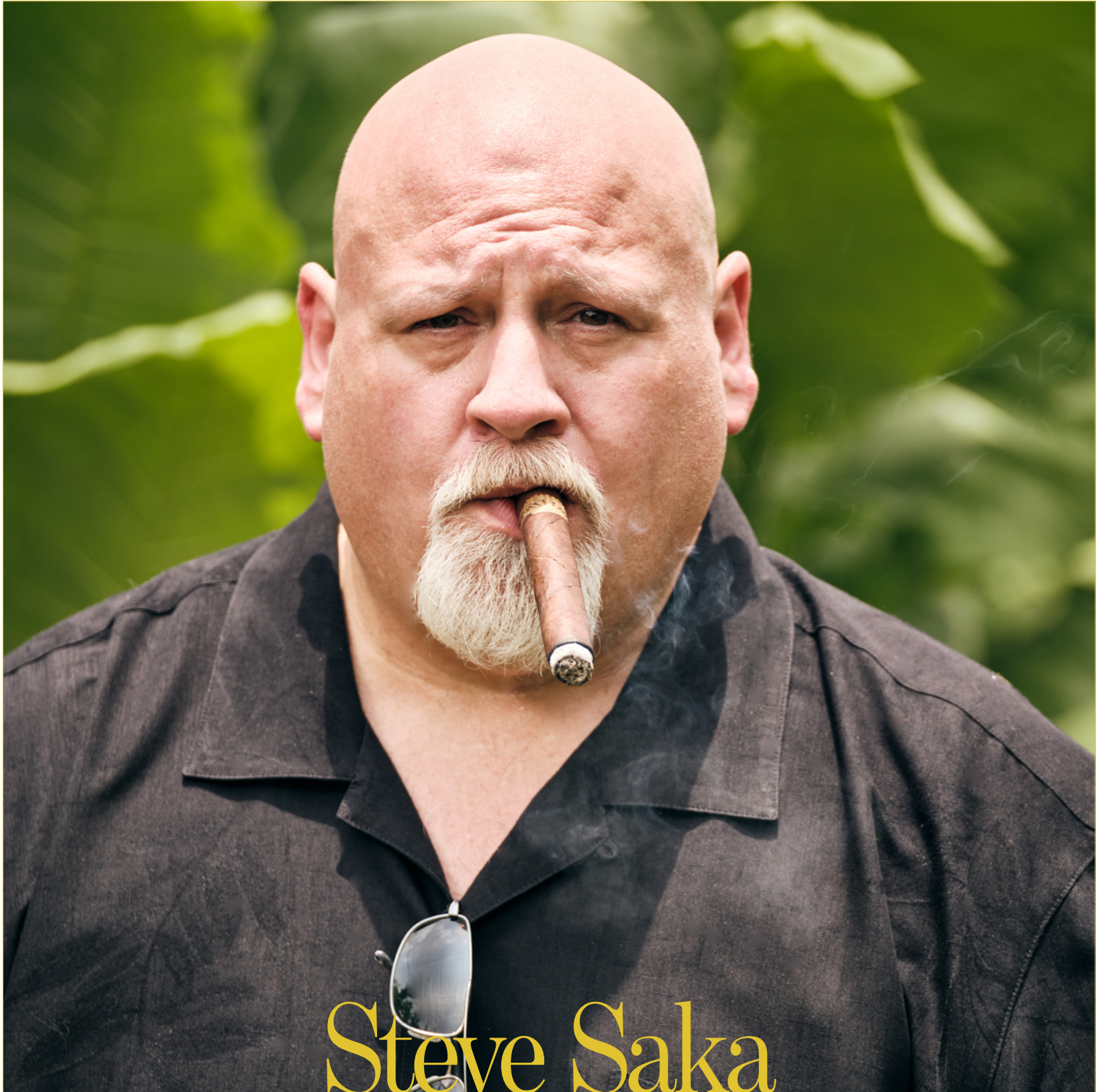


CigarsLover MAGAZINE

ISSUE 2 - 2023



- | GRAN HABANO CIGARS - THE NICOTINE - QUAI D'ORSAY: THE HISTORY - DOUBLE BINDER - PAIRINGS: WHEN TO SAY NO
- | DAD'S HAT DISTILLERY: THE INTERVIEW - WHITE RUM RENAISSANCE - LOW ALCOHOL MOCKTAIL - COCKTAILS: MOJITO
- | CANTABRIAN ANCHOVIES: ARE THEY TRULY THE BEST? - COFFEE TASTING: MIX IT, DON'T SWIRL IT!

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ART & GRAPHICS Renz A. Mauleon
PHOTOGRAPHY Mario Amelio
PHOTO EDITOR Renz A. Mauleon
DIGITAL DEVELOPER Nicholas Ding

AUTHORS Giuseppe Mitolo
John Jeremy
Michel Arlia
Nicola Ruggiero
Simone Poggi
Vincenzo Salvatore

COLLABORATORS Austin Crowe
Brent Moyer
Davide Pertino
Desiree Prieto
Jake Darwen
Nicola Cima
Riccardo Noya
Scott Sherer
Tobias Hüberli
Vincenzo Lopez
Vince Rubio

TRANSLATIONS Austin Crowe
Yongchao Chen
Minzhao Xie
Rachelle Mauleon

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| CIGARS TASTING PANEL | SPIRITS TASTING PANEL |
| Aaron Reddy | Ethan Smith |
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| Daniel Hardinger | Kaarel Kluge |
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| Giuseppe Mitolo | Michael Lamper |
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| Richard Frazier | Zac Mitchers |
| Ramon Bernard | |

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|------------------------|---|
| MARKETING & ADS: | CIGARISTA GMBH |
| office@cigarslover.com | Augiessenstrasse 13E, Widnau, Switzerland |
| +41 (78) 818 60 07 | CHE-239.774.579 |



Editor's thoughts

Three personalities in this second issue.

In this second issue of the year, we had the pleasure of having a talk with one of the characters that, in the past years, was able to establish a strong brand recognized worldwide: Steve Saka. In the 2022 Awards, the Muestra de Saka Bewitched, ended up in the 4th place in CigarsLover Magazine Best 50 Cigars of the Year list, with a solid 94 points. This cover article is followed by another interesting interview, one we had with George Rico, the man behind Gran Habano Cigars. The Gran Habano 20th Anniversario Capitulo I El Sueño was in 2022 Awards as well, placed 9th, with 93 points.

In this rich summer publication, we had the chance to sit down also with another producer, this time in the whiskey world: John Cooper, Co-Founder of Dad's Hat.

As usual, you will find 9 products in the paring section, followed by more than sixty cigars, whiskies, and rums blind tasted.

Enjoy the reading.

#refineyourtaste



CigarsLover MAGAZINE

Thank you for
TEN YEARS

CONTENTS



18



14



26



32

1

ON THE COVER

18

Steve Saka

4

Team

5

Editor's thoughts

10

CIGARS

14

Nicotine

26

Quai d'Orsay

32

Gran Habano

38

Double binder

40

Pairings

42

When to say no

46

Cigars & Spirits

52

SPIRITS

54

Dad's Hat Distillery

60

White Rum Renaissance

64

Mocktail

68

Cocktail: Mojito

70

TASTE

72

Cantabrian Anchovies

78

Mix it, don't swirl it!

80

BLIND TASTINGS

84

SPIRITS TASTING

86

Rum

94

Whisky

100

CIGAR TASTING

101

Lonsdales

106

Robustos

110

Toros

117

Torpedos

120

CREDITS



42



54



72

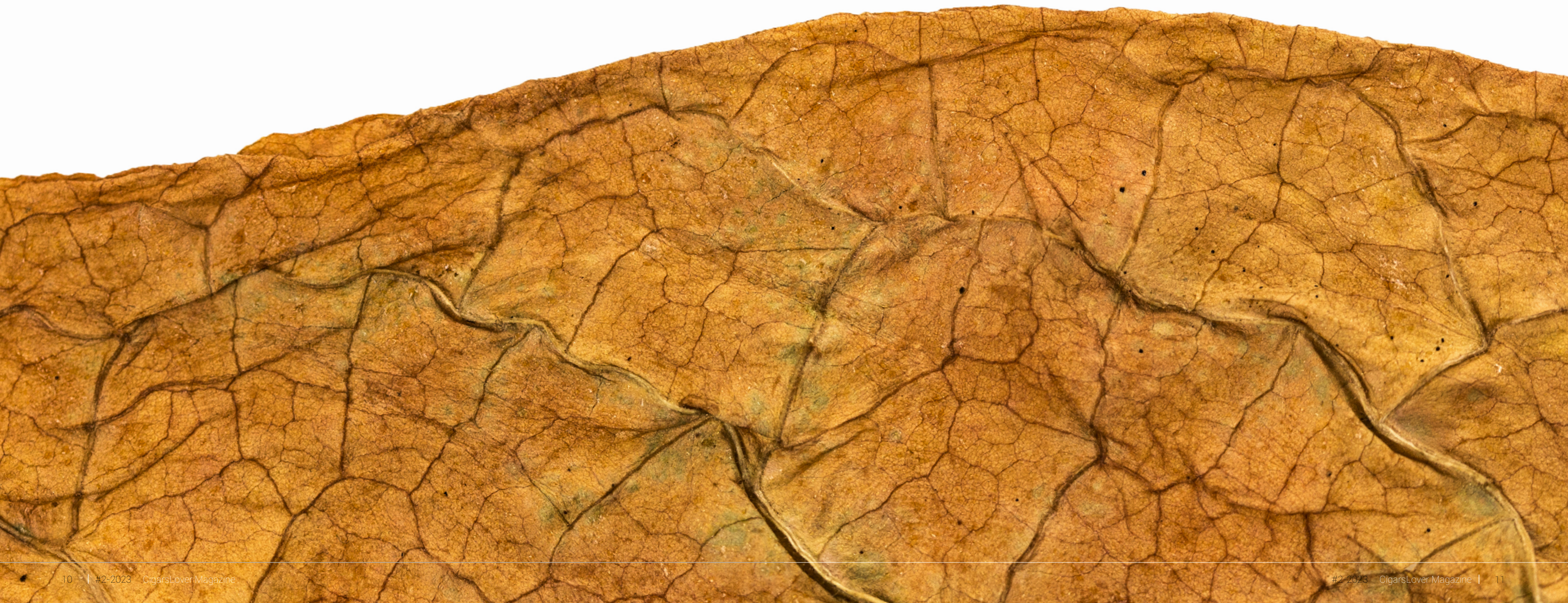


80

CIGARS

“Why pay \$100 on a therapy session when you can spend \$25 on a cigar? Whatever it is will come back; so what, smoke another one.”

Raul Julia



1965 - STARTING AGAIN FROM SCRATCH, DON SIXTO PLANTED
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Nicotine

The physiological effects of nicotine on the human body are the results of a chemical deception of the nervous system

by **Riccardo Noya**

In discussing nicotine, one always contemplates the risks and diseases it is associated with. Yet, nicotine's interaction with the body is much more complex and fascinating than one can imagine. After all, while we cannot scientifically ignore that nicotine is quite harmful, why would any aficionado experience an unexplainable pleasure in lighting a precious cigar?

From a chemical perspective, nicotine is a vegetal-based alkaloid which takes the name of the plant species from which we extract it: *Nicotiana Tabacum*. Tobacco plants synthesize nicotine in the roots and then distribute it to the leaves.

Yet, Mother Nature gave this feature to tobacco plants not for the smoker's delight, but as a poison, a means of defense against the bugs that might feast on the leaves. It is not by chance that we can make an insecticide agent out of tobacco plants (specifically from the *Nicotiana Rustica*). In fact, even other plants in the Solanaceae family like potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers synthesize nicotine in much lower concentrations. In other species, nicotine, even if present, is much less dangerous than other chemical components found in the plants; as in the case of the *Datura Stramonium*, a non-edible and highly poisonous plant.

Nicotine is quite a toxic substance, about 1mg/Kg is a sufficient dosage to kill an average adult subject. Such toxicity depends on its chemical structure, shared by many other natural poisons, that imitates the one of acetylcholine, a non-toxic substance normally present in our organism. Chemically speaking, nicotine is a neurotoxin. More precisely a parasymphomimetic toxin, a substance that imitates a neurotransmitter that can haywire the central and peripheral nervous systems. Of course, this circumstance cannot happen while enjoying a good cigar.

Yet, the nasty "nicotine kick" (you can find a special focus on Cigars Lover Magazine Winter 2018) is nothing but a mild and reversible nicotine intoxication. Once nicotine enters the body when we inhale smoke, it gets rapidly absorbed and, in few seconds, it reaches its two main target organs via the blood stream: the central and peripheral nervous systems. In these areas, nicotine can stimulate nervous cells due to its similarities with acetylcholine, one of the neurotransmitters that sends messages between the various nerve endings. This will allow specific cerebral areas to activate, causing numerous reactions inside our bodies.

From a biochemical standpoint, nicotine acts by binding with the cholinergic receptors localized in many different cerebral areas (cerebral cortex, thalamus, hypothalamus hippocampus, basal ganglia), but we also know the effects of nicotine on the so-called limbic system. The latter is located in the depths of our brain, it is one of the most ancient and primitive parts because it regulates those primary behaviors that allow us to stay alive. The limbic system is involved in the learning processes (as it is fundamental for keeping us concentrated), in emotional reactions, in instinctive behavioral answers, in short-term memory, in motivational and positive feedback mechanisms, in the sense of gratification and of pleasure.

Thus, nicotine stimulates with great intensity this neuronal area, also known as "reward system", that releases dopamine, another neurotransmitter. As widely known, the dopamine release provokes a sensation of satisfaction, relaxation, and pleasure. This explains why the smoker experiences great pleasure while smoking a cigar. By increasing the presence of dopamine in the brain, nicotine also determines an anti-depressive/euphoric and anxiolytic effect, which explains why lighting a cigar facilitates a nice mood for sociality and relationships.

Another organ targeted by nicotine is the so-called "vigilance center" (locus coeruleus), constituted by the nervous cells involved in sleep processes and alarm reactions, responsible for the state of vigilance and of some cognitive processes, of the concentration skills, of attention span and psychomotor performance. This is another reason that explains why many aficionados appreciate smoking a cigar during working activities (a name will suffice: Winston Churchill) or creative ones (here there would be too many names to drop).

Finally, nicotine influences other apparatuses too, particularly the digestive tract due to the activation of the autonomous nervous system. Its action stimulates intestinal motility and increases gastric and salivary secretion: it is not a case then if the majority of smokers define as "digestive" their post-prandial cigar.

Keeping in mind the most serious damages that can be caused by nicotine addiction, what we described here can be described as "kindly toxic" interactions between nicotine and the human body that for many smokers are among of the most beloved effects of tobacco.

SILENCIO

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IS IN THE DETAILS

DISCOVER THE WORLD'S
FINEST CIGARS



Steve Saka

"I am someone that has always focused on the moment and the tasks right in front of me".

by **Michel Arlia**

Six years have passed since our last conversation with Steve Saka, founder and owner of Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust. A lot has happened since then, so it was only fitting to catch up with everything in the Saka-verse.

The last time we spoke was a good while ago, back in 2017, to be exact. What has happened with you and DTT in the past six years?

Really? You want me to encapsulate six years into a single interview-worthy answer? I can already see how this is going to go... okay, where to begin? Introduced four additional core marcas, about a dozen exclusive ligas, most of which sell out in less than 24 hours, grown more than ten times in production, been honored with highest rated overall consensus brand for seven straight years, and Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust has arguably become one of the hottest cigar brands in the US market. I have also learned to make macramé plant hangers and embrace my inner Zen. Okay, those last two things aren't true.

You have your hand in every aspect of DTT. Which part has been the most difficult for you to adapt to?

Over the last three-plus decades, I have been blessed to have been in instrumental positions involving almost all the tasks associated within the premium handmade cigar industry from the field, pre-industry, factory, branding, marketing, strategy, distribution, and sales. While that experience is very helpful, it can also be a hindrance sometimes. I am my own worst enemy as I tend to stress out about every little detail since I am so familiar with every stage of the process. So my being a control freak is em-

bedded in the work product, but that also means I am almost always the bottleneck. I would love to be able to say this will change before I physically crash and burn, but I know that is unlikely.

Who has influenced you, and where do you take your inspiration from, cigar- or design-wise?

