hazelnut, and wood components to the marriage. The size also favors an appreciable and lively evolution, which nevertheless does not lose ground in the presence of this champagne but, on the contrary, chases it, seeking new sensations offered by the bubble.





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CigarMate

Handmade CigarMate
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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.

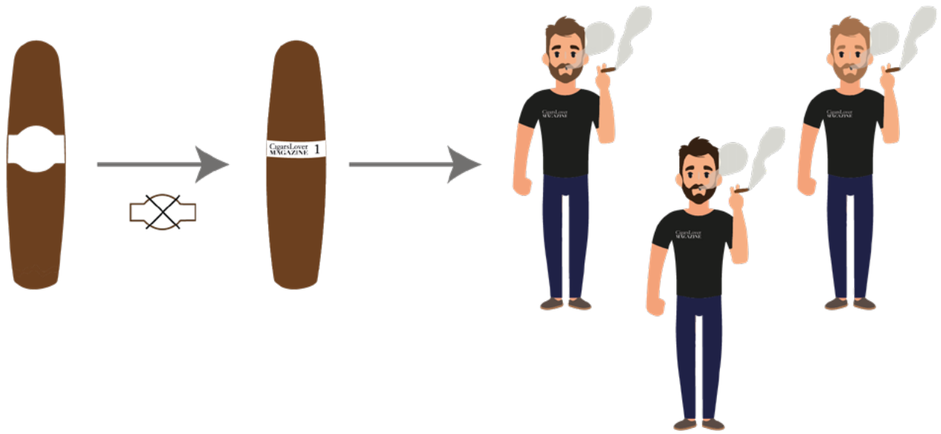
AWARDS 2022

At the end of the year, it is time for the big rankings, those collecting the best products tested during the year. Since 2015 CigarsLover Magazine has divided cigars into five terroirs, to showcase the best products each country offers. Since 2018, the TOP50 has also been added to the Awards, as the all-inclusive list without distinction of territory. This is accompanied by the Best Brands, Best Buys and the best Boutique Brands.

About the Spirits, two are the lists: the 10 best whiskies, and the 10 best rums of the year. The next pages collect the best of the best, the products that have thrilled us the most, the ones we recommend to not miss.



HOW ARE THE AWARDS MADE?

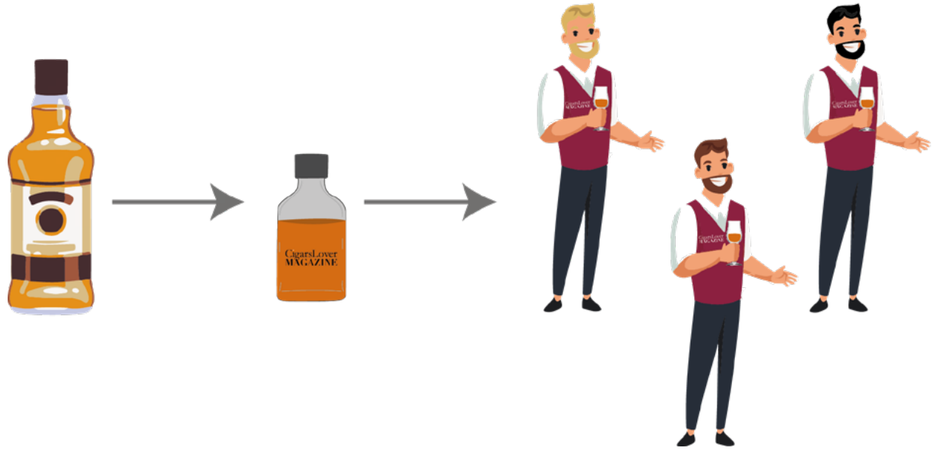


The cigar rings are removed and cigars are once again "dressed" with a new band, which simply bears a number. The same happens for the spirits, which are poured into little sample bottles, only showcasing a number and a possible indication, regarding the alcohol content, if the ABV is higher than 50%.

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



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



BEST 50 CIGARS of the YEAR

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

BEST RUM & WHISKY of the YEAR

THE BEST 10 RUM

1 Dillon
Brut de Fût 2013

RICH AND POWERFUL.
PEPPERY, LEATHER,
DARK TOBACCO.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	62%% - 124	$ 85 - € 90

Located in the heart of Fort-de-France, Dillon has been developing its rum-making expertise since 1779. This rhum comes from the 2013 harvest and spent long years aging in French barriques before being bottled at cask strength in a limited series of 1,750 worldwide.

The alcoholic strength is perfectly integrated in a triumph of noble wood spices, tropical fruit, and a peculiar visou vein strongly marked by orange zest. It's a very powerful rhum to the palate, to drink quite carefully, it's almost spicy at first, but it then moves to toasted wood, leather, wax, jam of tropical fruits, and candied citrus. The finish is long, meaty, and peppery with elegant notes of dark tobacco and a heart of cane juice.

This is an outstanding rhum at an outstanding price. It shows all the complexity of pure cane juice spirits and all the advantages of full proof bottling, without any faults. It's explosive but expressive, rich but harmonious, and intense but perfectly balanced. A must.

95



2 The Royal Cane
Jamaica 1994



COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Jamaica	60.3% - 120.6	$ 280 - € 300

MINERAL AND CITRUSY.

Column distilled in 1994, this rum was aged for 25 years in the tropical climate. In 2018, the cask travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to age three more years in the historic Liverpool Docks. Only 293 bottles.

Extremely rich in esters, the long aging of this Jamaica 1994 transformed the classic funky Jamaican notes in an explosion of brioche, vanilla, caramel, toasted nuts, citrus essential oils. The palate is outstandingly intense with loads of sweet and spicy scents that stimulates a seemingly endless mouthfeel. The finish is long and elegant: caramelized citrus, peppery and mineral echoes, graphite, and Early Grey tea.

94

3 Emperor
Deep Blue Pape Clément



COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Mauritius	40% - 80	$ 150 - € 160

TROPICAL AND MARINE.

It's a blend of pure cane juice rums and molasses rums (40/60%), aged between 5 and 12 years, and combined for 7 months in Pessac-Léognan Grand Cru Classé casks from Château Pape Clément. Once bottled, it was placed 60 meters below the surface of the ocean for 10 months, off the coast of Brittany, in a temperature of 11 to 13 °C, without oxygen, at a pressure of 6 bars.

Sweetness, intensity, and esters collaborate to develop suggestive tropical, marine, and spice scents. The sip is initially marked by herbal and bitterish notes, licorice, tamarind, and nutmeg, then it turns to sweet marron glacé and chestnut honey. Perfectly balanced, with a long finish. A unique rum.

94

4



Père Labat
Xo

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guadalupe	42% - 84	$ 90 - € 95

PATISSERIE AND BALSAMIC.

The Xo is produced in Grand-Bourg by the Poisson distillery on the island of Marie-Galante, the oldest on the island. This pure cane juice rum of at least 6 years of age is distilled in a red copper Creole column for a limited edition of 3,500 bottles.

This Père Labat Xo shows an elegant and fresh nose with scents of pear, thyme's honey, candied citrus, and mint chocolate chips. The palate is all about the visou that elevates the sip from a bed of sweet patisserie notes to surprisingly mineral and salty heights. Plenty of balsamic hints and sweet spices until the very end. What an elegant agricole rhum!

93

5



Long Pond
ITP 15 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Jamaica	45.7% - 91.4	$ 200 - € 280

FUNKY AND RESINOUS.

This is the first old rum bottled by this distillery, which has existed since the 18th century. Distilled in John Dore pot-stills, the ITP label indicates that it is a rather light rum (90-120 g/hlap in esters), but the 15 years in American oak cask developed great aromas and complexity.

It's typically funky as all Jamaican rums, but the long aging added a load of intense spices over the rich background of tropical fruit: mango, litchi, ananas, maracuja, star fruit, and plantain. There's an evident mineral vein with balsamic and resinous branches, tobacco, blackcurrant, and something brackish. The finish is warm and peppery, with a creamy mouth of almonds and exotic fruit.

93

6



Montebello
8 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guadalupe	42% - 84	$ 70 - € 70

SMOOTH AND VELVETY.

This agricultural rhum matures for 8 years in oak cask in the subtropical climate of Petit Bourg, on the Guadeloupe island of Basse-Terre. Recently, the distillery completely revamped the packaging and labeling of their bottles.

Deep and complex to the nose, it delivers rich scents of wood resin, cane juice, marzipan, and raisins, with a touch of chestnut honey. After a little time in the glass, aromas of olives join the bouquet. On the palate, a lot of ripe fruits, almost exotics, are enriched by white pepper, honey, and vegetal notes. Then oak, wax, and hints of cocoa. The finish is long, with pepper, wood, and plums.