Everyone and everything, there is no succinct way to answer that, as I have been influenced by all of the best and some of the worst people and products in our industry over the past four decades. At this point, I am rarely influenced by anything. I am very secure in what I believe is "proper" and have a clarity of thought that is very unusual. This is one of the things that makes DTT unique, nothing is ever "focused grouped." I don't even solicit the opinions of my own factory or stateside teams regarding blends or brands. Basically, everyone sees and smokes the end product when I present it. So the blends and the designs are 100% my own taste and aesthetic. I got into cigars in the mid-80s, so I have always been drawn to classic Latin designs, but I also prefer simple, clean presentations – true luxury brands do not need to be gold-gilded or "doo-daded up." They need to be executed well to properly present the cigars, but ultimately the cigar needs to speak for itself as its quality will become self-evident to the smoker. As for the ligas and the style of puros, I have smoked in excess of 100,000 cigars and been instrumental in the production of tens of millions more. This experience has given me a very clear perspective on what I believe to be an exceptional cigar vs. a typical cigar from leaf selection, blending, construction, etc. Unlike most folks, I smoke a wide spectrum





of puros of various types from milder to very robust across many vitolas with regularity. My goal is to present a wide array of options of what I believe to be the best within each genre with the hope that smokers will find something with-in our portfolio that “sings” to them.

Mi Querida Black comes in one size so far, called Saka Khan. What is behind the name?

It stems from a nickname I was tagged with while enlisted in the US Navy in the 80s. On my last tour of duty, I became Junior Officer of the Deck Underway qualified on the USS Connable (FF-1056). Typically this is a qualification attained by recently commissioned Officers, but my Captain was gracious enough to let me stand these watches and qualify to conn the ship, which is very unusual for an enlisted Petty Officer. At the time, Chaka Khan was a hot music talent and as fate would have it my middle name is Temujin, which is the birth name of Genghis Khan. So the convergence of these three odd, unrelated facts led to the enlisted guys on the bridge tagging me with “SakaKhan”. They would sing it at me often. As far as nicknames go, not too shabby, so it seemed like a perfect name for the first release within the Black line, particularly given its generous 7.25x54 format. We are releasing a smaller 5 5/8 x 48 format this year dubbed “PapaSaka” which is another nickname I have been graced with for other reasons.

With one of your newer releases, under the Muestra de Saka banner, Krakatoa, you worked on the blend for three years. What was it about the blend that didn’t make you can it after a while and keep working on it? And is there such a thing as a timeline for blends for you to be over them?

There is never a set timeline. Sure I have desired time-frames, but in the end, the liga has to be right. In the case of Krakatoa, my goal was to craft a potent liga utilizing a particular new tripa variety, but the stumbling block was it being too peppery, in my opinion. While I love robust, full-bodied blends that treat my palate with spice, I do not like cigars that abuse your palate. For me, a strong cigar still needs to be smooth to allow the palate to enjoy the rich and robust nuances of the leaf rather than just be a pepper bomb. I understand there are smokers that crave these “face melters”, but I don’t, so it took me over three years to continue working the leaf so as to strike the perfect balance of explosive flavor and richness without destroying the palate.

With the StillWell Star, you have proven that nothing is impossible. Is there even such a thing as impossible when it comes to blends?

Yes, this question alone requires pages and pages of an answer to do it justice. In short, many cigar brands and blends over the years focus solely on the “spot” flavor and body of a particular liga without an understanding of the physics of the tobacco, how it burns together, how to properly work each variety, how to modify the construction to best serve the leaf or how to make the blend to provide a consistent smoking experience to the consumer. It is very easy to make something that works in a snapshot, but entirely a different animal to create something that can

be consistently great. A truly great cigar requires a fundamental understanding of the properties of the organic materials that are air-cured black tobaccos and utilizing them in the individually appropriate manner to execute a liga that is sustainable. Most brands remain on the market for only a couple of years at best these days; this is a product of the current consumer market, but also because very few cigars are worthy once their “newness” wanes.

You are very outspoken regarding the creation process of your blends. Which one is the most misunderstood, and why do you think that is?

Our Muestra de Saka line, by its very nature, is a confusing one. “Muestra” is the term we commonly use to denote sample blends in the factory, and the entire line is an on-going series of unique ligas. Often they are created around a particular leaf or style, in the case of the Exclusivo it employs only vintage filler tobaccos with a minimum of five years of aging making for a very elegant, milder style of cigar, whereas the Nacatamale is a “farm style” blend where only two tobaccos are employed, one for the wrapper and binder and another for the entire filler recipe. This is how most Habanos are crafted, and it was always a style that fascinated me, given most modern-day blends incorporate four to five tobaccos, some like our Sobremesa contain seven unique tobaccos. The end result however is a brand in which none of the cigars are connected in any way other than they are my own blending machinations for each. I love the brand as it is a blender’s playground for me, but it’s one that requires the consumer to understand each individually in order to best appreciate it.

In our last conversation, we also briefly touched on the boom of the late 90s and early 2000s. We are right in the middle of a new boom. What are the similarities and differences between the two booms, and how do you think this one is going to play out?

They are very different, in my opinion. The boom of the nineties was spurred by newly formed media attention to the world of handmade cigars, and it was fueled by fad and early flex culture. I am not saying that it was intrinsically bad as that boom breathed new life into our, at the time, dying industry. The end of that boom was brutal business-wise in the short term but ultimately lead to the revival of cigars. The C19 boom was more a product of many cigar smokers having more free time and more free money to spend on handmade cigars, but with a much better educated and experienced consumer base. So the factory and tobacco pressures were dramatic in the short term, but we were as an industry better prepared to provide much higher quality of cigars. Although the quality slipped for some manufacturers temporarily, the overall quality was far superior to the last boom. So the “come down” from this recent boom is not as dramatic and has reinforced the position of the quality brands. The result is more people now making additional time in their returning busier schedules to still make a point of slowing down a little more than they



did before Covid to enjoy a handmade cigar more regularly. This year will be a little rocky for some brands, particularly in the US, due to a temporary oversupply, but ultimately I believe as an industry, we will be in a stronger position in the near term.

Growth is essential for a company, especially in the beginning. What would be your goal, and when would you be content not to grow further?

There is an often repeated saying that as a business, if you are not growing, you are failing. I am not sure I subscribe to that philosophy entirely, but there is definitely some truth to it. For us, our growth has been pretty much organic given we do not have a nationwide sales force or really a marketing strategy beyond making the best cigars possible. I know this frustrates some of our patrons, particularly those in the International markets who wish there was greater availability, but this “organic” approach allows us to maintain the quality. Whenever I feel the sales are outpacing our ability to deliver, we just cease opening new accounts; in the last eight years, we have paused opening any additional accounts on five separate occasions to allow us at the field and factory level to catch up. Ultimately my growth goal remains the same, to produce superior cigars that generate enough sales to allow me to continue doing what I love while also operating a small company where all of our team members prosper. I want everyone at DTT to be well compensated and genuinely happy to be part of what we are doing.

Internationally your presence has grown over the years. Which country has surprised you the most in terms of cigar culture and consumption?

This question is going to get me in trouble, particularly with many of your readers. Bear with me, please. For me, so far, International has been an afterthought, and honestly, if it were not for Joya de Nicaragua, S.A. willingness to act as our International Distributor, there would be no distribution outside of the US today. DTT simply does not have the infrastructure currently to effectively support sales beyond our local market. Most folks forget that we are an artisan company. There are many places within the United States we have yet to expand into. We have no representation in the vast majority of the States, so the International market is really a bridge too far for us to directly support. We struggle to meet the demand locally and it is even more difficult for us to do so worldwide. Our internationally available portfolio is much smaller, but like with all things, as we grow, it will also grow. Beyond the basics, I cannot even begin to talk about the cigar market outside of the US, much less the cigar culture. I do know the current demand is off the charts, and that I am honored that so many foreign cigar smokers are interested in our small family company’s brands.

You are also approaching your 10th anniversary with Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust. What has been the best and

worse memory for you so far?

Let's start with the worst: FDA regulation of our industry. Everything about it sucks the joy and passion out of the industry I love from its creativity to its artistry. It is geared to treat cigars like a common commodity and to push out small, privately owned cigar makers like ourselves; to make everything a passionless SKU. Thankfully our courts have seen the injustice in our bureaucratic overlords and have forced a pause on the most insidious parts of the regulations, but it is only a pause – in short, regulators regulate, so it is only a matter of time before they take another stab at destroying our love for handmade cigars. As for the best, it is hearing from my fellow cigar smokers who have chosen one of our puros as their favorite. We put a tremendous amount of time and effort in our attempt to be among the best, so I am truly honored and personally touched when someone selects a DTT cigar to celebrate with or mark a special moment in their life.

Trends in the cigar world, as everywhere for that matter, are hard to predict, but if you were a betting man, which ones would you put your money on?

Trends come and go, but the one constant is that the market, over the long-term, always rewards you for consistent quality. Rarely does anyone succeed at doing something

trendy in any industry and in particular the cigar industry. Although we have become better at agricultural science and production techniques, we are essentially doing the same basic things that our forefathers were doing over a century ago. Tobacco, vitola, and branding preferences will always continue to evolve and often repeat, but we are not in a business of being revolutionary. We are in one with a rich history, and it is our responsibility to honor that tradition by producing cigars that allow people to relax, celebrate, share, and soothe in moments of reflection and solace.

We are ending the interview with the same question as last time. Where do you see yourself and DTT in the future?

Now you have me wondering what I said before. At the risk of contradicting myself, today I see myself and DTT ruling the entire Cigar Universe, slaying all my competitors without hesitation or remorse. Okay, that was a joke. Honestly, I do not know. I have never been someone with long-term aspirations or goals. I am someone that has always focused on the moment and the tasks right in front of me. At my age, I have learned to not overly concern myself with the future, and I believe that if you do your sincere best work in the present that the future always seems to take care of itself.



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Quai d'Orsay

One of the brands of Habanos S.A. that was created for French borders but has conquered the World for its elegant charm.

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

This is not the usual story of the birth of a brand. Behind the creation of Quai d'Orsay there is no famous person or a commemorative event and yet there is something much more important, the relationship between two nations. The relationship between Cuba and France is excellent. In fact, if many may know that this brand was specifically founded for French smokers and at the explicit request of the French importer. Not as well known is the story of its birth and the developments of an



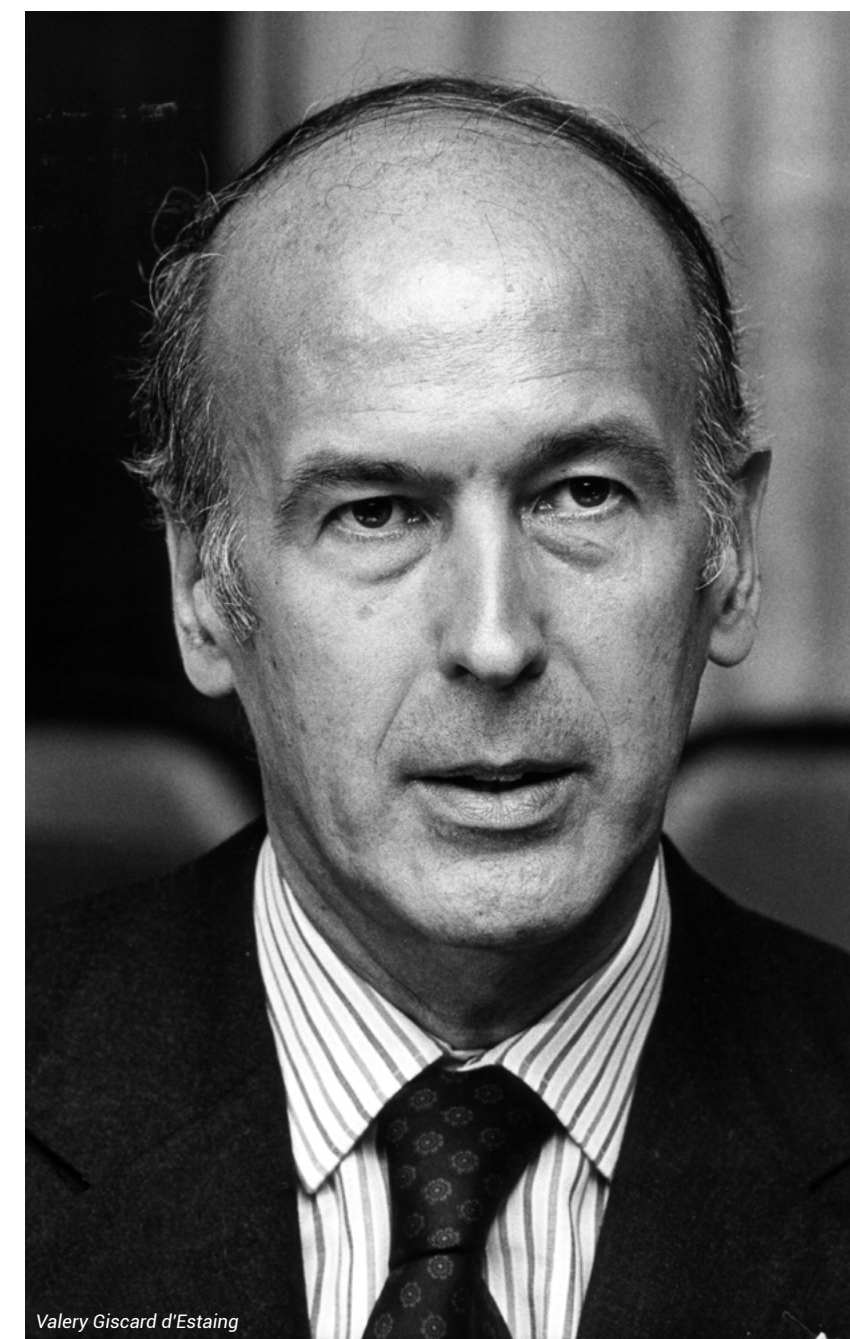
economic partnership that, even today, resonates. The idea of a cigar that would celebrate France and its areas of excellence (perfumes, champagne, haute couture, etc.) was launched in the early 70s, by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, French Minister of Economy and Finance, to the director of SEITA (Service d'Exploitation Industrielle des Tabacs et Allumettes). The minister's intention was to have a cigar that would underline the prestige of the country in diplomatic relations. The top management of SEITA (at the time directed by Jean Sandrin) promptly set to work on the project, which, after an initial screening for a machine-made cigar made in Bordeaux, opted for a product completely handmade by the experts in Cuba. They also needed a name that celebrated the spirit and elegance of France. At the time, SEITA's offices were located in one of the main streets of Paris, 53 Quai d'Orsay.

On the same street, at number 37, was also the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The name was immediately appreciated, on February 23, 1972, it was officially registered as a trademark in the French industrial registers.

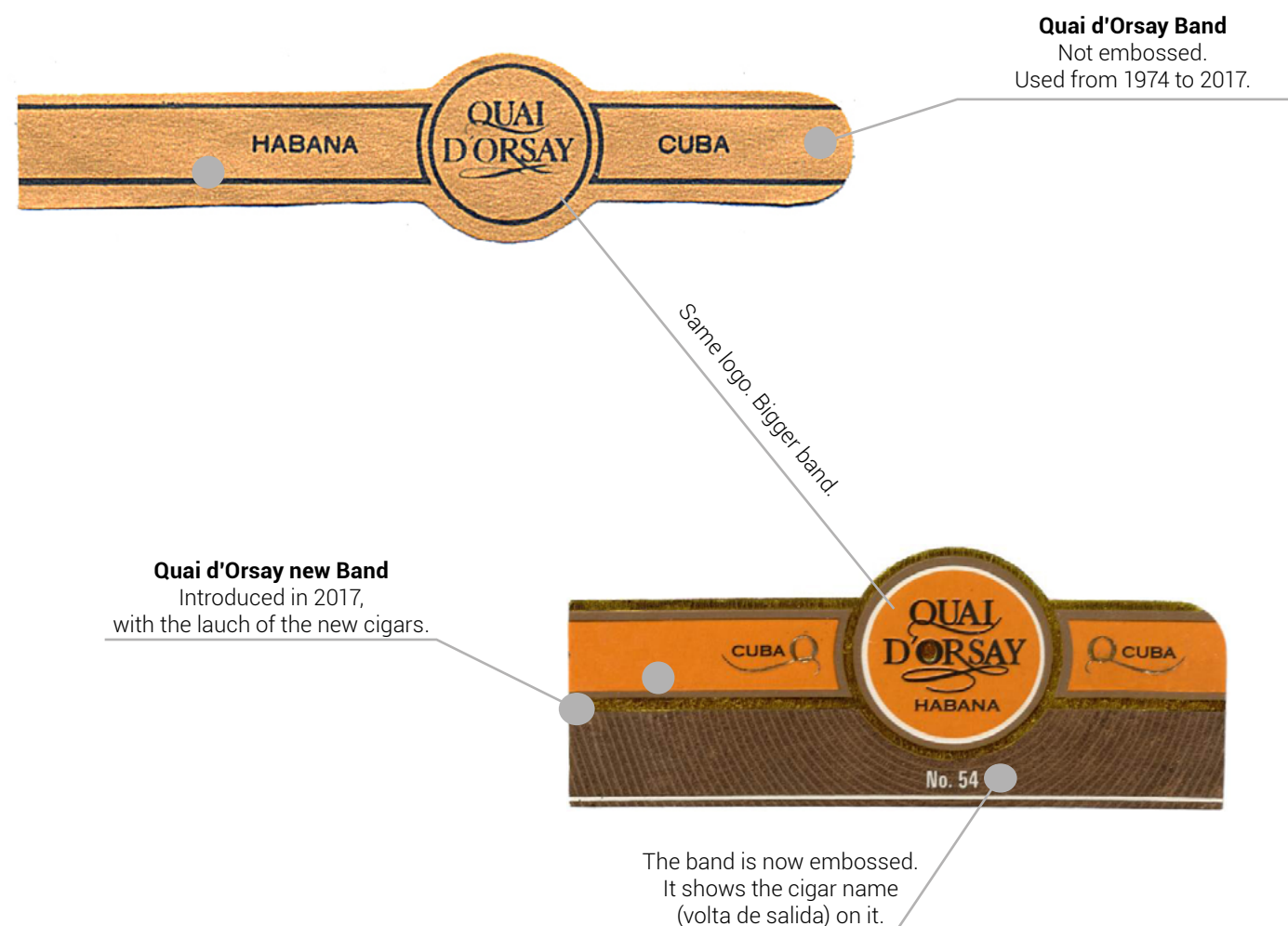
The choice of the name was the first decision to be made of strategic importance in marketing, but was only the very first part of a project in which no one else had ventured. In addition, SEITA's demands on Cubatabaco were not trivial: they wanted guarantees for the product that it was only to be sold in France and with very specific quality requirements. The French wanted a cigar that was not very strong, made with tobacco from the Vuelta Abajo, with a wrapper of light shade (rather rare at the time) made of Corojo variety developing moderate strength and, last but not least, that was torcido by hand. The first documentary evidence of this new project date back to the first half of 1972 and only on June 2, 1972 a first meeting took place between the delegations of SEITA and Cubatabaco. Six months later, a further meeting took place, this time focused on the presentation of a sample of twelve vitolas for examination. The French were rigorous and resolute on their positions and

requirements. In fact, only two sizes were selected and confirmed (a corona and a panetela), all the others were rejected. Among those rejected was a Laguito No. 3 considered too strong. At the time it was also requested that a format be produced that could be appreciated by French aficionados of the Cuban cigar and identifiable as truly French. They were looking for a product that conferred prestige for its qualities, a flagship for the brand, such as a Romeo y Julieta Churchill or Clemenceau (which took its nombre de salida from Georges Clemenceau, French Minister of War during the First World War). It took another eighteen months of work to arrive at the final selection of the five cigars that would create the brand's portfolio: Corona Claro (142 x 42, corona), Corona Claro Claro (142x42, corona), Panetela (33x178, ninfa), Gran Corona (155x42, corona grande) and, last but not least, the Imperiale (47x178, julieta no. 2). The two coronas were distinguished by the use of the wrapper which, as the name suggests, in the Claro Claro was particularly light colored. However, on the boxes of both references "Coronas" was the only designation imprinted on the main faces of the box and to understand which product it was without opening the package it was necessary to check the bottom of the box. If the words "clarissimo" were imprinted it was the Claro Claro; instead if it was imprinted "claro" it was the regular claro (stamp no longer affixed with the designation of the Corona Claro Claro, occurred in 1995).

After the international registration of the trademark with the World Intellectual Property Organization, which took place on February 27, 1973, and the definition of the sizes, the exclusive distribution contract was signed between Cubatabaco (represented by Alberto Ramos) and SEITA (Pierre Millet). It was agreed that the Cuban company became the owner of the Quai d'Orsay brand and recognized SEITA as the holder of exclusive rights for the sale of the related products in France, Monaco and in the Duty Free channels as well as the use of the products for diplomatic purposes. The initial purchase order was also made, set at 500,000 cigars for the first year with subsequent increases for the following years (in France, during the first half of the 70s, eight million cigars were sold per year). The contract, however, fixed the duration of the collaboration at five years.



Valéry Giscard d'Estaing



With all the preparations completed it seemed that everything was ready, but not quite. The official presentation was postponed because the first batch delivered, in addition to being fewer than the minimum number agreed, was also lacking the Imperial, cigar which, as mentioned, had to be the flagship of the brand. Therefore it was necessary to wait until October 1974 for the official presentation to the press. In the first days of November SEITA featured a seminar to present the brand and sizes to a small circle of tobacconists. In fact, by precise choice of the importer, the new "French" cigars were to be delivered only to tobacconists located in centers serving at least 200 thousand inhabitants, equipped with a walk-in humidor with an automatic humidification system and a showcase, exposed to the public, of at least two square meters.

Finally, the long-awaited cigars began to be distributed in stores, all in the same box. The French found themselves in the presence of a Semi Boite Nature of 25 units, equipped with a revolutionary novelty for the time: between the cigar heads and the box a housing had been created holding a humidifying stone. This gimmick, a few years later, turned out to be an unfortunate choice because it often over moistened cigars, with the effect of creating cracks in the capa and capote on

the foot or head. Another peculiarity of these packages was the inscription, engraved with fire, "Fabricacion exclusiva para Regie Francaise des Tabacs". Particularities aside, the new products were very well received by French consumers and also attracted the interest of aficionados all over the world.

The French idyll, however, began to show shadows as early as 1977, when Cubatabaco, before the expiration of the five-year contract, proposed to SEITA to expand the market to Switzerland and Belgium. After an initial negative response from the French, in 1978 a new agreement was signed between the parties, opening the markets of Switzerland and Belgium, with distribution rights reserved to SEITA, as well as Spain and England with rights held by Cubatabaco. A decade later, at the end of the 80s, on the wave of the success of the Mini Montecristo, the project of the "Mini Quai d'Orsay" was started, machine-made cigarillos that would be produced in France with the authorization of Cubatabaco. The project started in the early 90s in a historic building in Strasbourg, used as a factory, but the product never stood out and, in 2008, production was interrupted.

In the early 90s another hard blow further undermined the

prestige of the brand, this time swallowed up by much greater political repercussions. Cuba began to suffer the political and economic consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union and, as a result, of the increased weight of the embargo imposed by the United States. This political implication resulted in a drastic drop in Cuban cigar deliveries around the world. To overcome this, in 1994 France (also followed by the Spanish importer in this strategy) offered the Cuban government economic support of 24 million francs, which would have financed farmers and the tobacco sector. On the other hand, Cuba was asked to "repay" this loan with more generous and punctual cigar deliveries. This maneuver, though far-sighted, solved the problem only for the short term. After another decade of ups and downs (including the disposal in 1995 of the Corona Claro Claro), in 2005 Habanos S.A. decided to relaunch Quai d'Orsay worldwide and, for the occasion, it was decided to celebrate the event in Paris. However, this decision did not have the desired effect: in 2006 only 100,000 of the 300,000 cigars produced were sold. It is difficult to determine the reason for this flop. In retrospect it could be argued that the problems were affected by the choice not to renew the vitolaro (all five cigars launched in 1974 were confirmed, except for the Corona Claro Claro) nor the ligada. The brand

had remained anchored to its glorious past, while the world of cigars, as well as all product sectors, are affected by the fashions of the moment: not having inserted, for example, a short and generous cepo size, as was trendy in those years, or not having renewed the flavor could have negatively impacted the relaunch.

However, new life to the brand came from the Regional Editions sector. 2011 was the first year in which Quai d'Orsay cigars wore the second silver and red ring, with the Robusto Embajador (Magico, 52x115) exclusively for the French market and with the Superior (Robusto, 50x124) for the Asia Pacific region. With these two formats, the strategy of Habanos S.A. became clear: to relaunch the brand in much more "fashionable" formats (and it is no coincidence that the two vitolas chosen were very similar to each other), while maintaining a certain adherence to the historical aromatic profile of the brand. For the occasion, a slight graphic restyling was made, which returned a grittier image that left the charm of yesterday in the past: the background of the anilla turned from yellow to orange and the black characters of letters and contours were now more marked. Later, in 2014, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the brand, the Belicoso Royal (Petit

Belicoso, 52x125) was released, again for the French market and the following year it was the turn of the Robusto Diplomatico (Hermoso, No. 4, 48x127), also for France. In 2016, with the release of the Secreto Cubano (Minute, 40x110), again exclusively for France, a new restyling was made, curated by Wilfredo Hernandez, which still adorns the cigars of regular production to this day: the bottom of the anilla returned to yellow, but of a different color than the original, livelier, with the addition of a previously non-existent golden outline. Slight changes were also made to the inscription: the word "Habana" was added and the letter O of Orsay, from being empty, was filled with the same gold that adorns the outer edge of the band. Until 2022, eleven Quai d'Orsay regional editions have been released and it is no coincidence that six of these were exclusive to France.

Parallel to the new life provided by the regional editions, the brand's ordinary portfolio has undergone a substantial reorganization over the last twenty years. After the decommissioning of the Gran Corona (in 2006), the Panetela (2010) and the Imperiale (2015), in 2017, during the annual Festival del Habano, No. 50 (Series D No. 5, 50x110) and No. 54 (Edmundo Grueso, 54x135) were presented, alongside the only survivor of the original launch, the Corona Claro (which has retained only the name). The new cigars were presented to the world with a further novelty: they had the vitola de salida reported directly in anilla. Two years later, Quai d'Orsay landed in the field of limited editions with the Senadores (Hermoso No. 2, 48x157), also featuring one of the brand new packaging designed by Habanos. Finally, in October 2022, the release of the Quai d'Orsay Imperiales travel humididor was announced,

a revival of the 2015 discontinued size (Julieta no. 2) in an elegant, humidified, twenty-piece travel box. A return that implicitly certifies many statements. First of all, the centrality of a format that is very rare in Habanos S.A. portfolio. Furthermore, it confirms the importance that the brand still represents for Cuba, with particular attention to a cigar, the Imperiale, which was much loved by the aficionados of the time (together with the Panetela).

Analyzing Quai d'Orsay in terms of cigars it is difficult not to be influenced by the nostalgic vein of the aficionado, given that most of the cigars released at the time have now been discarded. As mentioned, the Imperiale and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Panetela, were the two flagship sizes of the brand, much appreciated also for their different smoking mechanics. Over the years the aromatic palette has changed enough, also to keep up with the times. However, there are still distinctive features well recognizable in the brand's (almost) fifty year history, such as strength, which spans from light to medium-light, and an aromatic spectrum that, starting from a background sweetness, usually returns herbaceous, floral, wood, sometimes even nutty aromas. Retracing the history of Quai d'Orsay it is possible to understand how this brand, born for the French market and at the explicit request of the importer, has had the opportunity to redeem itself, even emerging from very dark moments, becoming a real "niche brand" for aficionados all over the world. There is no doubt that in 2024, the year in which the fiftieth birthday of Quai d'Orsay will be celebrated, Habanos S.A. will want to celebrate it with a very exclusive product. They are confident that it will not be targeted exclusively for the French market.

LIST OF QUAID'ORSAY REGIONAL EDITIONS

- 2011 Robusto Embajador (52x115) - Francia
- 2011 Superiore (50x124) - Asia Pacifico
- 2014 Belicoso Royal (52x125) - Francia
- 2015 Robusto Diplomatico (48x127) - Francia
- 2016 Secreto Cubano (40x110), Francia
- 2019 Capitolio (54x164) - Francia
- 2020 Selection Royale (50x184) - Suiza
- 2021 Baalbeck (54x140) - Libano
- 2021 Clemenceau (47x178) - Francia
- 2021 Ambassadeur (44x90) - Andorra.
- 2022 Acuerdo (52x125) - Russia.



Gran Habano

*"Culture, Tradition, Quality,
and lots of great cigars."*

by Michel Arlia



Gran Habano has been in the business for over two decades, and they celebrated the occasion with a special release, the XX Aniversario Edición Limitada. We had a chat with George A. Rico where we talked about the past, present, and future of Gran Habano and much more.

Your family history dates back more than a century ago. Tell us about your family history with tobacco and your first memories of it.

My family has been growing tobacco and making cigars for multiple generations in Colombia and now in Central America after we immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1980s. My fondest memories as a child were seeing the tobacco fields and harvesting during the season in Santander, Colombia, during my vacation trips to visit my Nona.

When did you join the family business, and were you always keen on continuing the family legacy?

I joined my family's business in the late 90s, and I quickly fell in love with cigar making and envisioned us having a cigar brand. To me, cigar making and legacy are at the core of what it is to be a cigar maker. You cannot be one without thinking about what you are leaving the next generation, and that is the legacy I am working towards.

With your roots in Colombia, a country which doesn't get much attention for cigar tobacco, how is that country's cigar culture, and why didn't you open up the factory there?

Colombia's tobacco industry is as much a part of the new world as ever. That said, the security difficulties that have plagued the country for decades have made it impossible to open a factory there in the past. People will be surprised at how Colombia will make an impact in the years to come with its contributions to the premium tobacco leaf industry. I will be working hard to ensure that.

The look of your portfolio is unique, with a more vintage appearance with the core lines, which I assume are your father's creations, and a more modern look with the other brands, which I presume are your babies. How is the working dynamic between you two, especially regarding new blends?

The original core brands are my father's original blends, but I have always been the brand developer in our company since the beginning, and I feel they are all my babies. I have always loved being creative and focused on evolving while keeping within the medium. As time has progressed, I have overseen the blending, and I feel it has given our brand a more dynamic catalog of blends that I am sure will please every single cigar lover.

Some of your creations are under the S.T.K. banner. What does it stand for, and why?

The S.T.K. Stands for "Stay True Kid." It's a mantra I always say to myself to stay grounded. These are always the edgier and smaller projects I do every few years, pushing the boundaries of tradition and counterculture within the cigar industry.

You are a vertically integrated company, from farming to box making. You do it all. Which aspect of the company has evolved the most over the years?

The farming process has been the one that has evolved the most in the last 27 years of the company. When we started our factory, we were more dependent on tobacco leaf suppliers, but as time passed, we were able to bring our expertise in farming to allow us to farm for ourselves as well as become a supplier to the rest of the industry. This key part of our company has allowed us to secure the blend consistencies for years to come, ensuring our loyal fans the same product they deserve from us every time they try our product.

You also own multiple farms in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. How do you manage those farms in all those different countries? And how does the climate affect the result in each country?

With a great team! The ability for us to be able to work in so many different regions is and has always been a team effort. We wouldn't be able to do it without the great people that work for us day in and day out. The reason we are in so many different countries is because of each unique climate that each country has. This has given us a unique catalog of tobaccos that allows us to continue to blend after all these years.

Regarding how much work goes into it, what is the most-prized tobacco you have grown and the story behind it?

I think the most challenging and most prized tobacco we have grown has to be the original San Andres seed from Mexico grown on our farms in Nicaragua. It took many years to take to the soil conditions in Jalapa, Nicaragua. The story goes back to the beginning, in 2005, when I wanted to do a



project called the Gran Habano Azteca. Mexican tobacco was not considered of great quality at the time, but I felt it was so delicious and wanted to use it in our project. Things went well, and we were able to launch the brand as planned, but as more people started to experience how good Mexican tobacco tasted, it dried out what was already a small supply to begin with. That forced us to do what we do best, which is to do everything in-house. We started farming it ourselves, and after many years of failures and small yields, we were able to establish the seed to where we could harvest a yield to support a small production. Unfortunately for the Gran Habano Azteca, we were forced to stop production during those years. We have continued to farm the seed, and you can find it in our Gran Habano Corojo No.5 Maduro line. I am happy to say that for 2024 you will see the Gran Habano Azteca return as a limited production.

All types of tobacco from different countries are found in your blends, from Ecuador to the U.S.A. and even Peru. But there does not seem to be any Honduran-grown tobacco in any blends. Why is that?

As a small company starting out, it always comes down to financials. We always wanted to farm in Honduras, but lands were hard to come by, and we were at a disadvantage at the time. This is why we made it our goal to farm in Nicaragua because of its soil and climate conditions, and it made it more affordable for us to start there back then. We felt Nicaragua was a superior and more competitive country. Having come out of the civil war only a few years prior, it had good access to affordable labor and lands as well as water. This is why we established ourselves in the late 90s in Jalapa, Nicaragua. After many years things changed, and the political uncertainties in the country have prompted us to look back to Honduras. This is why we are now in the process of developing one of our farms in Honduras, where we will be able to farm 400 acres of tobacco soon to supply our factory's needs. So, in a future project, you will finally see Honduras as part of one of our blends. I look forward to it!