93

7



Karukera
L'expression Batch 2

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guadalupe	60.2% - 12.4	$ 75 - € 80

STRENGTH AND CHOCOLATE.

Distilled in column in July 2020, on the Domaine du Marquisat de Sainte-Marie, in Capesterre-Belle-Eau, this rum is first matured in new French oak casks, then in ex-cognac casks from March 2021 on, and bottled without reduction or cold filtration. 4,000 numbered bottles.

Despite its youth, the rhum boasts a perfectly integrate alcoholic body with scents of coffee, tobacco, blackberries, and noble wood. The sip is intense and flavorful with plenty of chocolate, blackberry jam, Cayenne pepper, red licorice, and festive spices. The typical visou comes out only at the very end, uniquely marked by the ex-cognac bitterish notes. Extremely loaded, but delicately delivered.

92

8



Nine Leaves
Almost Spring

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	48% - 96	$ 90 - € 95

WINEY AND CLEAN.

Made from Muscovado brown sugar (called Kokuto in Japan), a pure unrefined cane sugar, it's distilled twice in pot-stills and then aged for a year in ex-Cabernet Sauvignon casks of the Californian Wente Vineyard among the mountains of Shiga Prefecture.

This rum is a triumph of Japanese precision in wisely weighting the influence of ex-wine casks. It shows a nose of delicate fresh berries and youthful winey scents. The sip is fresh and joyful, more akin to a single malt than a rum, with peppery hints, fragrant biscuits, and edible flowers.

92

9



Opthimus
25 Whisky Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Dominican Rep.	43% - 86	$ 100 - € 85

LUSCIOUS AND RICH.

Oliver & Oliver presents a special finish of a few months in Single Malt Whisky casks for their classic blend of column distilled ron from sugar-rich molasses solera-aged in bourbon casks for 25 years.

It appears viscous and thick just as the traditional Opthimus, with decadent notes of maple syrup, plum jam, milk chocolate, and licorice. Then it develops a drier and more elegant character of vanilla, cinnamon, and warm spices that show the mark of the peculiar sing malt finish. It's a remarkable variation for this currently classic Dominican ron.

92

10



Foursquare
Indelible

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Barbados	48% - 96	$ 75 - € 70

ELEGANT AND FRESH.

The Indelible is the 18th Exceptional Cask Selection by Foursquare: it's a traditional English blend of pot-still distilled rums aged for eleven years in ex-bourbon and ex-zinfandel casks.

It's a quite rich and balanced rum: fresh fruit and summer spices dances over a bed of delicate wine scents. The palate shows a strong character with warm, spicy, tropical fruits and meaty and roasted notes. Coconut, vanilla, and noble wood spices lingers on the tongue until the final drop. A great drink!

91

PAGE

400+
SPIRITS
TESTED
EVERY
YEAR

FIND SPIRITS

THE BEST 10 WHISKY



1 Compass Box
Ultramarine

COMPLEX & VELVETY.
FROM SHERRY TO MINERAL
AND EARTHY PEAT.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	51% - 102	$ 350 - € 280

Limited-edition blended Scotch whisky, released in August 2022 in 5430 bottles as the first of the Extinct Blends Quartet, a series of four whiskies honoring previous styles of famous blends from late '80s and early '90s. The lead whiskymaker is James Saxon. The recipe includes malts from Caol Ila and Glendullan and grain whiskies from Girvan and Cameronbridge, along with pre-blended whiskies from the Compass Box stocks. The complete recipe is available on Compass Box website, with a true effort of transparency in communicating the complexity of this blend.

A minor hint of mineral and earthy smoke over a fruity background of baked apples and sweet lemon. Vanilla and a good amount of toffee, such as in old-school sherried products, are also present, with a sophisticated oakiness. The palate is salty and smoky at the beginning, leaving later space to a particular dark chocolate sensation coming upfront, malty and chewy, with a meaty finish. The latter is prolonged in a medium-long finish, reconnecting to the barbecue smoke, but also with the velvety texture with a generous amount of spices. The overall effect is very complex and pleasant for this evoking release, which reminds us what a careful blend can be in terms of symphony of layers of different tastes.

96



2


Hellyers Road
American Oak 18

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Australia	56.4% - 112.8	$ 230 - € 220

A FRUIT BOMB WITH CHOCOLATE NUTS.

Hellyers Road from Tasmania is not new in releasing similar expressions. This American Oak 18yo #2269.03 is a single cask, double distilled single malt created exclusively for Kirsch Import in Germany and The Nectar in Belgium.

It boasts a true explosion of flavors: there is a fragrant, fresh tangerine dimension, sweet lemon, pineapple. With time it turns into reddish fruit, with rounded and balanced plums and wet sultanas paired by salty fresh butter. The palate features high intensity and remarkable roundness, with toffee, burnt sugar, and sultanas, all this covered in sweet/dark spices. Some chocolate-covered almonds. Distant woody aromas as well. Extremely rewarding.

95

3


Mars
Tsunuki Peated

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	50% - 100	$ 180 - € 130

YELLOW FRUIT WITH MINERAL PEAT.

Created with peated malted barley from Scotland and distilled twice discontinuously in pot stills in Tsunuki Distillery, located in Kagoshima Prefecture, during the winters of 2016 and 2017. It was then aged for at least 3 years in ex-bourbon oak barrels, for a production of 14,830 bottles total.

Very expressive, with a basket of mixed yellow fruit, with various degrees of ripeness (apple, medlar, pineapple, lemon). Something crunchy. The spicy side speaks of black and white pepper. The sweetness is contained, classy, good quality vanilla pod. A slight hint of mineral peat. In a second moment comes a remarkable creaminess, providing an almost buttery sensation.

94

4



Teeling
18 Renaissance Series 5

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	46% - 92	$ 135 - € 120

APPLE, APRICOT, AND SWEET LEMON.

This special release is limited to 9000 bottles.

It is mellow and creamy, a sophisticated whisper, giving off sweet lemon, red apple, loquat, unripe apricot, and golden plum. A touch of honey and flower pollen. Sweetness is just minor vanilla powder. The palate is slightly more intense but still refined; heather honey, some sweet spices (cardamom, anise, gingerbread), a touch of fresh flowers, and a background of citric fruit continuing the refreshing side. Intensity is not the primary target; in this masterly crafted single malt, there are several aromas and tastes which are well balanced together to create a refined, silky, continuously moving complexity. Alcohol is almost non-existent.

94

5



Kavalan
Solist Port Single Cask

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Taiwan	57.8% - 115.6	$ 250 - € 125

DARK CHERRIES, PLUMS, CHOCOLATE.

Kavalan Solist Port Single Cask Strength is the expression matured in ex-port casks of the Solist series.

Red bold suggestions, together with a boastful vanilla sweetness: dark cherries, overripe plums, wet sultanas, but winey components are also evident. A very intense nose playing between sweet and bitter sides, the latter almost like licorice. The palate is surprising, with a cherry spirit, bold and intense, adding a remarkable ripe orange side, zests covered in dark chocolate. Alcohol is pretty intense but manageable. The perception is less sweet than the nose. Oaky notes and some chocolate fudge. A truly nice way of managing the winey character of ex-port casks.

94

6



Reservoir
Holland's Milkman

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	53.5% - 107	$ 125 - € 170

OAK, HERBS, AND DARK CHOCOLATE.

Aged for a minimum of 2-3 years in Reservoir's "small barrel" casks, it is then finished in an Ardent milk stout barrel for a further 2.5 years. Batch #4 from 2021 is 15% wheat, 70% corn, and 15% rye.

It features the most important bourbon aromas, where oak and milkshake vanilla notes are side tastes of the main cherry flavor, intense and bold. Later it turns into slightly more bitter sensation, rich in herbal notes but also in very dark chocolate hints. At the same time, there is a unique, rarely seen before creamy texture on the palate, which makes it a different experience. A particular product with a high ABV, a true exercise of creativity.

93

7



Rittenhouse
Straight Rye B. In Bond

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% - 100	$ 40 - € 35

HERBS, ORANGE, TOFFEE, AND SPICES.

Produced at the Bernheim Distillery of Heaven Hill, it commemorates Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square, named in 1825 after David Rittenhouse, astronomer and a scientist, first director of US mint. This expression uses a mash composed of 51% rye, 37% corn and 12% malted barley. It is then aged for approx. 4 years.

The herbal balsamic components are mellow and well-integrated, sweetened by an orange character. Toffee and sweet spices (cinnamon and nutmeg) are also given off, completing a true gemstone of a nose. The rich palate also adds oak and vanilla pod. Intense, yet very well-balanced experience, with all the specific character due in a rye whisky.

92

8



Waterford
Heritage Hunter

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	50% - 100	$ 100 - € 100

CHALK, EARTH, BARK, AND SPICES.