You recently had the 20th anniversary of the company and celebrated the occasion with a launch of a new blend. How much work has gone into getting to the final blend?



The 20th Aniversario was a great project, and I am ecstatic of how well it has been received. It was in the works for the better part of 5 years. From the time I set out to do the project, it took over 30 different blends to find the one that I felt was the one. I had a lot of fun with this project, especially for what it signifies!

Was there first the blend or the design concept of the 20th Aniversario clear in your head?

For me, in the beginning, it's always the concept. The idea of telling a story or transmitting a message through the art of making cigars comes first. Then the adventure of finding a cigar blend that matches the concept. It's the ordeal that I love, and I feel it gives essence to the brand in the end. I hope you see this in the 20th Aniversario.

What has been the most challenging part of the cigar business in the past twenty years to adapt to?

I think everyone that works or has worked in a family business at times can appreciate what I am about to say. My most challenging thing has been working with family. Working with family has been a blessing, but at the same time, it can be challenging to bridge the generational gap that can exist, particularly as our business has evolved. I think it all comes down to communication and who better to be your coworker than family?

With the first twenty years in the books, what can we expect from Gran Habano in the future?

Like I always like to say, Culture, Tradition, Quality, and lots of great cigars. A whole new generation is getting ready to join the ranks, and we will always continue to stick to what has made our family successful. There is much more to be done, and I look forward to writing the next chapter of Gran Habano. There are a lot of great projects in the works, and I hope everyone loves them as much as I love making them.



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Double Binder

*Why do some manufacturers use double binders?
What does it add to the cigar in terms of flavor?*

by **John Jeremy**

For several years, many producers have shared the blend details of the cigar, and, sometimes, reading the receta, the use of a double binder catches the eye. What is this all about?

The basic construction of a cigar involves using leaves for the filler, half of a leaf for the binder, and half a leaf for the wrapper. The binder, in particular, takes on a crucial mechanical function because it holds the filler together, rolling up around the filler leaves transversely to them. In fact, a cigar built only with binder and filler would be perfectly smokeable, at least from a mechanical point of view. Starting from this necessary premise, let's ask ourselves why some manufacturers use two binder leaves. The answer, in most cases, can be traced back to two distinct blending choices. In the first case, we could be

in the presence of a very particular, sophisticated blend, for which a given type of leaf is believed to be used as a binder which, however, is only available in size that is too small (by its nature or because that year's harvest was not generous enough). In this case, as can be guessed, the two half leaves used are of the same variety of tobacco. Another reason two half leaves are used for the binder is the precise decision of the master blender, who intends to give the smoke an appreciable transition as combustion progresses.

Regardless of the reasons why a double binder is chosen, the choice has repercussions on the moment of the bunching, during which the master blender and roller have to discuss how to arrange the leaves. By using two binders, the blend has more leaves and more moments

in which they all burn together, during which they all must burn simultaneously and in the same way, to avoid corrections in the burn. Also, in this case, deciding how much to overlap the two half leaves will be necessary. There are two ways to place the leaves: side by side with a slight overlap, and the second would be stacked with an offset to the left or the right with again a slight overlap of the leaves. This also depends on whether the cigar is rolled to the left or right.

All this makes it clear how using this construction technique is very demanding since it is crucial to avoid making any mistakes both in the blend design phase and in the actual creation of the cigars. It could also be for this reason that many of the best-known manufacturers (with high production volumes) choose to use a single binder.

BACK TO OUR ORIGINS

1947 **ALADINO** 1961
BY JRE TOBACCO



PAIRINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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



When to say no

*Better alone than with the wrong people.
Which products are best enjoyed alone.*

by **Simone Poggi**

As described in the opening notes of our pairings journey, a successful pairing should be one in which both products tend to integrate, refine and transform into a better experience when compared to independent tastings of each of them. On the other hand, when the two products, if tasted together, tend either to worsen their organoleptic qualities or one of the two is dominant over the other, we speak of a failed or unsuccessful pairing. This eventuality is also around the corner by selecting top-level tobaccos and extremely pleasant spirits.

However, we must also take into account those releases whose particularity is so strong and unique that, in our opinion, they are too complex to combine successfully. So far we have not succeeded, despite a truly enviable range of products available. So here is the review of our failed experiments; all those products that, although of a certain quality, have challenged our experience and capabilities, failing the most varied pairing opportunities we have tried.

First of all we can certainly count all the experimental whiskeys with a certain peat component, such as Octomore, Port Charlotte, the various releases of Kilkerran Heavily Peated. As reported in the article dedicated to combining cigars with peated spirits, there is peat and there is peat, when it's too much it's simply too much. By its nature the cigar releases aromas as a result of combustion, so there will always be a certain contribution to toasted and smoky

flavors. Even the most aromatic cigars will always have to deal with the heavy smoke of the distillate being transformed into stronger, more toasty ones. With such extreme spirits only cigars with a more pronounced body can even think of adding some contribution. Of course, some components of leather, dark cocoa, can certainly be added thanks to tobacco, but the result is really very powerful on the palate, perhaps overpowering for many.

A separate chapter has to be dedicated to whiskeys aged in red wine or sherry barrels that, when the casks proved to be intensely marking, gave rise to a tannic, vinous, astringent spirit, which already boasts a balance on the razor's edge. We have in mind products

such as the Reservoir Maison de Cuivre, the Kavalan Solist Oloroso Sherry, the Santis Dreifaltigkeit, some sulphurous and young Glenrothes. The bitterness of the union with tobacco, which also here must be thick and full-bodied to be minimally perceived, is a very complex risk, almost impossible to avoid. It is precisely for this reason that the simplicity of an ex-sherry casked whiskey, a very common proposal, can be considered a complex and difficult combination, much more than a distillate that has been influenced by a combination of barrels and thus more rounded and less extreme.

We do not want to exclude from this category releases that are based on a distillate whose aro-

matic notes do not feel particularly close to the most classic notes of the Caribbean cigar: distillates such as those from Floki and Penderyn. With their particular herbal and acidulous, almost vegetable notes, as well as of raw, naked, sharp and basic cereal, do not go well at all with the aromas of wood, nuts, cocoa (sweet or bitter). Even more so when you dare to explore particular oddities, such as the unique peatiness of the Floki Sheep Dung Smoked.

The perspective can be reversed, and we can also identify cigars that give their best on their own, even though taking into account that any tobacco, by the same nature of the combustion mentioned above, stresses the oral mucosa and therefore needs a drink, thus making a sip of a light fruitiness whiskey, maybe even a basic and entry-level product, at least pleasant and thirst-quenching.

One of the tobacco products that we would prefer to taste alone is a cigar with a considerable age; over time, tobacco often takes advantage of the integration among aromas in an often pleasant way, making the fruition softer and more enjoyable. However, the aromas, although more amalgamated, become less intense and more kaleidoscopic, therefore in our opinion less suitable for a further external addition. An invasive spirit could disturb this delicate balance achieved over the years, while it would find a more successful combination with the fresh, or at least aged only for 6-12 months cigar.





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PAIRING

Cigars
&
Spirits



ADVENTURA QUEEN'S PEARLS CORONA

STRUCTURED AND EVOLUTIVE.

| STRENGTH | PRICE |
|--------------------|--------------|
| ●●● | \$ 10 € 11 |
| DIMENSIONS | |
| 44 x 140 mm (5 ½") | |
| COUNTRY | |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | |

This Corona releases notes of sweet and precious wood with a sweet spiciness. In the second half, it turns on earth, white pepper, and more intense hints, which alternate with wood. Vegetable nuances are also perceptible. We use this excellent Dominican to check compatibility with two straight ryes not too dissimilar, one more honeyed and buttery, one just slightly more direct, yet full and satisfying.



PLASENCIA RES. ORGANICA PIRAMIDE

RICH. EARTHY AND BALSAMIC.

| STRENGTH | PRICE |
|--------------------|----------------|
| ●●● | \$ 10 € 10.5 |
| DIMENSIONS | |
| 52 x 158 mm (6 ¼") | |
| COUNTRY | |
| NICARAGUA | |

Made with organic tobacco, this cigar boasts earthy and creamy notes, peppery hints, plenty of cocoa and coffee scents, and a vibrant balsamic undertone. It is well-balanced and with a strength under control from the first to the last puff. We suggest pairing it with a luscious Dominican ron and a classic rhum from Martinique.



SILENCIO RED DOT CHURCHILL

GREAT SATISFACTION. LEATHER, WOOD AND SPICES.

| STRENGTH | PRICE |
|--------------------|---------------|
| ●●●● | \$ N/A € 11 |
| DIMENSIONS | |
| 49 x 178 mm (7") | |
| COUNTRY | |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | |

The Cameroon wrapper provides a complex and evolving profile, with a sophisticated sweetness. The main notes are of wood and earth with various spices (vanilla, cinnamon, pink pepper), which are combined with a finish of leather. The complex palette and the consistent strength are an ideal combination for two good Japanese blended whiskeys, one more woody but novel and one of rare creaminess.



PIKESVILLE

Straight Rye

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|--------------|-------------|-------|
| U.S.A. | 55% - 110 | \$\$ |
| | | |
| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
| Straight Rye | 6 Years Old | New |

Produced in Kentucky at Heaven Hill, it is a round, complex and buttery distillate, with honey, vanilla and pecans, enriched with vegetal hints of rosemary and thyme. The vegetal aromas have in the final a nuance of balsamic aromatic herbs. Excellent consistency of the two noses, especially in the buttery notes, with the side of aromatic herbs of the distillate that is grafted very well into the woody component, as if to recall refined French dishes rich in flavored butter. Very refined, yet gourmand. In the sip the balsamic herbs of the rye explode with flavor, recalling the white pepper and the earth of the cigar, stimulating salivation and giving a very long finish. Pairing very differently between nose and palate, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.



Pairing score

90

THE GOSPEL

Straight Rye

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Australia | 45% - 90 | \$ |
| | | |
| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
| Straight Rye | NAS | New |

Rye with a full flavor and medium body and intensity, delivers notes of rye (dark bread) and oak, with a distinct trait of quality vanilla. Intense hints of caramel are then added to marked spices, sweet allspice, cloves and pepper. There is a seductive note of woody resin that synthesizes the two products on the nose, with something like green and aromatic wood. On the palate the two woody characters are the masters, more seasoned, intertwining and playing with spices and earth. Well balanced and round, with the sweetness of vanilla and caramel that complements sapidity and cigar pepper. Clean and neat finish, of medium duration, dark bread and caramel.



Pairing score

89



KIRK & SWEENEY

Gran Reserva Superior

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|
| Dominican Republic | 40% - 80 | \$\$ |

| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
|-------------|---------------|------|
| Spanish Ron | 6/25 year old | - |

Kirk & Sweeney delved into the traditions of Caribbean rum-making and recovered the most classic recipe for its highest bottling in the core range: it's a blend of molasses rons aged between 6 and 25 years in American oak casks. The smooth and rounded profile of the ron matches the creamy and sweet mouthfeel of this organic cigar. The orange zest and salted caramel of the former perfectly support the notes of roasted nuts and honeyed almonds of the latter. The K&S's standard alcohol proof pairs up with the well-balanced strength of the Plasencia. Both products share interestingly similar wooden notes of vanilla, almond, caramel, and cocoa. The cigar's balsamic ending lands on the ron's finish of dried fruit and caramelized citrus.

Pairing score

91

J. BALLY

12 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Martinique | 45% - 90 | \$\$ |

| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
|----------------|-------------|------|
| Martinique AOC | 12 Year Old | - |

J. Bally's pyramidal bottle is one of the most iconic in the world. Aged like a cognac, Bally 12yo made into the history of rum thanks to its unique trait d'union character between Caribbean and French spirits. This Agricole rum offers a spicy and vegetal sip that wonderfully builds on the earthy and peppery structure of the Plasencia. Both develop plenty of citrusy notes that meet on multiple levels, both fresh and dried, mellow caramel and densely aromatic. The cigar is perhaps a bit creamier and more rounded than the rum, but its balsamic vein dovetails on the delicate visou of the Bally bringing to a perfect match the lingering sensations on the palate.

Pairing score

91



KAMIKI

Intense Wood

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Japan | 48% - 96 | \$\$ |

| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
|-------|-----|----------------|
| Blend | NAS | Japanese cedar |

Original, it boasts very specific, characteristic woody notes, with a varied mix of spices and some notes of tobacco, on caramel sweetness. Well-centered and integrated alcohol provides a fulfilling experience. The distinctive cedarwood aroma of the whisky finds its natural evolution in tobacco, which not only recalls it but also develops it, bringing it persuasively towards horizons of spices and leather. Very well integrated. On the palate the distillate is enhanced in its sweetness of spicy caramel, making the spicy notes of the cigar softer, balancing its character, with a very enjoyable result. The finish is quite long, with the return of the peppery part always round and enjoyable, satisfying.

Pairing score

91

AKKESHI

Blended Whisky Usui 2021

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|--------|
| Japan | 48% - 96 | \$\$\$ |

| TYPE | AGE | CASK |
|-------|-----|---------------------------|
| Blend | NAS | Mizunara, Sherry, Bourbon |

Complex, with notes of ripe fruit and vanilla, a citric element (orange and cedar) and an elegant, barely present herbaceous smoke. There are mineral tones well complemented by a remarkable creaminess that complete the profile. Pairing is well refined to the nose; the general delicacy is reminiscent of a precious wood, on which orange blossom and a splash of sea salt are grafted... a flowering coast. On the palate the tones are strengthened, with a generous grind of fresh and indomitable spices, which release a pleasantly savory side of the cigar, with a fresh appeal. A breath of caramel dilutes everything, enveloping the palate with elegance, with a return of the orange, not very sweet, with its essential oils. Very complex and elegant, sometimes elusive. The finish is always refined, perhaps just short-lived, almost hinted.

Pairing score

88



IT'S HOW WE PUT THEM TOGETHER
THAT SETS THEM APART

MANY THINGS MAKE OUR CIGARS EXQUISITELY DIFFERENT •
YET THEY CAN ALL BE HELD INSIDE A CIRCLE ONLY A FEW MILLIMETRES WIDE •
A SIMPLE WHITE BAND •



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SPIRITS

“My own experience has been that the tools I need for my trade are paper,
tobacco, food, and a little whisky.”

William Faulkner

Dad's Hat Distillery

*Tradition and talent
for the future of rye whiskey.*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**



Dad's Hat is a rye whiskey distillery located in Bristol, Pennsylvania. Established in 2006 by Hermann Mihalich, their original mission was to recover the traditional recipe for the Pennsylvania rye whiskey and reinvent it for the next millennium.

Delving into the 200 year-old American traditions of the Monongahela whiskey (after the local river), which was bashed by Prohibition and massified industrial whiskey, Mihalich, and the Dad's Hat family premiered a modern remake of this traditional rye whiskey, working in collaboration with local farmers and producers. They built a solid core range for the burgeoning international interest in rye whiskeys. Dad's Hat offers three main bottlings - the Pennsylvania Rye Whiskey, the 4yo Straight Rye Whiskey, and the Bottled in Bond Pennsylvania Straight Rye Whiskey - and several special cask finishings like the Vermouth and the Port Wine finishes.

We fell in love with your interpretation of rye whiskeys a couple of years ago. Thanks to you and to a small group of other brave distillers, we discovered the history of Monongahela and Pennsylvania Rye whiskeys and developed a real sweet tooth for its bold and intense taste. What was the major difficulty when you started Dad's Hat? Rye whiskey was already being rediscovered on the global market, but your approach was more historical.

We ran into several roadblocks when we started. Rye whiskey was being rediscovered as the key ingredient for classic cocktails, but the history of Pennsylvania Rye Whiskey had been forgotten and there were no whiskey distilleries in Pennsylvania. In order to remain Historically Accurate we made the decision to make our whiskey and not to source it. At first, we could not find a still manufacturer interested in a small whiskey distillery in Pennsylvania. We reached out to CARL, a German company with a long history making stills, and they connected us with the Arti-

san Distillery Program at Michigan State University. This connection helped us refine our process and resulted in the recipe we practice today. Finding a reliable source for clean and ripe rye grain was a challenge and that took a lot of trial and error. No one was using locally grown rye grain for anything other than cover crops or animal feed. We needed higher quality. We were introduced to our current supplier, Meadow Brook Farms in Riegelsville, PA and they proved to be a very reliable supplier of superior quality rye grain. We were anxious to see if our recipe would yield good aged whiskey and had to wait to see how we did. The good news is that the marketplace was ready for this whiskey and we were warmly received, winning Whiskey Advocates Craft Whiskey of the Year.

Can you tell us what makes Pennsylvania Rye Whiskey so interesting? Can you describe to us the process that led you to the final recipe for Dad's Hat rye whiskeys?

We founded Mountain Laurel Spirits in 2011 with the express intent of rediscovering and re-introducing Pennsylvania Style Rye Whiskey to the world. Pre-Prohibition, Pennsylvania was the largest producer of rye whiskey worldwide. Pennsylvania Rye used a unique Mash Bill of rye grain and a high percentage of malted grain. There was no corn or wheat in the mash. We did extensive research into historical mash bills and settled on 80% rye grain, 5 % malted rye and 15% malted barley. We also distill with a sweet mash.

How does your collaboration with local farmers and producers work? How important is it in whiskey-making to be able to follow and directly work with the sourcing of primary ingredients?

The quality of the grain is absolutely critical to the final whiskey. Unripened, over ripe, or musty grain all have an adverse effect on the final product. We have been fortuna-

te to develop a partnership with a local farm here in Bucks County, Pennsylvania that is our sole source for our Rye Grain. This farm has been in the same family since the early 1700s and they have fields of rye dedicated solely to Dad's Hat. The result is grain ripened to perfection, totally clean and specially stored just for us. This grain has a direct, positive impact on our rye whiskey, delivering the spice, grass and fruit that our whiskey is known for.

Do you think that much has changed since 2006 in the global whiskey market? What about rye whiskey?

The global whiskey market has exploded in the past 5 years with significantly more competition and whiskey styles available. Craft distillers like us continue to face new challenges as the "big distillers" continue to flex their marketing muscles. The Rye Whiskey market has gotten very crowded with the resurrection of old brands and new brands but it continues to grow in volume. Our unique flavor profile and true "Pre-Prohibition" style has enabled us to carve out a unique niche but every day is a new challenge.

What led Dad's Hat to experiment with peculiar cask finishings like vermouth and port wine? How does your creative process work regarding such experiments?

Being big fans of Scotch Whisky, Herman and I also developed a fondness for cask finishes. One day we were enjoying a Manhattan and a cigar and began a discussion of why no one was re-aging Rye Whiskey in Vermouth barrels. It just made too much sense not to try. On the spot, we called Quady winery, the winery responsible for the Vya Vermouth we were using in that Manhattan, and asked about sourcing some of their Vermouth and Port barrels. We could not have been happier with the result. The Vermouth Finish was incredible with all the rye spice and fruit notes you would expect. We did the same with the Port finish. The key factor for us is the concept of "Finish". We don't want our cask finished Rye Whiskey to taste like a glass of Port or Vermouth that somebody accidentally poured some whiskey into. You should taste the Rye Whiskey first and about half way back the Port or Vermouth should say hello. The "Finish" is where the Vermouth or Port flavor should be. At the end, back of the palette.



Has rye whiskey been benefitting from the rediscovery of local tastes and traditions, or has it more contributing to it?

The rediscovery of local has a large impact on us in terms of regional presence and sales. The history of Pennsylvania Style Ryes and the importance of that in Whiskey Culture and History has also benefitted us outside our local region. People want original, time honored and classic and will go out of their way to get it. Dad's Hat has achieved the status of defining what pre-Prohibition Pennsylvania Style Rye is supposed to be. As a result, people speak out our whiskies worldwide.

How has the rediscovery of rye whiskey impacted the development of modern mixology, in your opinion? How much do you get from the mixology world? Is there a risk that the peculiarities of your products get lost in cocktails and the like?

The original pre-prohibition "classic" cocktails were rye whiskey based. The continued growth of modern mixology and the changes in drinking habits from quantity to quality have a continued positive impact on the growth of Rye Whiskey sales. Our whiskies are built to enhance the flavor of a cocktail. Dad's Hat Ryes don't get lost in the mix. Further, our whiskies improve a cocktail, taste great over ice and are truly remarkable neat. Mixologists are embracing Dad's Hat Classic Rye Whiskey as the rye of choice for their cocktails and that's a trend we certainly hope continues.

Where do you see the rye whiskey market going? Where will be Dad's Hat in the future?

We anticipate the Rye Whiskey market will continue to grow and flourish both domestically in the USA as well as in international markets. Whiskey is appealing across a wide swath of demographics and people are willing to explore and get out of their "comfort zone" with both whiskey and cocktails. Authentic and historic is important to consumers and Dad's Hat meets that criteria. Our future is bright and we intend to stay true to who we are. We make authentic Pennsylvania Style Rye Whiskey, we do it well and that's all we do.

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White Rum Renaissance

The comeback of the original one.

by **Nicola Ruggiero**

Many rum lovers have been exclusively drinking dark aged rum for all of their lives. Even if there's nothing wrong with it, as aged rum is wonderful, wood and aging do add a lot to what can already be a fantastic distillate. In fact, white rum is not only the original style that made this spirit famous across the seas and ships over the course of centuries past, it is also a rum-making technique quite different from the dark and aged version. Today, beside the more anonymous mass-produced white rums from molasses, we are witnessing the worldwide renaissance of white rums from pure cane juice. After the rediscovery of the last romantic artisanal producers in the French Caribbean — Haiti's clairin in particular — white rum made a big comeback in the core range of old and new distilleries across the globe.

There are numerous reasons that make white rum a particularly apt distillate for our times. First, white rum answers the global call for more "authentic, genuine, and traditional" products, as it is integrally dependent on the quality of the raw ingredients as well as of the fermentation process. In short, white rum is all about the terroir, as we say these days with a term borrowed from the world of French wines, and the distilling techniques. White rum brings to the forefront the true quality of the sugar cane and of the fermentation wonders that transform its pure juice into a spirit. It also showcases the specificity of the soil and the effect of the climate in which sugar canes were born, raised, and harvested. As white rums cannot rely on the passing of time nor on the interaction with wood and oxygen the quality of the distillation has to do all the heavy lifting. For this reason, the best white rums are made via distillation in pot-stills, as it is the only way, albeit a very difficult and demanding one, to make the most out of such a special relationship between the sugar cane juice and its environment. Second, even if white rums from pure cane juice can be just as difficult and expensive to produce as dark aged rums, they are ready to be sold and consumed

immediately. They do not require any extra time, which is the major burden for all new distilleries opening worldwide, but especially in the US. Something similar has been happening in the whisky industry with the rediscovery of new makes, white dog, and moonshines, but white rums are a whole different matter. They are not simply an early and crude shell of the magic that will come. On the contrary, white rums offer everything that will be lost to the passing of years and the contact with oxygen and wood. It's not a matter of being better or worse, but of valorizing different expressions of the sugar cane juice. Finally, and counterintuitively, white rums can be much easier to read and appreciate for the larger public. On the contrary, the lack of productive standardization in the rum industry makes it difficult for the neophyte to understand the differences in aging and nature between French, Spanish, and English styles, as well as Solera or traditional aging,

blending and single barrel, and so on.

Haitian clairin is probably the most traditional white rum out there, and the style that usually is capable of surprising even the shrewdest rum aficionado. If, in the rest of the Caribbean, there are currently about 50 distilleries left, in Haiti there are over 500 artisanal clairin producers that fuel their centuries-old pot stills with bagasse, the dried pulp left over from the sugar cane

fermentation, perfectly closing the sustainability cycle. Clairins are crystal clear intense and spicy spirits showcasing all the strengths and qualities of white rums with their note of funky visou, citrus and tropical fruit, fresh spices, drooling sapidity, balsamic and resinous hints. About ten years ago, Verlier's mastermind, Luca Gargano, fell in love with clairin and decided to launch a whole new series of Velier bottlings. Gargano focused on the best producers that relied on organic agriculture, handpicked harvesting, wild yeast fermentation, and traditional distilling. In this way, Velier not only paved the way for Clairin to become Haiti's first, and foremost, Slow Food Presidium. Furthermore the curiosity sparked by their new bottlings led the global world of rum to question their neglect of white rums. Another high-quality production is the rum blanc agricole from the

French Antilles, like Martinique and Guadeloupe. These white rums can be quite a surprise, combining the Agricole rum's famous rustic elegance with the neatness and freshness of the unaged clear spirits: aromatically bold and intense, rich in visou and luscious herbal notes, with plenty of peppery and spicy hints. In the area, we can name producers such as Depaz, Damoiseau, Clément, Père Labat, Montbello, Bielle, but there are many other old and new names venturing in top level white rums now that the market asks for more and more.

Moreover, white rum is not just a Caribbean affair. One cannot underestimate the distilleries in the Indian and Pacific Oceans anymore. These white rums come in very diverse styles, often offered by brave new distilleries in modern interpretations that try to move past the traditional English vs Spanish vs French triptych. From the Mauritius to Tahiti, from Thailand to Japan, white rum is swiftly conquering places and traditions that had never considered working with sugar cane juice, until they fell in love with its distinctive essentiality.

Finally, at the global forefront of the countries with more new rum distilleries specializing in white rums we find the United States. How so? Finally doing away with a century of relegation to cocktails, many new US distilleries are bottling white rums that are completely changing the way American consumers are familiar with considering these spirits. American-made craft white rums are the buzzword in every rum aficionado's ear: among the most surprising we can name Kohana Agricole rum from Hawaii, Owney's New York City Rum, and Privateer New England White Rum, but they are just the tip of the iceberg.

While dark rums as well as spiced rums continue to dominate the market, it seems that white rums are about to change things. For once we are eager to discover the surprising and enticing ways in which white rums will evolve in taste and aroma across the world.





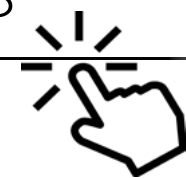
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Mocktail

The new orientation of drinking zero or little alcohol content, while safeguarding the aesthetics of the classic cocktail.

by **Nicola Ruggiero**

The mixology world moving according to the fashions and trends of the moment is, by now, a consolidated circumstance over time. Yet, this sector is intrinsically linked to alcohol.

In recent times, the new trend of mixed drinks with very low or even zero alcohol is gaining ground. These are the so-called low-alcohol drinks, a natural step towards a way of drinking that is more attentive to satisfying the demand of those consumers who want to combine well-being and health without sacrificing flavor. Unlike the classic "non-alcoholic cocktail," the new trend introduces a series of products specifically created for mixing to the market. Non-alcoholic cocktails are born primarily as an alternative to alcoholic drinks, offering a valid alternative to those who do not consume alcohol or those who prefer to drink more consciously or healthily. Whether it's a well-known cocktail or one created on purpose, low-alcohol drinks are becoming a trend, to the point that bartenders from all over the world have begun to present them as offerings on drink lists. Currently, the universe of low-alcohol cocktails and, above all, mocktails (zero alcohol drinks) is growing rapidly, to the point of developing new and increasingly innovative techniques and recipes.



The etymology of the term mocktail derives from the union of mock (deception in English) and cocktail. The word indicates a drink that, despite having an alcoholic appearance in terms of aesthetics and taste, can be consumed by teetotalers or those who prefer not to drink alcohol in the particular moment. Mocktails are original and alcohol-free mixes, the fruit of the bartender's creativity, typically obtained by replacing the alcoholic part with ginger ale, lemonade, or simply sparkling or coconut water. However, nothing can give way to banality. In fact, these drinks often expertly use "homemade" extracts, juices, tinctures, and bitters as they were fine distillates. There are even detoxifying, energizing, or slimming variants around, made using various fruit types.

Given this undeniable trend, even the leading companies in distribution have moved in the wake of this success, incorporating this new trend, and its consequential demand, by responding with new products. The recent launch by Dia-geo, one of the giants in the spirits sector, is a non-alcoholic version of the famous Gordon's gin; obtained using the same botanicals as the alcoholic drink but with immersion in simple water and subsequently distilled. Bacardi has also started the production of alcohol-free beverages, announcing a constant growth forecast for the coming months by virtue of the change in consumer habits. We also point out the less known, but no less important products such as Italicus (a bergamot liqueur produced by the Italian company of the same name) the "Dry London Spirit," which contains all the characteristics of gin without its alcohol content. We also mention Lyre's Apéritif Rosso, which, thanks to the addition of tonic water, becomes an excellent non-alcoholic Americano. All products are chosen by those who do not want to drink alcohol because they have to drive, by religious faith, or simply to respect "Dry January." (The established Anglo-Saxon tradition of abstaining from alcohol for one month of the year). The mocktail or the "moderate" drink is expanding, and producers are aligning with current demand. On the other hand, it is more difficult to predict how long this trend will last over time.



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Mojito

“A cocktail with charm and popularity that never fades, as well as the prestige of another great representative of Cuba: the cigar.”

by **Davide Pertino**

Although the notoriety of cocktails is constantly updated given the impact that fashions have on it, there are few diehard drinks that never go out of fashion. Real evergreens known by all, even by the most extremist abstainers, which enjoy a safe place in the Olympus of all mixology preparations. Among these, without concerns of denial, there is the Mojito.

The Mojito is a drink of confirmed Cuban origin, known by all, especially among the aficionados who find in it a worthy cousin to combine with the consumption of a puro. With reference to its birth, the most consolidated history refers to Hemingway and a very famous bar in La Havana. Yet, before this "year zero" there is a part of history dating even longer back in time, to be found in the sixteenth century on board the ships that sailed in the seas of

the Caribbean. Sir Francis Drake, the first Englishman to circumnavigate the world, a privateer and a politician in his homeland, for decades tried to besiege Havana. According to legend around 1500 when "El Draque" (a name given by local sailors) tasted for the first time, in a local tavern, in the Isla de la Juventud, the aguardiente (burning water) an ante litteram rum mixed with lime, brown sugar, and mint. That mixture was named Draque or Draquecito in honor of the navigator Francis Drake. From that moment on, there are no further references to contemporary history. However it is possible to reconstruct a profile of this cocktail by deepening the knowledge of the ingredients and of the name itself.

Among the historical and never changed nor modified ingredients there is lime, a rich in vitamin C the main ele-

ment used to fight scurvy, a disease linked to the lack of this vitamin, suffered, above all, by navigators. There is no reason to doubt that in that first mix drunk by Sir Drake there was any. Another constant ingredient, and typical of Isla Grande, is mint and not just any mint but the hierba buena (Mentha Spicata) a native Cuban botanical variety, with a sparkling and extremely pungent scent.

Then there is the name, on which the sources refer to different stories: some legends recall the mojo, a Cuban seasoning based on garlic and citrus fruits or to the same African term that would indicate a spell, others refer to the local term mojadito which means "wet". This is the story or legend linked to one of the most famous drinks ever.

Yet if it had been called otherwise, it would have been just as successful. This is due to a boost in popularity conferred by events of more recent history and to two names: Ernest Hemingway and the Bodeguita del Medio de La Habana. The latter was a place particularly loved by most intellectuals of the twentieth century, who loved to sip this drink with a unique and refreshing taste. If we had frequented that place, over the years, we could have met Ava Gardner, Pablo Neruda, Nat King Cole, Mohammed Ali, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the good Hemingway. So let's go back to the famous writer, a regular customer of the place, who, armed with a cigar and a notebook, loved to spend the warm Cuban evenings sipping the famous Caribbean drink. To tell the truth, Hemingway used to go to El Floridita too, another local bar, as remarked by his phrase "My mojito in La Bodeguita, My daiquiri in El Floridita", still present today in a painting that is proudly displayed inside the bar. A phrase that, despite hanging on a wall, has shown all its dynamism, projecting this cocktail into the Olympus of world mixing in every point of the globe!

And finally we come to the real protagonist. The preparation of this drink is simple, but as with all simple things, there are precautions to keep and mistakes to avoid. The first mistake is the use of crushed ice: cube ice is always to be preferred because the dilution is less and the cooling is faster. The second mistake is to crush the mint leaves, lime and sugar: a huge mistake, because with this action you will release the essential oils of the lime that will make the drink bitter and not even the sugar will save it (sugar, as a flavor enhancer, will only emphasize the bitterness, without correcting it). The third mistake is to use raw cane sugar because it takes longer to dissolve in lime juice. The last mistake to avoid is the use of tonic water instead of the classic soda: the tonic is spicy so it will unbalance the drink.

The mojito is the most famous easy-drinking cocktail: fresh, thirst-quenching, fragrant, with that acidic touch that cancels thirst and burning mouths. For these characteristics it is a fairly multifaceted cocktail in combinations with cigars, so you just have to try and try again the most satisfying pairing. But always with a mojito!

INGREDIENTS

- 5 cl of Cuban white rum
- 2 cl lime juice (better if squeezed at the moment)
- 3 teaspoons (approx.) white cane sugar
- 10/15 leaves of hierba buena (or mint)
- Sparkling water or soda

GLASS

Preferable and most widely used is a tall tumbler.