Belonging to the Arcadian Farm Origin series, it uses Hunter barley, a variety from 1959 which vanished since the 1970s and was only preserved in the seed bank of the Irish Dpt of Agriculture.

It features a unique nose, with marine notes then dispersed into robust aromas of chalk, damp earth, roots, with black olives and sea water. Fruit is limited to fondant lemon candy, of intense sweetness. The palate provides ginger and acidic sensations, with green spices, limiting the fruit to white pear. At times the overall experience can be tough, especially due to the intense mineral notes, but it can be considered as one of the most unique products on the market.

92

9



Glendalough
7yo Mizunara Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	46% - 92	$ 100 - € 90

BLACK AND RED FRUIT, WOOD, SPICES.

A new release from the Irish distillery known for Mizunara oak aging. A red thread on the bottle is placed to represent the links between Wicklow, Ireland and Hokkaido, Japan. Back in 2020, the Glendalough 17 Years Old Mizunara Cask Finish was named best whisky of the year.

This release is evocative: fruit is black (plum, blackcurrant, blackberry) and dark red (very ripe black cherry), with a hint of juicy raisins in alcohol. Everything is accompanied by a balsamic scent, blackcurrant hard candy. There is a complex sweetness of blackberry jam with a touch of wine and a slight bitter balsamic chocolaty note, pleasant, which deepens the experience. A precious wood finish.

91

10



Amahagan
Edition N.5 Sherry Cask

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	47% - 94	$ 105 - € 90

FRUIT, BUTTER BISCUITS, VANILLA.

Blend from Nagahama, the smallest distiller in Japan, on the shores of Lake Biwa in Shiga prefecture, inaugurated in 2016. The total capacity of the pots is 1,500 liters, with a steam indirect heating method. The name of the main still is “Aranbic”, from the Arabian appearance.

This expression is an ode to fruit, mainly orange and grapefruit, but also interleaved with apple and some more tropical hints. A gentle dryness is proposed, before butter biscuits with brown sugar and vanilla hints. Round and mellow, soft and refined. The ABV is nicely chosen, perfect for an easy drink but also to enjoy the senses. The refined texture adds an excellent creaminess on top.

91

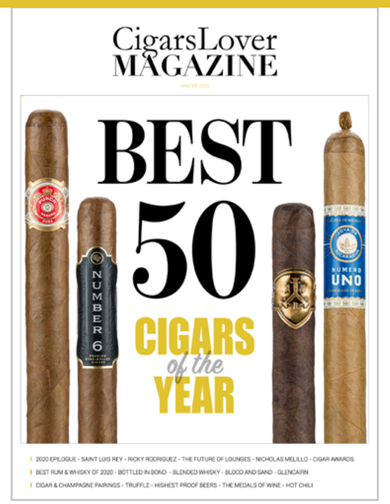
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CIGARS
TESTED
EVERY
YEAR

FIND CIGARS













CIGARSLOVERS MAGAZINE DISCOVER ALL ISSUES











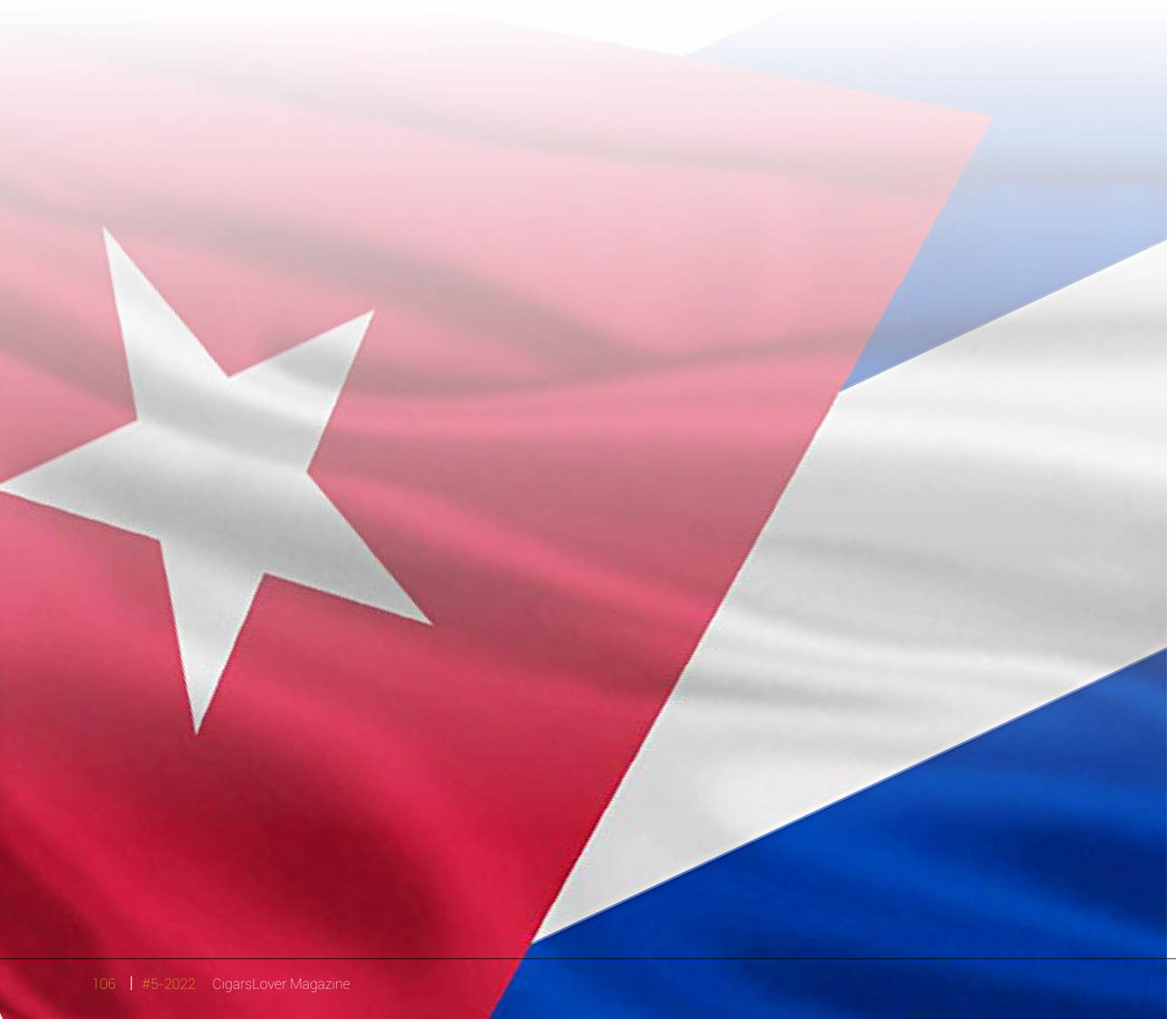


PAGE

INTERACTIVE

THE BEST 50 CIGARS

CUBA



1 Romeo y Julieta

Linea de Oro Hidalgos

CREAMY AND ROUND.
WHITE PEPPER, COFFEE, BALSAMIC HERBS.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	57 x 125mm (5 ⅞")	N/A $ - 55€	1h

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA

After a delay in delivery, at the beginning of 2022, the first boxes of the Linea de Oro reached markets worldwide. This release underlines the choice of Habanos SA to carve out a super premium segment within the portfolio of their global brands. The Romeo y Julieta Linea de Oro comes in three formats (Dianas, Hidalgos, Nobles), which correspond to three new vitolas de Galera (Damas, Hidalgo, Triangulare), presented in elegant twenty-count boxes, in which the red and gold are the dominant colors.

Among the three new references, the Hidalgos offers a very complex and satisfying smoke. The opening is characterized by aromas of aged wood, white pepper, and roasted coffee beans, with a strength slightly higher than the medium level. The central section becomes slightly spicier on the palate with an evolution that brings notes of leather and walnut to the base of white pepper and toasted coffee. In the final third, the cigar becomes stronger and much more balsamic without neglecting the peppery and leathery notes of the previous thirds.

A smoke that boasts a respectable evolution, an unparalleled creaminess on the palate, and a flavor intensity that increases puff after puff. The finish is noteworthy, and the flavor profile also satisfies for its refinement.

93



2

Ramon Allones
Gigantes

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	49x194mm (7⅝")	N/A $ - 18€	1h 40min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



HARMONIOUS. WOOD, EARTH, AND COFFEE BEANS.

The Ramon Allones Gigantes is one of the few Prominentes (or Double Coronas) sizes still in production in Cuba. Over time, it continues to maintain a reliable production consistency, offering a very representative smoke of the brand.

A well-balanced cigar from the first to the last puff. Elegant, creamy, and harmonious. Undoubtedly, the best Ramon Allones available.