PREPARATION

Put in the glass sugar, lime juice, carbonated water (or soda) and, with the help of a teaspoon, dissolve the sugar. Only then add the mint leaves, rum and mix, from bottom to top. After mixing all the ingredients, add ice and a last drop of carbonated water. Garnish with a sprig of mint and a slice of lime.

ADVICE

In addition to not incurring the errors described, pay attention to the actual dissolution of sugar, since everything must be amalgamated to create a fresh drink with an unmistakable taste. On the basic recipe, you can play on the rum used and its proportions, for example using half white rum and half dark.

TASTE

"Life is uncertain. Eat dessert first."

Ernestine Ulmer





Cantabrian Anchovies

*The excellence of the commoner seafaring tradition is conquering the most refined palates.
As a result of this notoriety, does it correspond to true culinary excellence?*

by **Vincenzo Lopez**

Cetara, Trapani, Palinuro, Collioure are the names of small coastal towns on the Italian and French Mediterranean coast. Unknown to many but not to tourism and food operators. They are common names, which evoke very little even in our daily lives.

Yet, if the name of Cantabrian is mentioned, it will open a mental gap that will immediately remind you of anew food fashion; anchovies. Thus, the place-product association means that the most known, appreciated, the most succulent, and the most famous anchovies in the world are precisely those caught in the Bay of Biscay, without even knowing one of the maritime cities present on that stretch of Spanish coast. Yet, as is well known, unity is strength, and the Spaniards have been far-sighted in this by making an inexpensive and extremely traditional product excellent.

Ennobling it to the point of bringing it to tables all over the world and making its cost acceptable..

As a result of this success an insidious question must be asked: are they truly the pinnacle of the anchovie? It's all true, the Anchovies of the Cantabrian Sea are really delicious. They differ substantially from other regions producing anchovies for the percentage of fat present in the meat, for their increased size and extraordinary consistency, all made "commercial" by the technical contribution of a Sicilian, but let's proceed in order.

The Cantabrian anchovies are fished as soon as winter ends, at the verge of fresh spring, in order to enjoy a fatty product of doubled proportions. The sea of the northern coast of Spain is famous for being extremely cold and this

leads the anchovies to be in constant movement and develop lines of surface fat necessary for survival. Historically, these anchovies were brought to full attention thanks to the work of Giovanni Vella Scatagliota from Trapani, an Italian resident in Sicily. He was sent to Santoña Region Cantabria to seek new frontiers of fish for commercial expansions. When he arrived there, he found himself in front of a decidedly unexpected show: the "pursein" fishing technique, traditional and similar to that used in Sicily for the capture of tuna, which was bringing to shore tons and tons of anchovies of considerable quality and size.

Let's try to imagine what Mr. Scatagliota was faced with coming from countries with a very long seafaring tradition. Faced with the characteristics of this fish, fat and decidedly bigger than he had seen before. Scatagliota decided to work with the techniques already used in Italy: preserve the fish in extra virgin olive oil after the traditional and at the time honored method of preservation; salting. It is superfluous to add that Mr. Vella Scatagliota remained in Spain after he met a beautiful local woman who convinced him to put down roots in Iberian land. Ultimately her allure strongly contributed, in this way, to create what would become a "brand", which today we know as Cantabrian Anchovies. Even today these anchovies are processed by hand, one by one, in the initial phase of deboning. This is entrusted to women who, with their marked skill and meticulousness, take care of each fish to the point of making them a niche, expensive food, and at the same time guaranteeing their tradition. The next phase is the salting for a time varying from 2 to 6 months (or even more, depending on the recipes of the different companies present on the market), some producers even allow their salt aging to reach 12 months of maturation. This practice, in addition to making the product long-lasting, gives the meat a unique, intense, distinctive character.

Therefore, having defined why the Cantabrian anchovies are so famous and succulent, one may wonder if all the other producing regions are inferior or not worthy of being mentioned. First, it is necessary to point out (and give credit) that the Spaniards have been considerate and careful in supporting federations and denominations of controlled originto maintain the excellence and exclusivity of their native product. In reality it would not be absolutely correct to compare products with different characteristics, even in their nature. The and French anchovies, for example, are not far behind in quality, but they are different products. In fact, a smaller and less fatty fish is processed because the Mediterranean waters are warmer than the Atlantic. The end result between the two products is certainly different, but it would not be wise to define one better than the other.

In Cantabrian anchovies the potential lies in the consistency of the meat, which must meet precise texture characteristics, it must be thick and fleshy. This gives a product that shines even just accompanied by a slice of toast and butter. However, in practice they should be combined with foods and ingredients that only consist in a mere frame. In Spanish cuisine, for example, Cantabrian anchovies are widely used in tapas, enriching a simple tortilla or rolling it into a cylinder of goat cheese then sprinkled with paprika dulce.





A wonderful combination is a cube of focaccia toasted on each side in a pan, with butter flavored with herbs of Provence spread on top and a fillet of anchovy.

Mediterranean anchovies, on the other hand, have a decidedly softer consistency with a more decisive and pungent character. Traditionally, in addition to extra virgin olive oil, Mediterranean spices are used for preservation. The French anchovy, mainly fished in the Eastern Pyrenees in the Occitan Region. Although they are also marketed with traditional Spanish and Italian methods, they are distinguished by subtle differences in primary preparation. First, as soon as they are caught they are selected in the boat and then macerated in salt without being deboned: this favors the self-generation of a brine very similar to the Garum of the ancient Romans. After three months of brine (a little more or less, depending on the recipe) they will be sorted and deboned\ once again ; painstaking and careful work. After this operation they will be placed in oil in a jar or arranged in wicker weft and coarse salt in the typical wooden tubs intended for market sales. These anchovies more distinctly saline and "arrogant" in palatal terms, unlike the Spanish, find their best use in salads and bakeries with multi-grain flours. Try them with thin slices of baked beetroots, fresh goat cheese, walnuts and fig jam, assisted by a crispy baguette.

The Italian anchovy, unlike the others, is perfect for the backbone of the cuisine of the bel paese: small, tender and not fatty with interesting delicate notes. The processing

also varies between brine, salting, and adding extra virgin olive oil. The latter is sometimes enriched, by culinary tradition, with spices, tubers and aromatic herbs, giving the taste shining inspirations. This anchovy can find different culinary uses, but it can also be considered a true pillar of Italian cuisine, namely the soffritto; abasic preparation that gives salinity and character with extreme simplicity, a perfect exemplification of Mediterranean cuisine. Another peculiarity of Italian gastronomy, the colatura di alicie, a process deriving from the pressing of anchovies put in barrels with salt. This process was understood and practiced by the friars of Campania (in the region of Naples) who worked the anchovy since the dawn of time. Before today's mechanical presses and steel tanks, the anchovies were placed in barrels with salt and pressed with weights immediately after the deboning process. Initially the tail band (the longitudinal iron band that maintains the assembly of the barrel) was loosened, to facilitate the escape of excess slurry from pressing and salting. This step was short-lived before the realization that that liquid, properly filtered, was very appreciated as a condiment or ingredient for sauces and soups, still sought after and esteemed.

In conclusion, we cannot fail to celebrate the excellence of the Cantabrian anchovies. However, it is the task of the attentive gourmand to try and fully enjoy the anchovies of all origins. With trial and error one can become attached to one more than the other but by sampling the different types of anchovies become part of a superlative seafaring mastery.



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所有威士忌飲用者經常進行類型分析，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，必須加深，能夠揭示許多有用的新聞：標籤。

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

雙重標本應將其名字命名為威士忌。這同樣適用於美國世界。相反，在蘇格蘭和世界其他地方，我們說沒有“e”的威士忌：在蘇格蘭的情況下，名稱擴大了蘇格蘭威士忌。單一蘇格蘭威士忌保證了單一產區的威士忌。一些蘇格蘭威士忌增加了生產區域，以強調產品的地域性。

“歲月”之後經常出現由數字與產品的最低年齡有關。最低年齡因為，與標籤不同桶的混合相比，最低年齡的數字是相同的。示例：使用三個桶分別釀造8年、12年和26年的威士忌將顯示“8

歲”字樣，無論舊桶的氧化情況如何。公沒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，沒有標籤或假單產品，它們是所謂的NAS（無年齡聲明），其中適用於最低2年威士忌的標籤上。製片人選擇不說年齡，這仍然是未知的：它將由我們的口味來驗證味道和愉快。

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取出。然而，無參數也可以使用用水稀釋的威士忌的較低等級的木桶強度威士忌。



忌，特別是如果前者有一定的年齡。 “Un Chilled”這個詞讓我們知道威士忌沒有被冷過，以及“沒有顏色”，或“沒有添加劑”（或其他類似的詞），解釋說沒有添加劑修正顏色。

在特殊情況下，我們還可以找到所用桶的指示，甚至是桶桶的數量。這通常及經常發生在非常有趣的酒中，這是在獨立裝瓶商的情況下使其成為驕傲的來源。此外，我們可以找到Single Cask或Single Barrel這兩種詞，它們強調了它的獨特性。另一個詞是Small Batch，它仍然是一個更廣泛的概念：您可以從兩個桶中取出，但仍比前邊小一些（舉一個例子：獨立和Cadenhead的裝瓶者為自己的小批量結合了兩個或三個桶，而奧

本小還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，它總是發現精神和龍族的日期，特別是當涉及單個桶時：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造廠，不同釀造廠，甚至麥芽（大麥）和小麥（穀物）桶的麥芽威士忌混合在一起。在第一種情況下，沒有標籤（這是一種常見做法）。在第二種情況下，我們將有混合麥芽威士忌（多年混合標稱為Vatted），第三種情況是混合威士忌（或混合），還有Grain Whiskies：這個術語是指所有種類的威士忌。在美國世界，我們經常遇到與威士忌相關的各種詞語，或者使用的唯一一類：黑麥威士忌，玉米威士忌。

我們試圖解釋各種標籤上最常見的術語：沒有絕對的紀律，每個製造商都有自己的事情。但是，遵循這些指導原則，在這個廣闊而獨特的世界中，您將更容易自說。

Mix it, don't swirl it!

*When a spoon makes
a huge difference*

by **Luca Cominelli**

Let's start by saying an obvious thing. If you're thinking, "I always mix my coffee right after having poured some sugar," the following lines are not - yet- for you.

We are considering an espresso, made with fine beans and enjoyed not in one single shot but savored in a few sips, and yes, without sugar.

Often, especially at the bar, many people take the cup and do a couple of swirls to mix the coffee. Let's start by clarifying one thing: when the coffee is brewed, at the beginning, the concentration of the oils (the ones responsible for the aromas you perceive) is higher. The more water passes through the ground coffee, the fewer oils remain, and the less rich and thick the coffee becomes. This means that a perfectly extracted coffee will be more concentrated at the bottom of the cup than at the top.

If you go ahead and drink it, you will taste a sort of bland first sip, followed by richer ones, until you reach the bottom, which will probably be unbalanced due to a distinct acidity.

It is possible to check this by using a refractometer, which allows you to monitor the TDS (Total Dissolved Solids). By taking different samples, bottom and top from a cup of espresso, you are going to notice a difference in the values the refractometer is going to show. This difference is higher in case you don't touch the coffee at all, less high if you swirl it, and similar if you are going to mix it well.

This is why the spoon comes in handy. This is why it is always close to the cup, no matter the sugar. By giving the coffee a nice mix, the oils will get distributed in a more homogeneous way, and you will be in the position to taste the best out of your espresso from the first sip.



Blind Tasting

84 **SPIRITS**

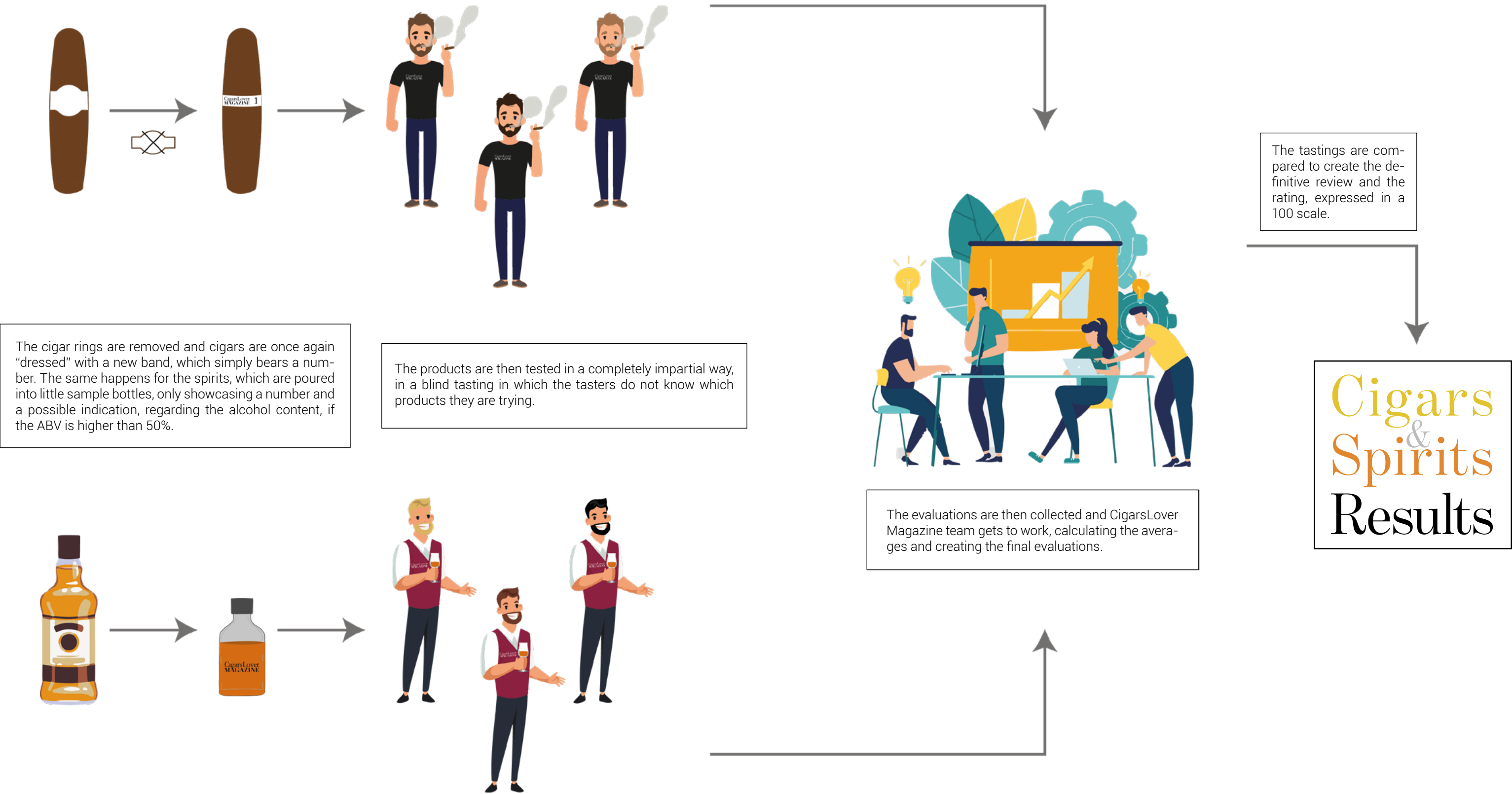
- 86** Rum
- 94** Whisky

100 **CIGARS**

- 101** Lonsdale
- 104** Robusto
- 111** Toro
- 117** Torpedo



HOW ARE THE BLIND TASTINGS MADE?





KAVALAN

Solist Fino Sherry

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

- NOSE —

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

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

Long persistence. White pepper, cocoa and walnut. A touch of orange peel.
- Complex and incredibly rich, it is a very satisfying whisky.

94

Legend

All the information in the blind tasting

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

- 1

Spirit image.
- 2

Name of the spirit reviewed.

“yo” means “Years Old” and indicates how many years the product has been matured. If there is no indication of that, it is because the producer didn’t declare it.
- 3

• COUNTRY: where the spirit is made.

• ABV-PROOF: percentage of alcohol contained in the spirit.

• PRICE:
\$ less than \$50
\$\$ between \$50 and \$100
\$\$\$ between \$100 and \$250
\$\$\$\$ above \$250
- 4

The tasting is divided in three parts: what is perceived to the nose, to the palate and in the finish. The final rows describe the overall experience that brought to the rating.
- 5

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

Spirits Lover MAGAZINE

400+

SPIRITS

TESTED

YEARLY

Rum



PARANUBES
Anejo

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|--------------|-------|
| Mexico | 53.8 107.6 | \$\$ |

— NOSE —
Natural rubber, tropical fruit, herbal nuances, sugar cane, wood polish, and some roasted scents.

— PALATE —
Smoky, with notes of tar, olive brine, roasted plantain, licorice and cashews. A touch of honey and aloe.

— FINISH —
Medium long. Pepper, coffee, cocoa, caramelized muscovado sugar.

Despite the high ABV, it is enjoyable without adding water.

91



SAINT JAMES
15 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Martinique | 47% 94 | \$\$ |

— NOSE —
Wood, honey, and pecan nuts. Fruity nuances, with notes of raisins. Roasted coffee beans nuances.

— PALATE —
Wood, a vegetal touch, and sugar cane followed by a rich spiciness. Tropical fruit.

— FINISH —
Long finish. Wood spices, sugar cane.

Rich and nicely persistent rum. The flavor profile is deep and structured.

90



CLAIRIN SAJOURS
Harvest 2018

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|---------------|-------|
| Haiti | 56.4% 112.8 | \$ |

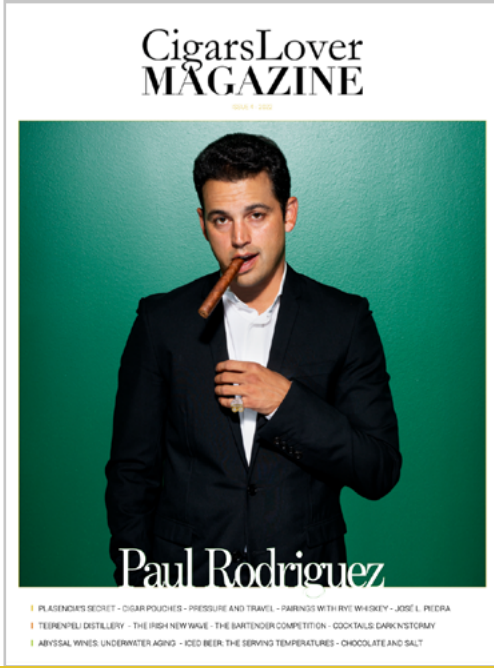
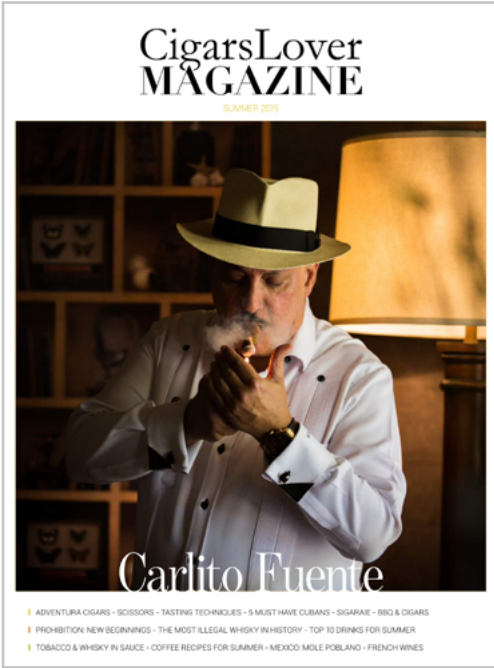
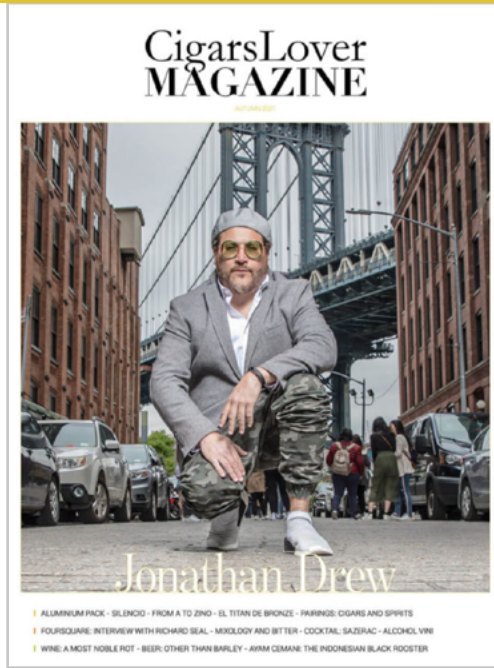
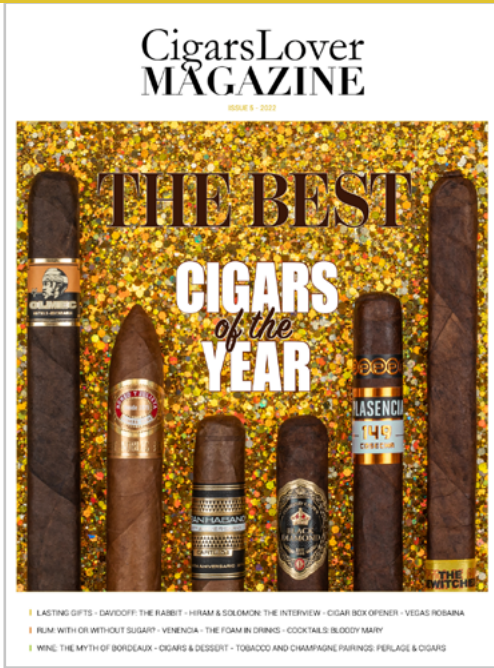
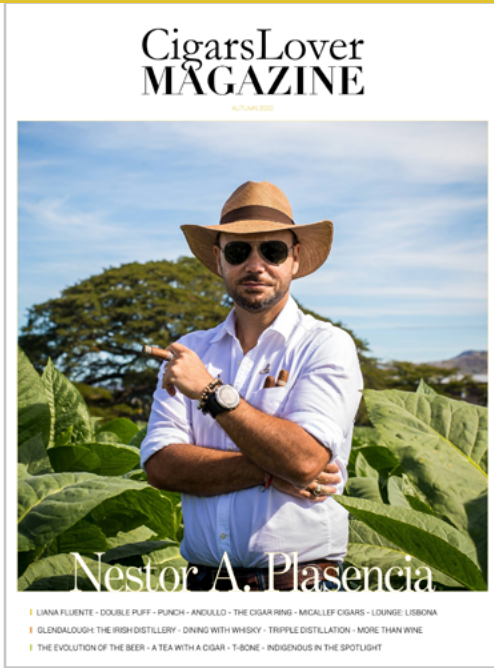
— NOSE —
Nail polish and vegetal scents, followed by visou, truffle, olives, and spicy nuances.

— PALATE —
Fresh, with tropical fruits, resins, and balsamic aromas.

— FINISH —
Medium long. Piquant and spicy, with mustard and olives.

A clean, rich, and surprising rum.

90



CIGARSLOVERS MAGAZINE

DISCOVER ALL ISSUES



INTERACTIVE



TAKAMAKA
Grankaz

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|--------|
| Seychelles | 43% 86 | \$\$\$ |

— NOSE —
Vegetal scents, brine, molasses, and a touch of yellow fruitiness. Fresh and almost floral.

— PALATE —
Nutty notes, cocoa, wood spices, wood raisins, and nuances of oak. Then a little brine. Leather.

— FINISH —
Medium long persistence, with wood spices, nuts, and honey.

Good complexity and structure.

90



EL DORADO
15 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Guyana | 43% 86 | \$\$ |

— NOSE —
Mint and dark chocolate, with scents of raspberry jam and wood polish.

— PALATE —
Salty and minty. Oily. Notes of dates, apricot, and candied apples.

— FINISH —
Long. Creme caramel, honey almond granola, and beeswax.

Rich, smooth, and well balanced. Easy to appreciate.

89



SAINT AUBIN
Sauternes Finish

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|-----------|-------------|-------|
| Mauritius | 43% 86 | \$\$ |

— NOSE —
Fresh, with apple, herbal tea, a touch of wood, and a clan fruitiness.

— PALATE —
Almond milk, apple, oak, vanilla pod. A little on the dry side.

— FINISH —
Medium-long finish, with almonds, wood spices, and vanilla. Dry.

Unique flavor profile. Nice complexity.

89



DICTADOR
XO Platinum

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|----------|-------------|-------|
| Colombia | 40% 80 | \$\$ |

— NOSE —
Coffee, vanilla, and a lot of spices, with nutmeg, cinnamon, clover, vanilla, and cardamom.

— PALATE —
Sweet and soothing: salted caramel, toffee, chocolate candied oranges, and a hint of amaretto.

— FINISH —
Medium finish. Candied citrus, milk chocolate, wood spices.

Good complexity and balance. Harmonious.

89



MONTEBELLO
Rhum Blanc

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Guadeloupe | 55% 110 | \$ |

— NOSE —
Fresh and vibrant, with citrus, brine, earthy scents, and vegetal hints. Some earth.

— PALATE —
Round. Sugar cane, fresh citrus, and a mix of vegetal and brine aromas.

— FINISH —
Medium. Earth, vegetal and peppery.

Balanced and satisfying.

89



SANTIAGO
DE CUBA
11 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Cuba | 40% 80 | \$ |

— NOSE —
Cinnamon, anisette, and nutmeg top a woody structure of beeswax, vanilla, spirited cherry, and dried apricot.

— PALATE —
Light. Sweet and fresh, with a vibrant herbal undertone that makes it extremely pleasant to sip.

— FINISH —
Spices and honeydew honey, with a touch of thyme.

Easy to drink but nicely balanced.

87



CLÉMENT
Canne Bleue 2016

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Martinique | 50% 100 | \$ |

— NOSE —
 Marine iodine, together with rich ve-
 getal notes.

— PALATE —
 Sapid and citrusy, with vegetal and
 visou notes that well intertwines with
 each other.

— FINISH —
 Long. Sugar cane, ocean breeze.

Rich and capable of boasting a nice
 complexity.

87



DEPAZ
*White Cuvée
 de la Montagne*

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Martinique | 45% 90 | \$ |

— NOSE —
 Sugar cane juice with a touch of
 fruit. A little tangy and peppery.
 Vesou.

— PALATE —
 Sugar cane and pepper. Some
 candied citrus fruits and vesou.

— FINISH —
 Medium. Citrus and pepper.

Easy to enjoy.

86



HELL OR HIGH
 WATER
Reserva

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Blend | 40% 80 | \$ |

— NOSE —
 Scents of nail polish, vegetal notes, a
 touch of brine, and roasted aromas.

— PALATE —
 Sweet spices, candied orange, and
 wood. Caramel. Dry.

— FINISH —
 Medium persistence. Spices and ca-
 ramel.

Rather basic and easy to enjoy.

84

THE CHEDI
 ANDERMATT, SWITZERLAND

2013
 2023

A DECADE OF
 MAKING THE
 DIFFERENCE

TASTE
 THE
 DIFFERENCE

H
 SWISS DELUXE HOTELS

GHM
 A STYLE TO REMEMBER

L
 LEADING
 HOTELS®

Whisky



HIGHLAND PARK
The Dark 17 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|----------|
| Scotland | 52.9% 105.8 | \$\$\$\$ |

— NOSE —
Sherried. Strawberry jam, sultanas, figs, blackberries, and red ripe fruit. Chocolate praline.

— PALATE —
Solidly sherried. Dark spices, blackberry, black currant, and dark chocolate ganache.

— FINISH —
Medium-long. Dark spices and red berries. A balsamic touch.

Intense and fulfilling nose. Quite classy and persistent.

90



TEERENPELI
Palo

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Finland | 46% 92 | \$ |

— NOSE —
Herbal and marine smoke. Apple, lemon, unripe peach, cherry, and plum. Caramel, vanilla and salty hints.

— PALATE —
Velvety. Peaches and dried plums, over iodine, yet slightly herbal smoke. Butter biscuits with vanilla.

— FINISH —
Short, yet clean. A soft smoke and some crisp mixed fruit.

Balanced and well-crafted, classical at times, yet very pleasant.

89



YUSHAN
Sherry cask

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Taiwan | 45% 90 | \$ |

— NOSE —
Oak and vanilla. together with some vegetal notes. A little winy. Then rich red fruits.

— PALATE —
To the palate, red fruit, oak, rich orange peel, a touch of honey, caramel, and roasted notes.

— FINISH —
Long finish, with leather, walnut, wood spices, and orange peel.

Ample flavor profile, with a decent structure. Nice persistency.

88



ICHIRO'S MALT
Double Distilleries

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|--------|
| Japan | 46.5% 93 | \$\$\$ |

—NOSE—
 Sherried notes, wet sultanas, dried-out figs, strawberry jam (dried out in the sun). Vanilla and toffee.

—PALATE—
 Warm mouthfeel with sweet spices and white pepper. Bloody orange, very ripe peaches.

—FINISH—
 Medium long. Bloody orange with spices.

Nice finish and palate. Something is missing to the shy nose.

88



THE DUBLINER
10 Year Old

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Ireland | 42% 84 | \$ |

—NOSE—
 Quite fragrant, with ripe peach, apricot, and yellow apple, buttery biscuit with vanilla, and some toffee. Honey.

—PALATE—
 The same fruit of the nose is mixed with cinnamon and nutmeg. A minor herbal note and a touch of salt.

—FINISH—
 Medium. Balsamic hints, a pinch of salt, and some citrus oil.

Well-crafted. Rich. Rather complex profile for a captivating fruition.

88



GEORGE T.
 STAGG
Stagg Jr.

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|---------------|-------|
| U.S.A. | 64.7% 129.4 | \$\$ |

—NOSE—
 Leather, wood resin, oak, and some vegetal hints, followed by wood spices. Caramel and balsamic aromas.

—PALATE—
 With a drop pf water, there are oak, wood spices, charcoal, vanilla, orange zest, and a little honey.

—FINISH—
 The finish is long, with spices, honey, and oak.

The flavor profile is ample and deep. Rich.

87



THE KYOTO
Kuro-Obi

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|--------|
| Japan | 43% 86 | \$\$\$ |

—NOSE—
 Corn, cotton candy sweetness and vanilla. Then medlar and unripe plum. Even floral at times.

—PALATE—
 The sweetness of corn is also evident here, supported by notes of not-too-ripe banana and vanilla.

—FINISH—
 Medium. Creamy vanilla and sweetness, with a coconut mouthfeel.

Well-balanced, smooth, simple, yet of a certain originality.

87



TOMATIN
12 Year Old

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

—NOSE—
 Leather and roasted coffee. A hint of brine. Then vanilla pod, wood resin, cinnamon, and yellow fruits. Buttery.

—PALATE—
 The lemon peel is confirmed, together with oak, wood spices. Raisins.

—FINISH—
 The finish is medium. Oak and wood spices.

Balanced and with a decent intensity. Not that deep though.

84



WILD TURKEY
Longbranch

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| U.S.A. | 43% 86 | \$ |

—NOSE—
 Oak, and vanilla, followed by licorice root. Then vegetal and floral and roasted scents. A touch of caramel.

—PALATE—
 Straight and simple: oak, vanilla, balsamic notes (recalling mint), and caramel. Then a touch of honey.

—FINISH—
 Medium. Oak, lemon peel, hints of balsamic herbs.

Easy and straightforward. The flavor profile is easy to enjoy.

84



STONEWOOD
Smokey Monk

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|-------------|-------|
| Germany | 40% 80 | \$ |

—NOSE—
 A mineral hint, candle match, dark fruit, plums, sultanas, dark cherries, with rhubarb.

—PALATE—
 Coherent with the nose. Dark and red fruit with some balsamic nuances. A slightly bitter hint.

—FINISH—
 Short. Red fruits and balsamic notes, that fade off quickly.

Easy but not that structured or deep. Contained persistence.

84



NOBUSHI

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

—NOSE—
 Very simple. Minor malty notes, raw cereals, some liquid sugar sweetness.

—PALATE—
 Very neutral, with the liquid sugar sweetness coming straight forward. Unripe fruit note nuances, with lemon candy.

—FINISH—
 Very short. Truly simple sweetness.

Simple, with a very entry-level sweetness covering the flavor profile.

84



BUSKER
Single Pot Still

| COUNTRY | ABV - PROOF | PRICE |
|---------|--------------|-------|
| Ireland | 44.3% 88.6 | \$ |

—NOSE—
 Slightly alcoholic. Cherry in alcohol, unripe yellow fruit, green tangerine, and ginger. Spices and wild honey.

—PALATE—
 Not truly mellow. Green spices, ginger, and a not fully integrated alcohol. Spices.

—FINISH—
 Medium. Alcoholic and quite rich in spices. Ginger.

Intense, rich, and fulfilling.

83



CHOOSE WHO TO BELIEVE.

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

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




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DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Legend

All the information inside the blind tastings

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



1

ADVENTURA
Royal Return King's Gold Robusto

COMPLEX AND RICH

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

3

95



4

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

5

- 1

Cigar picture.
- 2

Cigar tasting notes: the flavor profile delivered throught the smoke.
- 3

Rating scale: 95-100 memorable and excellent in every detail. 90-94 great quality and highly satisfying. 86-89 high quality and very pleasant. 81-85 decent, delivering a good smoke . Under 80 not recommended.
- 4

Flag identifying the country where the cigar is made.