The start is characterized by nuts and precious wood aromas, with hints of leather. The flavor profile focuses on spicy tones but also on toasted hints of hazelnut and sometimes cocoa.

92

3

Romeo y Julieta
Wide Churchills

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	55x130mm (5⅛")	N/A $ - 13€	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



SWEET AND CREAMY. GREEN PEPPER, COFFEE AND VEGETAL NOTES.

The Wide Churchills was Introduced in 2010, and it has never lost its luster. It was the first Cuban cigar produced in the "Montesco size," a cigar boasting a generous ring gauge compared to the Cuban production of years prior.

Its sweetness and creaminess are remarkable, and the smoke is intense and balanced. The evolution is quite perceivable.

The sweetness appears from the first puffs, together with vegetal, citrus, and wood notes. Then, coffee and spices emerge. The finish is dominated by toasted, earthy, and green pepper aromas.

91

4

Montecristo
Edmundo

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x135mm (5⅜")	N/A $ - 18 €	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



POWERFUL. WOOD, COCOA, EARTH AND SPICES.

The Montecristo Edmundo was the first Toro-sized cigar produced in Cuba back in 2004. Since then, it has continued to be among the most representative products of the brand due to the consistency and typicality of the flavor profile.

The Edmundo is not new to the Awards. It was among the best five Cubans also in 2017. It delivers a rich, bold, and fulfilling smoke.

Wood, nuts, and black pepper are the main aromas in its flavor profile. During the smoke, spicy peaks and nuances of cocoa, earth, and balsamic tones appear as well, creating a nice evolution.

91

5

Partagás
Shorts

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	42x110mm (4⅜")	N/A $ - 7 €	40min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



SATISFYING. VEGETAL NOTES, BLACK PEPPER AND LEATHER.

A great small sized cigar from Partagas and, among the quick smokes, also one of the best in the entire Habanos S.A. portfolio. It is a true classic, made since before the Cuban revolution. Nowadays is available in 25 and 50-count boxes.

Petite, refined and powerful, but never rough, the Partagas Shorts offer a quick but intense and satisfying smoke.

It mainly develops vegetal and nutty notes, enriched with wood and black pepper. Aromas of leather, spices, earth and herbs are revealed further into the cigar. The strength gradually increases.

90

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



1 Davidoff
Limited Edition 2022
Gran Toro

MASTERFULLY BALANCED AND COMPLEX. PEPPER, WOOD, AND LEATHER.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	58x140mm (5½")	32 $ - 25 €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	BRAZIL	BRAZIL, DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA

When Davidoff introduced the first line of their, now-known as, Black Band Collection, it was quite an unprecedented event for many reasons. The first and visually most evident was the introduction of the main band in black and silver, which broke the traditional color scheme of white and gold. The other reason was that the company ventured into terrains of tobaccos they are not particularly known to use. With the Limited Edition 2022 Gran Toro, Davidoff sought to create a blend that combined the best of the landmark tobaccos of the Escurio, Nicaragua, and Yamasá lines.

The Gran Toro opens with aromas of wood and herbs that carry into the first third where vegetal notes, white pepper, and almonds are added. The smoke is creamy. In the second third, the nutty component turns to bitter almonds, and the coffee joins the profile. Balsamic nuances appear in the last third, and the white pepper aroma turns black. The strength starts out medium-light and steadily grows to a medium-full level towards the end.

Trying to marry tobaccos from three different lines is not an easy task, but Davidoff manages to do just that in a brilliant fashion. The cigar is complex and flavorful, with a very broad flavor profile. Aromas are added and layered on top of each other throughout each third, while being masterfully balanced among themselves.

94



2

Laura Chavin
La Ligue des Divins
Short Churchill

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	48x124mm (4⅞")	N/A $ - 26 €	55min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



BALANCED, SMOOTH. EARTH, NUTS, WOOD AND PRECIOUS SPICES.

La Ligue des Divins owes its name to the origin of its tobaccos, some of which are cultivated at an altitude of up to 800m above sea level. The cigars have been aging since 2020.

The Short Churchill showcases a balanced and smooth smoke from start to finish. A broad flavor profile is supported by the perfect amount of strength.

The cigar immediately brings aromas of nuts, herbs, and earth to the palate, followed by precious spice and wood. Coffee and creamy leather notes are added later on, and the spices, mainly cinnamon, grow in intensity.

93

3

La Aurora
Cameroon 1903
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●	50x127mm (5")	7 $ - 6 €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	CAMEROON	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, NICARAGUA



BROAD AND COMPLEX. WOOD, PEPPER, AND COFFEE.

The storied Dominican brand launched the Cameroon 1903, part of their Time Capsule Series, back in 2017. The year referred to when the brand started using the Cameroon wrapper for the first time.

A cigar with an interesting and complex flavor profile. The medium-light strength level makes sure that the broad spectrum of aromas is put center stage.

Wood, pepper, and coffee are perceptible in the first half, joined by dried fruits and vegetal nuances. The flavor profile becomes more intense in the second half, and creamy notes of caramel are added.

93

4

Diamond Crown
Black Diamond
Emerald

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	20 $ -22.5 €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	U.S.A.	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



COMPLEX AND INTENSE. LEATHER, EARTH, AND SPICES.

The Diamond Crown Black Diamond line from J.C. Newman Cigars was launched to celebrate the company's 100th anniversary. Earlier this year, they presented a revamped look with a tweaked blend.

A flavorful and full-bodied smoke from the get-go that offers an intense profile that is very complex but still balanced at the same time.

The cigar opens with dark tones of leather, earth, and black pepper, with hazelnut aromas following. Halfway through, the spice has evolved into cinnamon, and the smoke becomes creamy with a hint of sweetness present as well.

92

5

Caldwell
Anastasia
Caspia

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	46x143mm (5⅝")	22 $ - N/A €	1h

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	N/A	N/A	N/A



FLAVORFUL, ROUND. WOOD, NUTS, LEATHER AND SPICES.

Anastasia from Caldwell Cigars is the follow-up to their The Last Tsar line and has gone through numerous iterations, marked by a different colored secondary band. This year's release is the "Yellow Label."

The Caspia, a Corona Gorda size, is marked by a broad and smooth flavor profile. The aromas are well intertwined, creating a complex yet round smoke.

Herbs, wood, and spices, mainly white pepper, start off the smoke, followed by nutty aromas. In the second half, a creamy leather note joins the profile, with the pepper turning black.

92

HONDURAS



1 Plasencia

Cosecha 149 Azacualpa

Toro

RICH AND SATISFYING.
EARTH, COFFEE BEANS, AND SPICES,
WITH NUTS & CHOCOLATE.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	14.5 $ - 14.5 €	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS

The Plasencia Cosecha 149 Azacualpa is the first line made by Plasencia using tobaccos exclusively from Honduras. The line was announced in the second half of 2021. The line's name refers to where the tobacco comes from, the 149th crop harvested in 2014. Tobaccos have been aged for seven years before rolling. The wrapper is from Olancho, San Agustín, the binder is from the Jamastran Valley, and the filler is a mix of tobaccos from Olancho, Jamastran, and Talanga.

The Cosecha 149 is available in three sizes: Robusto, Toro, and Gordito. All of them are available in 10-count boxes. The Toro is box-pressed and dressed up in a Maduro wrapper. The construction is flawless.

The opening delivers earthy notes, together with vegetal and roasted aromas. Getting through the smoke, there is also a rich coffee bean flavor enriched by spices, with the cardamom standing out. Nutty and chocolaty notes are added in the second half. The finale is a riot of spices.

The 149th Toro delivers a bold smoke. The flavor profile is deep and complex, with dark and roasted aromas. The strength is medium to full, and it is under control from the first to the last puff.

94



2

Gran Habano
XX Aniversario
El Sueño

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x127mm (5")	14 $ - N/A €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, PERU, COLOMBIA.



INTENSE & EVOLUTIVE. COFFEE, EARTH AND BLACK PEPPER.

The XX Aniversario is rolled in a wrapper leaf grown in the Jalapa Valley region, Nicaragua, and aged for four years. It is sold in 20-count boxes, and it celebrates the 20th Anniversary of the brand.

The cigar is intense and balanced. The flavor profile is broad, and the evolution is marked. It boasts a distinct harmony.

It develops notes of coffee, earth, black pepper, and piquant peaks. The spices are the protagonist without being overwhelming. In the second half, a rich cocoa vein enriched the flavor profile.

93

3

Alec Bradley
Double Broadleaf
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	9.9 $ - N/A €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



GREATLY BALANCED. WOOD, LEATHER, AND SPICES.

The Double Broadleaf is the third release in the Alec Bradley Experimental Series. The name comes from the use of Honduran-grown Connecticut-seed Broadleaf leaves, one used as the wrapper and one as one of the binders.