Cuba



Dominican Rep.



Nicaragua



Honduras



Mozambique



Mexico



U.S.A.



Costa Rica



Italy



Philippines



Cina



Panama
- 5

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

Lonsdale





***SOBREMESA
BRÛLÉE BLUE***

REFINED AND SWEET

A very smooth smoke with a refined profile. It releases sweet notes accompanied by wood, leather, and white pepper. The second half becomes creamier, and the pepper becomes more pronounced.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| ●●● | 46x158mm (6 ¼") | \$ 15.95 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | MEXICO | NICARAGUA |



***GURKHA COLECCIÓN
ESPECIAL LONSDALE***

FLAVORFUL AND ROUND

Hay and cream are revealed in the beginning, joined by black pepper and citrus aromas. An herbal note is added later, together with a hint of sour cream.

88



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| ●●● | 48x165mm (6 ½") | \$ 13.95 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| N/A | MEXICO | N/A, U.S.A. |



***JOYA DE NICARAGUA
ANTAÑO CT LONSDALE***

BROAD AND COMPLEX

Once lit, cream, wood, and white pepper notes are brought to the palate. Nuts and herbs are added later on, and the white pepper changes to black pepper and becomes spicier in the finale.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 44x168mm (6 ⅝") | \$ 9.95 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



***ILLUSIONE
ALLEGRIA LONSDALE***

BALANCED AND SMOOTH

The cigar starts out with aromas of cappuccino, nuts, and white pepper in the retro-hale. Cream, leather, and wood notes are added in the second half of the smoke.

88



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 42x110mm (6 ¼") | \$ 10.6 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



***INTEMPERANCE
BA XXI AWS IV***

BOLD AND FLAVORFUL

Black pepper and leather give way to the smoke. Earthy and woody aromas are added later on, underlined by a mineral nuance. The black pepper changes into hot chili in the finale.

89



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ●●●● | 42x117mm (4 ⅝") | \$ 6.75 € 5.6 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| BRAZIL | INDONESIA | NICARAGUA |



***H. UPMANN HERMAN'S
BATCH LONSDALE***

FLAVORFUL BUT LINEAR

The cigar opens with aromas of black pepper, coffee, and leather. Further into the cigar, a nutty component is added, mainly hazelnut. The last couple of puffs are spicy.

87



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| ●●●● | 42x165mm (6 ½") | \$ 9.5 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | DOMINICAN REP. | DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA |



***J. LONDON
GOLD SERIES LONSDALE***

RICH AND EVOLUTIVE

It delivers white pepper, spices, nutmeg, and balsamic hints. The spicy components get richer in the second half, culminating in piquant peaks. Earth and a touch of walnut are added later on.

88



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| ●●● | 42x165mm (6 ½") | \$ 19 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | ECUADOR | DOMINICAN REP. |



***LA PALINA
CLASSIC ROSADO LONSDALE***

CREAMY BUT STATIC

Leather aromas open up the smoke, followed by nutty aromas, mainly hazelnut. Cream and wood are added in the second half, rounding out the profile.

87



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| ●●● | 42x117mm (4 ⅝") | \$ 8 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| HONDURAS | HONDURAS | DOMINICAN REP., HONDURAS, NICA. |

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money send
tobacco”

-George Washington

“And
Whiskey”

-Reservoir Distillery



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Robusto



CALDWELL LONG LIVE THE QUEEN QUEEN'S COURT

COMPLEX AND SMOOTH

Nuts, wood, and spice open the smoke. Leather and herbs are added later on, supported by a sweet base. In the second half, the herbs become balsamic, and the finale is spicy.

93

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|------------------------------|
| ●●● | 52x127mm (5") | \$ 14 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| CAMEROON | INDONESIA | DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA |



BONGANI ROBUSTO

FLAVORFUL AND INTENSE

Black pepper and wood give way to the smoke, joined by aromas of nuts. A sweet component is present in the background. Balsamic herbs and chili are added in the second half.

91

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|-------------------------|
| ●●● | 50x127mm (5") | \$ - € 13 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| CAMEROON | MOZAMBIQUE | MOZAMBIQUE, ZIMBABWE |



SERINO ROYALE CONNECTICUT ROBUSTO

BALANCED AND SMOOTH

Pepper, oak wood, and cashew flavors make up the core of the profile throughout the cigar. Along the way appear aromas of leather, herbs, and coffee to round out the smoke.

90

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 52x127mm (5") | \$ 11.2 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



CASA TORRES 20 AÑOS GRAN ROBUSTO

BROAD AND FLAVORFUL

Spices, mainly white pepper, and espresso aromas give way to the smoke. Hazelnut, wood, leather, and cream are added later on. The white changes to black pepper in the second half.

90

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-------------------|------------------------|
| ●●● | 52x130mm (5 1/8") | \$ - € 9.8 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | INDONESIA | HONDURAS, NICARAGUA |



CUMPAY
ROBUSTO MADURO

BOLD

Earthy notes, followed by walnut, vegetal nuances and a smoky hint. Almonds aromas appear in the middle third, while in the last part, roasted notes complete the flavor profile.

89



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| ●●●● | 52x121mm (4 ¾") | \$ 11 € 8.8 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



DON TOMAS
BRAZIL ROBUSTO

BALANCED AND SWEET

The molasses and ripe fruit aromas are present throughout the smoke, supported by an evident sweetness in the background and black pepper, leather, and sour cream notes along the way.

87



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| ●●●● | 50x140mm (5 ½") | \$ - € 4.5 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| BRAZIL | HONDURAS | DOMINICAN REP., HONDURS, NICA. |



CHATEAU DIADEM
ROBUSTO

DEEP AND EVOLVING

In the first half, it delivers notes of wood, leather, and nuts, with a mix of white and green pepper in the background. Earth and vegetal aromas are added in the second half.

89



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|----------------|------------------------------|
| ●●● | 50x127 mm (5") | \$ - € 11.9 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | DOMINICAN REP. | DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA |



E.P. CARRILLO INCH
NICARAGUA NO. 62

BALANCED BUT STATIC

Earth and nutty aromas, mainly walnut, are the core flavors throughout the smoke. Vegetal notes appear in the second half, and black pepper is added in the last third.

86



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|
| ●●●● | 62x127mm (5") | \$ 10.45 € 12.6 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



LAMPERT 1675
ROJO ROBUSTO

FLAVORFUL AND ROUND

The first half is marked by vegetal and floral aromas, supported by pepper notes. In the second half, the pepper remains, but the rest of the profile turns to coffee and leather aromas.

88



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 50x127mm (5") | \$ 12 € 8.9 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



ZINO
NICARAGUA ROBUSTO

BALANCED AND ROUND

The cigar starts out with aromas of cream, citrus, and hints of tea leaves. A white pepper note is added in the second half, supported by a light earthy nuance in the background.

86



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| ●●● | 54x127mm (5") | \$ 6.8 € 7.5 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | DOMINICAN REP., HONDURAS, NICA. |



RAMÓN ALLONES
SPECIALLY SELECTED

SMOOTH

Black pepper, nuts, and wood are present in the first half. Leather and coffee aromas are added in the second half of the smoke, joined by herbs and chili spice towards the end.

87



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|--------------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 50x124 mm (4 7⁄8") | \$ - € 13.5 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| CUBA | CUBA | CUBA |



POR LARRAÑAGA
GALANES

CREAMY AND SMOOTH

The cigar opens with a creamy hazelnut and wood notes, with a hint of sweetness in the background. A milk coffee aroma is added in the second half of the smoke.

86



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| ●●● | 52x120mm (4 ¾") | \$ - € 11.6 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| CUBA | CUBA | CUBA |

Toro



CAO AMAZON BASIN EXTRA AÑEJO

RICH AND BOLD

It develops intense notes of dark chocolate and earth, together with a rich roasted coffee aroma. In the second half, vegetal nuances are added in the aftertaste.

92



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| ●●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 15 € 14 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | DOMINICAN REP., BRAZIL, COLOMBIA |



GRAN HABANO COROJO NO. 5 GRAN RESERVA 2012

BALANCED AND FLAVORFUL

The cigar starts out with black pepper and roasted nuts, followed by wood, leather, and cream. An herbal note is added, which becomes balsamic towards the end, and the finale is spicy.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|
| ●●● | 54x152mm (6") | \$ 8.6 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA |



DREW ESTATE M81 BLACKENED TORO

ROUND AND FLAVORFUL

Cocoa, earth, and pepper open the smoke, joined by notes of leather and nuts, and the profile is supported by a light sweet base. A balsamic herb aroma appears in the second half.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|----------------------|
| ●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 9.85 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| MEXICO | U.S.A. | NICARAGUA, U.S.A. |



OLMEC MADURO TORO

DEEP AND STRUCTURED

The cigar opens with aromas of earth, leather, and spice, mainly black pepper. Wood, nuts, and herbs are added later on, and there is also a subtle sweetness present in the background.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| ●●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 14.5 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| MEXICO | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



LA ESTANCIA
EDICIÓN EXCLUSIVA 56

CREAMY

It delivers earth, nuts and vegetal aromas, joined in the middle third by black pepper, which gets more intense advancing in the smoke. In the final part, roasted coffee.

90 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ●●● | 56x165mm (6 ½") | \$ - € 28 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | DOMINICAN REP. | DOMINICAN REP., |



TATUAJE HAVANA VI
VEROCÚ BLUE NO.1

BALANCED AND SMOOTH

Cappuccino, hazelnut, leather, and cream notes are present in the first half, with a hint of black pepper. Herbal notes are added, and the pepper becomes more pronounced later on.

89 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| ●●● | 52x159mm (6 ¼") | \$ 12 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



MI QUERIDA
TRIQUII TRACA NO. 652

FULL AND INTENSE

Cocoa, charred wood, and coffee open up the smoke, joined by black pepper and cream. There is also an underlying sweetness perceptible. Earth and herbs are added in the second half.

89 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|------------------------------|
| ●●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 12.5 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| U.S.A. | NICARAGUA | DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA |



VEGAFINA
1998 VF54

COMPLEX AND ROUND

Aromas of black pepper, walnut, wood, and earth are present in the first half. Herbal and lemon zest notes are added in the second half, and the smoke becomes slightly sour towards the end.

89 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| ●●●● | 54x155mm (6 ⅝") | \$ 10.3 € 8.4 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | INDONESIA | DOMINICAN REP., COLOMBIA, NICA. |



GURKHA
PURE EVIL TORO

INTENSE AND SMOOTH

Leather and nuts give way to the smoke, joined by a roasted coffee note later on. Floral and honey notes are added to the profile in the second half of the smoke.

89 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| ●●● | 54x152mm (6") | \$ 9.5 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



ROSALONES SELECCIÓN
BODEGAS EDICION 2022

BALANCED. A LITTLE STATIC

White pepper, dry wood and coffee, followed by a touch of citrus and earh. In the last part, balsamic notes and cocoa complete the flavor profile.

88 

| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| ●●●● | 50x152mm (6") | \$ - € 6.9 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



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PLAYED FAVORITES
BUT IT'S OKAY IF YOU DO.**



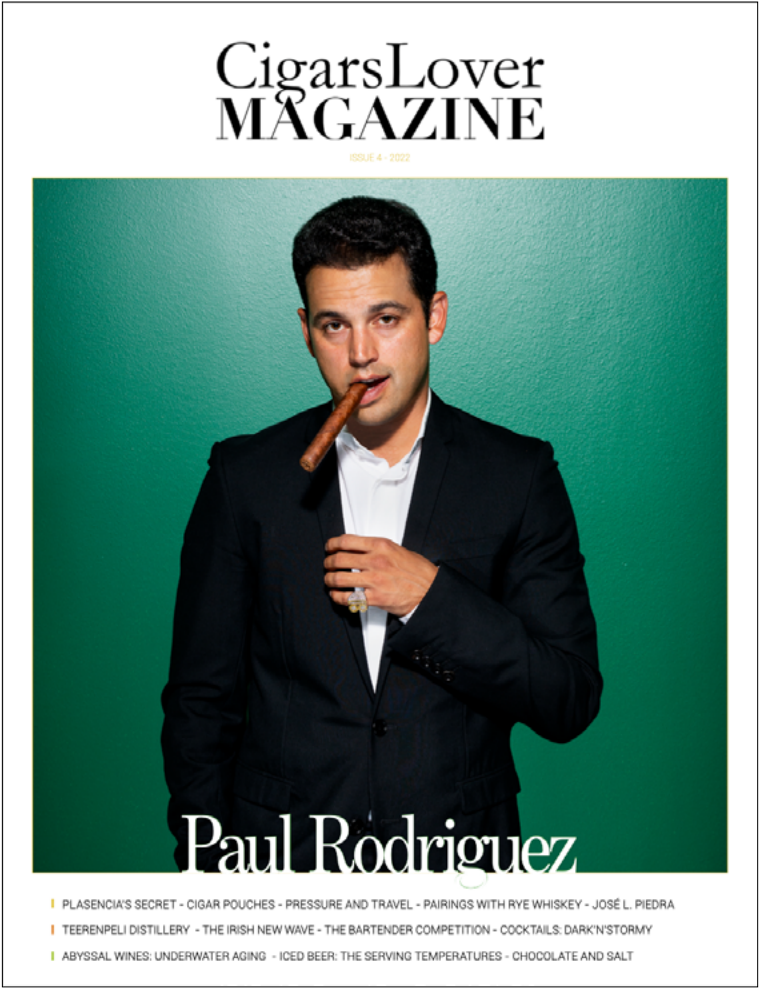
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CigarMate

*Handmade CigarMate
for handmade cigars*



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

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

The CigarMate is composed of several collectible pieces.

Torpedo





VEGAFINA
YEAR OF THE RABBIT 2023

RICH AND EVOLVING

It delivers nutty and roasted notes, with a light pepperiness to it. The middle third boasts the intensity. The flavor profile turns to earth, with rich black pepper and dark roasted coffee.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| ●●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 12 € 12.5 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | DOMINICAN REP. | DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA |



CAVALIER GENÈVE
INNER CIRCLE FIGURADO

COMPLEX AND SMOOTH

Coffee, nuts, and wood supported by honey and white pepper are present in the first half of the smoke. Cream and herbal aromas are added in the second half, and the finale becomes spicy.

90



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| ●●● | 54x152mm (6") | \$ 14.3 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | HONDURAS | DOM. REP., U.S.A., HONDURAS, NICA. |



UNDERCROWN
SHADYXX

BOLD AND FULFILLING

It exhibits earthy notes, accompanied by vegetal aromas and black pepper, the latter mainly perceivable in the aftertaste. Roasted coffee notes and a touch of vanilla are added later on.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| ●●● | 50x127mm (5") | \$ 11 € 15 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| MEXICO | U.S.A. | BRAZIL, NICARAGUA |



EL LOCO
LA VIUDA

COMPLEX AND INTENSE

The cigar starts out slow, with notes of wood, black pepper, and herbs in the first half. Things pick up in the second half in flavor intensity, additionally notes of peanuts and mineral are added.

89



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| ●●●● | 54x152mm (6") | \$ - € 12.4 |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| MEXICO | MEXICO | MEXICO |



VILLIGER DE NICARAGUA
LIMITED EDITION 2022 USA

BALANCED AND COMPLEX

A mix of cocoa, earth, and leather gives way to the cigar. A light pepper aroma is perceptible, and walnut and toasted wood are added later on. Balsamic notes appear toward the end.

91



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| ●●● | 52x152mm (6") | \$ 15 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | MEXICO | NICARAGUA, U.S.A. |



WARPED
NICOTINA BELICOSO

FLAVORFUL AND STRONG

A mix of spice and vegetal aromas give way to the smoke, joined by hazelnut, wood, and a hint of cream. In the second half, leather is added while the faint creaminess disappears.

88



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| ●●●● | 52x140mm (5 ½") | \$ 11 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



CRUX
LIMITADA THE SHOW

BOLD AND SATISFYING

It delivers notes of earth and wood, followed by vegetal aromas a touch of black pepper. The spicy component gets way richer in the second half, joined by roasted coffee beans.

90



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| ●●●● | 52x127mm (5") | \$ 11 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA | NICARAGUA |



CASA 1910
CAVALRY EDITION LUCERO

BALANCED

The cigar opens with black pepper, nuts, and vegetal notes, followed by floral nuances. Herbal and ripe fruit aromas are added later on, supported by a subtle sweetness.

86



| STRENGTH | SIZE | PRICE |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| ●●●● | 54x152mm (6") | \$ 17.5 € - |
| WRAPPER | BINDER | FILLER |
| ECUADOR | MEXICO | NICARAGUA |

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