The Double Broadleaf Robusto delivers a great balance. The flavor profile is savory and fulfilling, well blended around the Broadleaf tobaccos.

The first part brings earth aromas to the palate, seasoned wood, roasted notes, and a touch of leather. The second part adds a rich peppery vein with balsamic herbs.

92

4

Aladino
Classic
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x127mm (5")	8.6 $ -N/A €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



DEEP & STRUCTURED. SEASONED WOOD, NUTS, AND CAPPUCCINO.

The Classic line is exclusively made with tobacco grown in Honduras by the company. The cigars are made at the Fábrica de Puros Aladino in Las Lomas Jamastran in Honduras.

The smoke is rich and well-balanced. The flavor profile is structured, boasts great harmony, and the construction is excellent.

The smoke begins with seasoned wood, the undisputed protagonist, together with a vegetal touch and some nutty notes. In the second part, it delivers roasted aromas of cappuccino, together with leather.

92

5

Oscar Valladares
10th Anniversary
Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	20 $ -22.5 €	1h 15min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	MEXICO, HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



SATISFYING & RICH. WOOD, WHITE PEPPER, LEATHER, AND COFFEE.

The 10th Anniversary celebrates the company's first ten years in business. Two wrappers are used: one from Mexico, the other from Honduras. The latter is a candela and is only used on the foot of the cigar.

It develops an intense smoke with a perceivable evolution. The strength grows throughout the fruition, ending it in a satisfying way.

With the candela wrapper on, the smoke delivers precious wood and a hint of white pepper. Then it turns to cinnamon, leather, coffee beans, and earth with some fresh citrusy notes. The finale is balsamic.

91

NICARAGUA



1 Olmec
Claro
Toro

EVERLASTING PERSISTENCY.
A RIOT OF WILD PEPPER, COFFEE,
EARTH AND LEATHER.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	14.5 $ - N/A €	1h 20 min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

The Olmec is a new line created by Foundation Cigars and released in 2022. It is an homage to the Heart Land of the Olmecs, which is currently the Mexican states of Veracruz, Tabasco, and San Andrés Tuxtla. It is in this same region that some of the highest quality San Andrès Negro wrappers are grown. This seed variety is considered one of the oldest in the world.

The blend is made of Nicaraguan filler tobaccos from the Esteli and Jalapa valleys, aged for three years. The San Andrés Negro wrapper tobacco comes from the rich volcanic soil of the land of the Olmecs. It is fermented slowly at low temperatures to preserve its natural oils. The cigars are packed in boxes of twelve. They are made in Nicaragua at the AJ Fernández Cigar Factory.

The opening delivers a blast of leather, roasted coffee beans, and earth, together with a rich peppery vein. The first part of the smoke is a riot of wild peppers, earth, walnut, seasoned wood, and coffee beans. In the middle third, the cigar adds a rich balsamic vein that refreshes the smoke. In the finale, some piquant peaks complete the ample and structured flavor profile. The persistency is phenomenal. The flavor profile is rich and satisfying, with a broad variety of aromas and a nice evolution to it.

96



2

My Father
Le Bijou 1922 100 Años
Corona Especial

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	44x165mm (6½")	13 $ -N/A €	1h 15min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



FLAVORFUL. BLACK PEPPER, EARTH AND VEGETAL NOTES.

This Le Bijou 1922 100 Años was released to commemorate the 100 years of José García Alayón, the father of the brand founder José "Pepín" García.

The cigar is rich and bold from the first to the last puff. The strength is full, and the same goes for the flavors' intensity. A fulfilling and well-balanced smoke.

It brings to the palate notes of earth, espresso, and spices, the latter mainly in the aftertaste, with the black pepper enriching the whole smoke. The bouquet is completed with leather and vegetal aromas.

95

3

Muestra de Saka
The Bewitched

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	48x168mm (6⅝")	19.75 $ - N/A €	1h 30min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	MEXICO	NICARAGUA, U.S.A.



RICH AND EVOLUTIVE. BLACK PEPPER, EARTH, WALNUT AND LEATHER.

This cigar was released in mid-2022, and it is packed in boxes of 7 cigars, each one placed in a coffin. It is dressed up with a golden band on the foot.

This box-pressed cigar delivers an intense smoke that doesn't stop getting richer and richer. A great evolution and a fulfilling finale make it a true stand-out.

It exhibits notes of earth, black pepper, and a mineral touch. Advancing in the smoke, nutmeg, piquant peaks, and undergrowth reach the palate as well. Walnut and leather join in the last part.

94

4

Joya de Nicaragua
Cinco Décadas
El Cumiche

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x140mm (5½")	20 $ - N/A €	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	N/A	N/A	N/A



CREAMY AND SMOOTH. LEATHER, HAZELNUT AND WHITE PEPPER.

This Cinco Décadas was released back in 2018 to celebrate the brand's 50th anniversary. The cigar name is chosen as an homage to the next generation of the company.

The cigars are sold in 10-count boxes, and they recently hit the market. The El Cumiche delivers a perfectly balanced, flavorful, and complex smoke.

It brings to the palate aromas of leather, herbs, and spices, with the white pepper standing out. Hazelnut and balsamic notes follow. In the finale, a rich black pepper flavor ends the smoke.

93

5

Padrón
Family Reserve
No.95 Natural

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	60x121mm (4¾")	29.5 $ - N/A €	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



BOLD AND INTENSE. EARTH, COFFEE AND WHITE PEPPER.

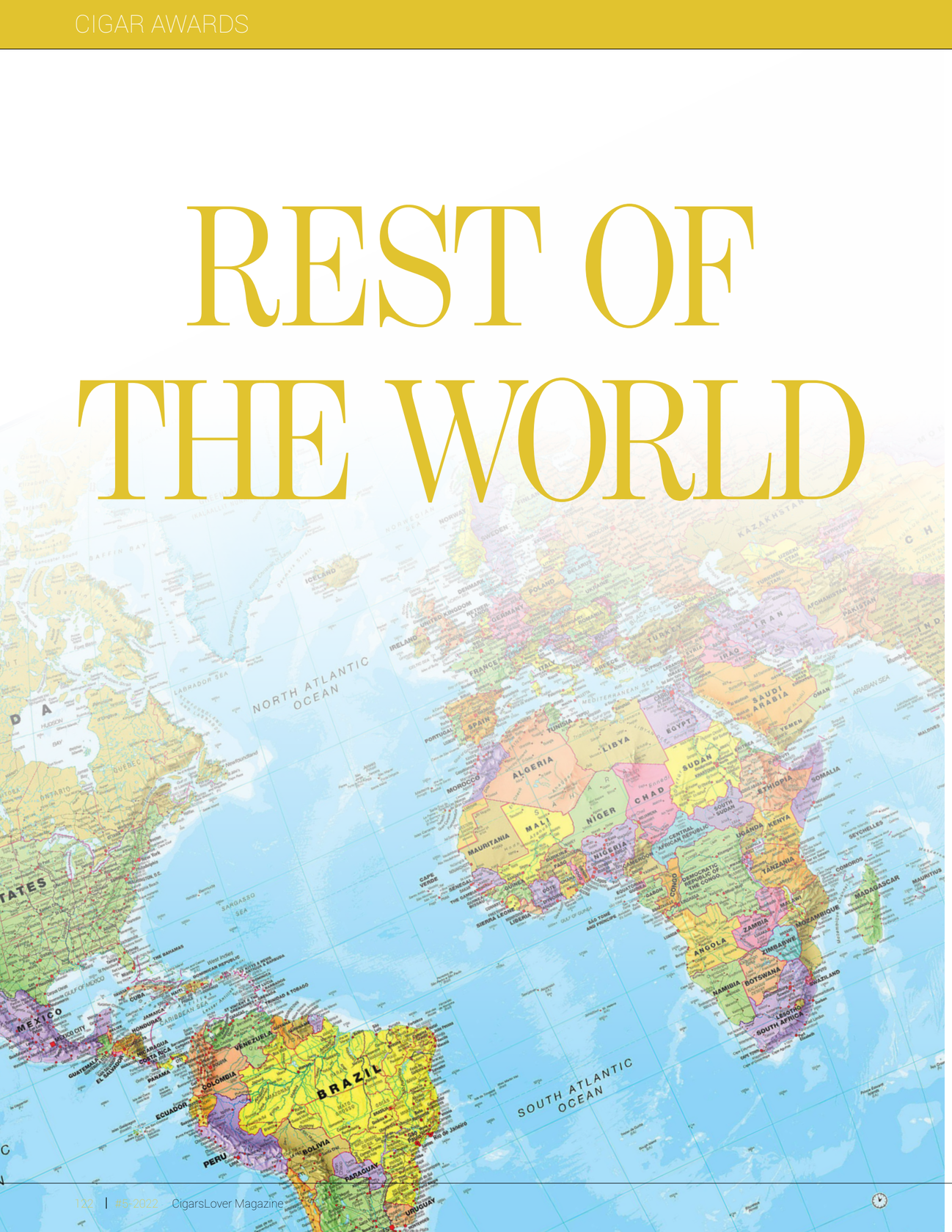
This new addition to the Padron Family Reserve celebrates what would have been the 95th birthday of José Orlando Padrón, the founder of the brand, born in 1926.

The cigar is generously filled and wrapped in a smooth wrapper leaf. As per tradition, it is a bold smoke, showing a nice structure and a rich flavor profile.

It delivers rich notes of white pepper, the main flavor of the smoke, earth, and leather, together with some hints of coffee beans. In the final part of the smoke, the flavor profile is enriched with toasted aromas.

92

REST OF THE WORLD



1 Graycliff

Boss of the Block

Cangri

DEEP AND STRUCTURED.
DARK CHOCOLATE, WILD PEPPER
AND COFFEE BEANS.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	52 x 152mm (6")	30 $ - N/A €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BAHAMAS	NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	COSTA RICA, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA

Boss of the Block is a collaborative project between the Graycliff Cigar Company and musical artist P La Cangri. The tobacco roots run deep in Cangri's Cuban background. Her grandmother taught her about tobacco and was a master cigar roller from Holguin, Cuba. Cangri has been a fan of the late Avelino Lara, former boss of Cohiba, and the Graycliff Cigars, which Lara created together with the Garzaroli family in the Bahamas.

Boss of the Block comes in four sizes, which go by the name Big Boss (Gordo), Bull (Toro), Cangri (Torpedo), and El Duro (Robusto). All cigars are sold in 24-count boxes, except for the Big Boss, which comes in 18-count boxes. It delivers a rich smoke with a remarkable aromatic depth and an evolution that is clearly perceptible throughout the smoke. The flavor profile is broad, intense, and balanced.

The first puffs release deep notes of dark chocolate, with a hint of white pepper in the background. The cigar is then enriched with vegetal and earthy nuances, together with exotic spices; the latter becomes the protagonist in the central part. The flavor profile changes one more time in the last third, where it turns to rich leather and coffee beans with vegetal nuances and a hint of dark chocolate. Wild peppers are present in the aftertaste and get richer in the finale.

92



2

Great Wall
Victory

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	53x152mm (6")	51 $ -50 €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CHINA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	INDONESIA	CHINA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



FLAVORFUL AND RICH. WOOD, NUTS, AND SPICES.

Great Wall Cigar was founded in 1918 in the city of Shifang, and is China's biggest cigar producer today. The history of growing tobacco in that city goes back over 400 years.

The cigar reveals a flavorful, bold, and rich, yet balanced, flavor profile. All this is paired with an impeccable construction.

Aromas of wood, hay, and nuts give way to the smoke and are joined by well-marked notes of leather and black pepper. The smoke itself is quite creamy. The black pepper notes become spicier towards the end, culminating in chili spice.

91

3

La Regenta
Gran Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	54x152mm (6")	13 $ - N/A €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CANARY ISLANDS	ECUADOR	MEXICO	BRAZIL, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



COMPLEX AND ROUND. WOOD, COFFEE, AND PEPPER.

The maker behind the La Regenta is the Dos Santos S.A.U. company from the Canary Islands. The family-owned business dates back to 1921 and was the first tobacco factory that shared the homonymous name of the cigars.

Although the strength is on the lighter side, the cigar is flavorful, complex, and smooth, paired with an interesting flavor profile.

A combination of wood and coffee starts off the Gran Toro, which is followed by aromas of hazelnut. An interesting sour cream note is added in the second half, together with pepper and herbs.

90

4

Casa 1910
Revolution Edition
Tierra Blanca

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	54x152mm (6")	16.5 $ - N/A €	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO



BALANCED, SMOOTH. LEATHER, EARTH, AND NUTS.

The Mexican brand Casa 1910 followed up the success of the Mexican Puro Cuchillo Parado with their sophomore release to their Revolutionary Edition with the Tierra Blanca. The Mexican San Andrés wrapper has been aged for five years.

A smooth and creamy smoke that is characterized by a broad flavor profile supported by a medium-bodied strength level.

This Mexican Puro opens with a creamy and leathery smoke that is followed by notes of earth and nuts, mainly hazelnut. Aromas of black pepper and balsamic herbs are added later on.

90

5

Drunk Chicken
Original
Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	38x191mm (7½")	11.5 $ - N/A €	1h 30min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	MEXICO	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA



BOLD AND COMPLEX. CHARRED OAK, PEPPER, AND LEATHER.

Drunk Chicken Cigars started its venture into the cigar industry in 2019, and the blend that started it all was this one, the Drunk Chicken Original, also known as the DCO.

The elegant Lancero size is a flavor bomb and reveals a bold and complex smoke with a sustained strength level from start to finish, while still being well-balanced.

Charred oak, black pepper, and leather are the undisputed prominent aromas throughout the smoke and are supported by a mix of aromas like earth, coffee, and cocoa along the way, with a hint of creamy sweetness.

90

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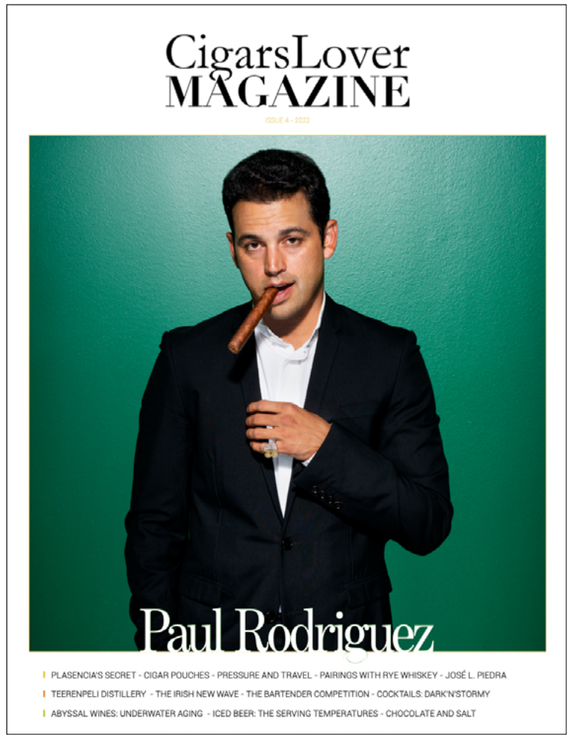
Stay tuned and don't miss any new CigarsLover Magazine issue.













INTERACTIVE



BEST 50 CIGARS *of the* YEAR

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
96	1. Olmec Claro Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$
95	2. My Father Le Bijou 1922 100 Años Corona Especial		44 x 165 mm (6½″)	●●●●	$$$
94	3. Davidoff Limited Edition 2022 Gran Toro		58 x 140 mm (5½″)	●●●●	$$$$$
	4. Muestra de Saka Bewitched		48 x 168 mm (6⅝″)	●●●●	$$$$
	5. Plasencia Cosecha 149 Azacualpa Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$
93	6. Joya de Nicaragua Cinco Décadas El Cumiche		52 x 140 mm (5½″)	●●●	$$$$
	7. Romeo y Julieta Linea de Oro Hidalgos		57 x 125 mm (4⅞″)	●●●	$$$$$
	8. Laura Chavin La Ligue des Divins Short Churchill		48 x 124 mm (4⅞″)	●●●	$$$$$
	9. Gran Habano 20th Ann. Capitolo I El Sueño		52x 127 mm (5″)	●●●●	$$$
	10. La Aurora Cameroon 1903 Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5″)	●●	$$
92	11. Ramon Allones Gigantes		49 x 194 mm (7⅝″)	●●●	$$$$
	12. Caldwell Anastasia Caspia		46 x 143 mm (5⅝″)	●●●	$$$$$
	13. Hiram & Solomon Revival		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$$
	14. Aladino Classic Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$
	15. Greycliff Boss of the Block Cangri		52 x 152 mm (6′)	●●●●	$$$$$
	16. Alec Bradley Double Broadleaf Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●●	$$
	17. Padron Family Reserve No. 95 Natural		60 x 121 mm (4¾″)	●●●●	$$$$$
	18. Diamond Crown Black Diamond Emerald		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$$$
91	19. Arturo Fuente Don Carlos No.2		55 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$
	20. Plasencia Alma Fuerte Colorado Claro Eduardo I		54 x 159 mm (6¼″)	●●●	$$$$$
	21. Great Wall Victory		53 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$$$
	22. Stolen Throne Call To Arms Corona		46 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$
	23. Adventura Barbarojas Invasion Robusto		52 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$$
	24. Lampert 1675 Edicion Azul Robusto		52 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$
	25. A.J. Fernandez Enclave Connecticut Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$
	26. Romeo y Julieta Wide Churchills		55 x 130 mm (5⅛″)	●●●	$$$$
	27. Montecristo Edmundo		52 x 135 mm (5⅜″)	●●●●	$$$$
	28. Joya de Nicaragua Antaño CT Lonsdale		44 x 168 mm (6⅝″)	●●●	$$
	29. La Flor Dominicana Solis		50 x 165 mm (6½″)	●●●	$$$
	30. Oscar Valladares 10 Anniversary Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$$
	31. Blind Man's Bluff Nicaragua Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$
90	32. Silencio Black Supremo		54 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$$
	33. E.P. Carrillo Allegiance Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$
	34. Todos Las Dias Thick Lonsdale Mas Fuerte		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$
	35. Undercrown 10 Corona Viva		43 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●●	$$
	36. Escobar Cigars Maduro Distinguidos Romeo		52 x 140mm (5½″)	●●●	$$$
	37. Villiger Nicaragua Coronita		43 x 133mm (5¼″)	●●●	$$
	38. Cumpay Lancero Limited Edition		38 x 178mm (7″)	●●●	$$$$
	39. La Regenta Toro		54 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$$
	40. Casa 1910 Revolution Edition Tierra Blanca		54 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$$$
	41. Partagas Shorts		42 x 110 mm (4⅜″)	●●●●	$$
	42. Aladino Cameroon Lonsdale		43 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$
	43. Tatuaje Havana VI Verocú Blue No.2		54 x 140 mm (5½″)	●●●	$$$
	44. Perdomo 10th Anniversary Maduro Toro		54 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$
	45. Aganorsa Leaf La Validacion Habano Gran Robusto		54 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$
	46. Drunk Chicken Original Lancero		38 x 191 mm (7½″)	●●●●	$$$
	47. Reinado Grand Apex Robusto Extra		52 x 140mm (5½″)	●●●●	$$$
	48. Warped Chinchalle		50 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$$
	49. Cavalier Genève Inner Circle Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●	$$$
	50. Rojas Street Tacos Carnitas Robusto Box-Press		52 x 127 mm (5″)	●●●	$$

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
96	1. Olmec Claro Toro		52 x 152 mm (6″)	●●●●	$$$

RATING ON A 100 POINTS SCALE

POSITION, BRAND, LINE AND CIGAR NAME

RING GAUGE AND LENGTH

- ● *LIGHT*
- ●● *LIGHT TO MEDIUM*
- ●●● *MEDIUM*
- ●●●● *MEDIUM TO FULL*
- ●●●●● *FULL*

PLACE WHERE THE CIGAR IS MADE

- *BAHAMAS*
- *CANARY I.*
- *CHINA*
- *CUBA*
- *DOMINICAN*
- *HONDURAS*
- *ITALY*
- *MEXICO*
- *NICARAGUA*
- *U.S.A.*

- $ *BELOW 7*
- $$ *FROM 7 TO 11*
- $$$ *FROM 11 TO 15*
- $$$$ *FROM 15 TO 20*
- $$$$$ *ABOVE 20*

Best BRANDS

Best Brand
Cuba

Romeo y Julieta is among the oldest brands in Cuba. The first historical traces date back to 1873 or 1875 when the Asturians Alvarez Rodriguez and Josè "Manin" Garcia Garcia officially registered the brand by choosing a name that, openly evoked Shakespeare's tragedy, conferred luxury and prestige. In the span of about twenty-five years, the company of Rodriguez and Garcia not only grew appreciably but managed to become a leader among Cuban manufacturers of the time.

In 1903, after an insignificant intermediate corporate transition, the brand and its factory were acquired by Josè Rodriguez Fernandez, nicknamed "Don Pepin", and his company Rodriguez, Arguelles y Cia, set up with three other partners. Only two years later, a new and mammoth factory was inaugurated, which could count on 1100 employees (750 of whom were rollers) and even on motor vehicles for the delivery of orders. Behind this enormous success was the wit and skills of Don Pepin, who brought about many innovations in the cigar sector, such as a new way of advertising, marketing research, and attention to the worldwide distribution network. Romeo y Julieta also owes its success to two factors: it was the brand that produced the most Figurado and Perfecto (sizes that were very "fashionable" between the 1940s and 1950s) and the massive and careful use of bands, used even with ad hoc customizations for the wealthiest customers. Currently, the brand is counted among the six global brands of Habanos S.A., and it is also the one that, together with Montecristo, holds the highest number of cigars sold. The portfolio is vast, and although offering similar cigars, it manages to satisfy even the most challenging and demanding palates while maintaining an important production constancy, considering the global sales volumes. Furthermore, the launch of the "Linea de Oro" gives new life to the brand with super premium cigars, able to offer smokes in line with the brand but with an even more refined flavor profile.



Best Brand
Honduras

Christian was born into the cigar industry and started working in the family business in 1995. Working next to a living legend, his father Julio R. Eiroa, Christian learned the craft from the best. Since his introduction into the industry more than 25 years ago, he has become a prominent fixture in the business.

After the Eiroa family sold Camacho and a short-lived retirement from the cigar industry, the CLE company (which stands for Christian Luis Eiroa) was launched in 2012. Since then, the brand has become a mainstay in the cigar world, as has Christian himself.

In 2020, Christian celebrated his 25th year in the industry and introduced the CLE 25th Anniversary for the occasion. Like most of his cigars, the 25th Anniversary is made in Honduras at the homonymous factory, and the Honduran puro has been a success.

2021 was an even busier year for the brand. At the PCA trade show, he introduced five new lines. Three of those (Asylum PCA Exclusive, Asylum Friday The 13th 2021, and Asylum 9) are for the Asylum brand, which he also makes. The other two are the Eiroa PCA Exclusive and the cryptic CLE Signature THT-EKE 03/17. Both of the releases focus on their family-grown Honduran Cameroon wrapper. All the delays that have been going on this year, thanks to COVID, have made it difficult for everybody in the industry. In Christian's case, he also had to deal with his warehouse in Miami being robbed. Despite all the hurdles, Christian has still managed to deliver without compromising the consistency that the company is known for. Not only are the new releases great smokes, but CLE has managed to place well in numerous blind tastings throughout the year. Christian has also managed to consistently rank in our Awards and, including this year, he has made the cut five times out of seven, a feat only achieved by a select few.

ALEC BRADLEY

Best Brand
Nicaragua

Pete Johnson, the founder of Tatuaje Cigars, went from Rock and Roll bass player to working retail (including the famous Grand Havana Room in Los Angeles) to creating the difficult to pronounce Tatuaje brand. Before the brand's inception in 2003, Pete had already looked for someone that could make his cigars, but nothing worked out until he had a chance encounter with José "Pepin" Garcia. The rest is history.

Tatuaje has grown from a small brand to a large company with a cult-like following over the years. Along the way, Pete, with the Garcias, has created an impressive portfolio with classic blends, such as the Selección de Cazador (Brown Label) and Havana VI (Red Label) Cabaiguan, Fausto, Black Label, and many more. He is also one of the catalysts behind the boutique craze and small-batch releases. Many of these releases are highly sought after, like the Monster series, the T110, the Pork Tenderloin, and many more.

Pete has always been one of the busier brands, and each year he announces numerous new products that range from new lines to line extensions and limited releases. This year, some of these cigars are the Cojonú 2021, a Toro Sampler, and the Monster Mash Sampler. He also brought back some of those highly sought after releases from the past, like the T110 (in three wrapper variations: Habano, Sumatra, and Broadleaf), the LLE Capa Especial (known in the past as the NHC Selección Limitada Capa Especial), and the Frank Redux 1 (re-release of the first Monster of the series). Both regular production and limited releases did well throughout the year in blind tastings and reviews, with the Cojonú 2021 also placing in the Top 5 of Nicaragua, underlining a fantastic year for the brand.

Pete's Tatuaje brand still manages to stay relevant and fresh but remains true to itself, and after almost twenty years in the business that is not easy to achieve.



Best Brand
Dominican Rep.

Ernesto Perez Carrillo, the man, is a living legend in the cigar industry. Ernesto Perez Carrillo, the brand, is relatively young. Ernesto joined his father in the famous El Credito factory in Miami, from whom he learned most of what he knew about cigars. He took over the factory once his father passed away in 1980. After some difficult years and stagnant sales, Ernesto Perez Carrillo struck gold when he created the La Gloria Cubana brand (the non-Cuban version). The brand grew from a "local" Miami cigar to one of the most sought-after cigars in the United States, and the brand's success skyrocketed in 1992. In 1999 the Perez-Carrillo family sold El Credito to Swedish Match/General Cigar. Ernesto worked for them until 2009. Then, he joined forces with his son Ernesto III and daughter Lissette and launched the E.P. Carrillo brand together. We had the pleasure of talking to him and his daughter earlier this year and get a peak into the brand's heart. The brand has been red hot for the last couple of years, and this year is no exception. Last year, they won the Award for Best Dominica cigar with the La Historia Parents. They carried over the momentum into 2022 and launched two new lines, the INCH Nicaragua and the Allegiance. Surprisingly enough, both lines are not made at Perez-Carrillo's La Alianza factory. Instead, the INCH Nicaragua is produced in collaboration with the Plasencia family, and the Allegiance is made at the Oliva Cigar Co. Both factories are located in Nicaragua. It is not the only collaboration with the Oliva Cigar Co. as the La Alianza factory is tasked with producing the new Cuba Aliados by Ernesto Perez-Carrillo limped edition for Oliva. Aside from that, they also released a limited edition Lonsdale size in the Encore line. With all this, the brand remained constant with its remaining portfolio, and they have done well throughout the year in numerous of our blind tastings. In November, the company also announced that they are expanding their Dominican production, which means we will see even more of E.P. Carrillo in the future.



Best Brand
Rest of the world

When cigar lovers talk about tobacco and different terroirs, many of the major countries are named. The more versed smoker might throw in some smaller countries from time to time, but one country that you don't hear about often, if at all, is China. The Great Wall Cigar company has set out to change that. The company was founded in 1918 by Wang Shuyan in Shifang. Back then, it was called the Yichuan Cigar Factory. Shifang is the hometown of tobacco cultivation and cigars in China and has a history of planting tobacco leaves for nearly 400 years. In 1958, Marshal He Long renamed the factory to what it is known today, the Great Wall Cigar Factory. Over the years, the Great Wall Cigar brand became the most famous and most sold cigars in the land and was also given to many foreign Leaders as a diplomatic gift, such as President Nixon, when he visited the country in 1972. Nowadays, Great Wall Cigar Factory has become the world's most extensive cigar production base, with an annual production capacity of an incredible 5 billion cigars. They also boast the largest cigar aging room in the world, also known as the "Asian Cigar Bank".

For the last couple of years, Great Wall Cigar has focused its attention on increasing their presents in the international market, and they have done so with great success. Products like the Great Wall Miracle and the Fusion Edition (a collaboration with Vega Fina Cigars) have done very well in our magazine. The Fusion Edition Piramides even placed fourth in the Awards last year in the Rest of the World category, not forgetting the Great Wall Victory, which made it into the Awards this year.

With how well their cigars have performed over the course of the past 12 months, it was only natural to award them with the Best Brand in this category, and we are sure that more awards will follow in the future if they keep it up.



Best BOUTIQUE cigars





HIRAM & SOLOMON
Revival

BALANCED AND COMPLEX.

Hiram & Solomon created the Revival blend for the MW Larry B. Thompson, Jr. Grand Master of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons for the state of North Carolina. In the first half, the flavor profile consists of mixed nuts, coffee, and pepper aromas. Cereal notes are added later on and joined by leather nuances toward the end.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x152mm (6")	92

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	$ 14 | € N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN. REP., U.S.A.



ADVENTURA
Barbarrojas Invasion Robusto

ROUND AND SMOOTH.

Adventura Cigars continues their maritime theme with a darker twist in their tales of ADV & McKay, with their newest release, called Barbarroja's Invasion. The Robusto reveals a balanced and smooth smoke with the flavor profile centering around dark aromas of earth, leather, and coffee. Balsamic and spicy notes are added later on.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x127mm (5")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
● ●●	50 min	$ 14.2 | € 14.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



LAMPERT
1675 Edición Azul Robusto

CREAMY AND BALANCED.

The man behind the brand is lawyer Dr. Stefan Lampert. After the inception of the company, the Edición Azul was the third line introduced by Lampert and the first one made in Nicaragua. It delivers milk chocolate and nutty notes, enriched by white pepper and a touch of ginger. In the second half, ripe fruit and leather. Vegetal hints.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	52x127mm (5")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	$ 10 | € 7.9

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, PERU



ESCOBAR CIGARS
Maduro Distinguidos Romeo

COMPLEX AND FLAVORFUL.

Escobar Cigars launched circa four years ago and have made many waves since. So much so that the famous Grammy award-winning recording artist "Nas" joined as a co-owner. The Double-Figurado starts out with aromas of pepper, earth, wood, and espresso. A herbal note is added in the second half, which turns balsamic towards the end.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	52x140 mm (5½")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 20min	$ 13.5 | € 15.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	INDONESIA	NICARAGUA



STOLEN THRONE
Call to Arms Corona

FLAVORFUL AND INTENSE.

Stolen Throne followed up their highly acclaimed Crook of the Crown line with their sophomore release with the Call to Arms to their regular production portfolio. 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.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	46x152mm (6")	91

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

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



CHATEAU DIADEM
Toro

DEEP AND EVOLVING.

Chateau Diadem is a new cigar brand, with the production located in Navarette, in the Dominican Republic. Among their cigars, we picked the Toro size. It delivers notes of precious wood, leather, and nuts, with a mix of white and green pepper in the background. Earth, walnut, and vegetal aromas are added in the second part.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x152mm (6")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 20min	$ 10 | € 10

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	NICARAGUA, DOMINICAN REP.

Matilde



THE ROYAL CIGAR COMPANY
YOUR PARTNER FOR PREMIUM CIGARS

RIMEDI CIARLATANI

CHOOSE WHO TO BELIEVE.

A MIRACULOUS LIE

Inspired to the miraculous and fraudolent 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

BEST BUY cigars

Over the last year, year and a half, we have seen an overall price increase in cigars throughout the boards, this also affected the budget segment. With price being the pivotal reason for this list and with the increase shifting the price range of them, we decided to change the cut of for the eligibility of under 6 $/€ to under 7 $/€.





TATUAJE
Havana VI Angeles

BALANCED AND FULL.

Tatuaje Cigars wallet-friendly Havana VI line has been a staple in the company's portfolio since 2006. It was the first line from Tatuaje produced in Nicaragua at the now-famous My Father factory. The Angeles opens with aromas of leather, earth, and pepper, followed by wood. The smoke is smooth, with a subtle sweetness present as well.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	42x118mm (4⅝")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	40min	6.75 $ - 5.6 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



LA ESTRELLA
Solar Robusto

COMPLEX AND ROUND.

The Scandinavian Tobacco Group followed up the La Estrella Polar, released in 2019, with the sister line, the La Estrella Solar, this year. Wood and nuts are the main combinations of flavors. Throughout the smoke, they are supported by pepper, earth, and coffee, with pleasantly bitter notes towards the end.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
HONDURAS	50x125mm (5")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	N/A $ - 3.4 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
INDONESIA	INDONESIA	COLUMBIA, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



CASA MAGNA
Liga F Petit Corona

INTENSE AND FULL.

The Casa Magna brand was launched in 2008. In 2021, the Quesada family, owners, and makers of the brand introduced the new Liga F line. The "F" stands for fuerte and is Spanish for strong. The spicy mix of black pepper and cinnamon are the prominent flavors throughout the smoke, and they are supported by coffee, leather, and wood.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	40x108mm (4¼")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	30min	5.8 $ - 5 N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.,	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



POR LARRAÑAGA
Montecarlos

SMOOTH AND CREAMY.

The history of the brand goes back to 1834 and was founded by Ignacio Larrañaga. The elegant Montecarlos (vitola de Galera Deliciosos) is a staple of the brand. Rich cappuccino notes, together with caramel and white pepper. Further into the smoke, nuances of earth and hazelnut are added, together with a vegetal aroma in the background.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
CUBA	35x159mm (6¼")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 20min	N/A $ - 5.5 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



GILBERT DE MONTSALVAT
Revolution Style Belicolissimo

BALANCED AND RICH.

Gilbert de Montsalvat, a fictional character, was created by Swiss entrepreneur Raymondo Bernasconi. The silhouette on the band is, in fact, a profile shot from Raymondo. It reveals notes of aged wood and black pepper, with leather hints. In some puffs, you can also perceive nuances of graphite. Balsamic hints appear in the final part.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x140mm (5½")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	1h 10min	N/A $ - 6.6 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	NICARAGUA



BARRIO VIEJO
Double Toro

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT.

The Barrio Viejo was created by the German distributor Wolfertz and released in 2019. Two additional sizes were added to the line in 2021, including the Double Toro. The profile is straightforward, dominated by black pepper aromas, followed by wood, earth, and leather. There is also a pleasant acidic component present.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
HONDURAS	55x152mm (6")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 20min	N/A $ - 3.5 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA

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