

# CigarsLover MAGAZINE

ISSUE 5 - 2023

## AWARDS 2023

## The Chedi Andermatt

- | INTERVIEW WITH TIM-MARTIN WEBER - ARTISTA CIGARS - A GUIDE ON HUMIDOR WOODS - AN ALTERNATIVE PAIRING
- | RESERVOIR'S EXCLUSIVE BOTTLINGS - PROHIBITION - CHAMPAGNE: BUBBLES & COCKTAILS - KAVLAN PODIUM
- | WINE: THE TIMELESSNESS OF BURGUNDY - PERLAGE & CIGARS, THE PAIRINGS FOR THE END OF THE YEAR



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## Editor's thoughts

*Best cigars, best spirits, best brands, and much more best of..*

Every time the end of the year approaches, the air is filled with the need to remember what happened during the last time the Earth revolved around the Sun. Often, we also try to recall the main things of the past years, but we can only reminisce about the most important ones. The same happens for the products we try and enjoy more, the memorable smokes, and the meditative drinks that often enhance some situations and help us be closer to someone else through what is called sharing.

For the end of 2023, you can expect nothing else but the confirmation of what we did in all these years: all our ratings, the best cigars divided by country, the biggest best of list made of 50 cigars, the best rum and whiskies, the best brand, the best boutique, and the best buys.

But before enjoying the page filled with numbers, or just after, if you followed our suggestions for what to smoke, drink, and pair next, you will find plenty of articles and interviews in this fifth issue of the year.

Enjoy the reading.

#refineyourtaste





# CigarsLover MAGAZINE

Thank you for  
**TEN YEARS**



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**SILENCIO**

# LUXURY

IS IN THE DETAILS

DISCOVER THE WORLD'S  
FINEST CIGARS

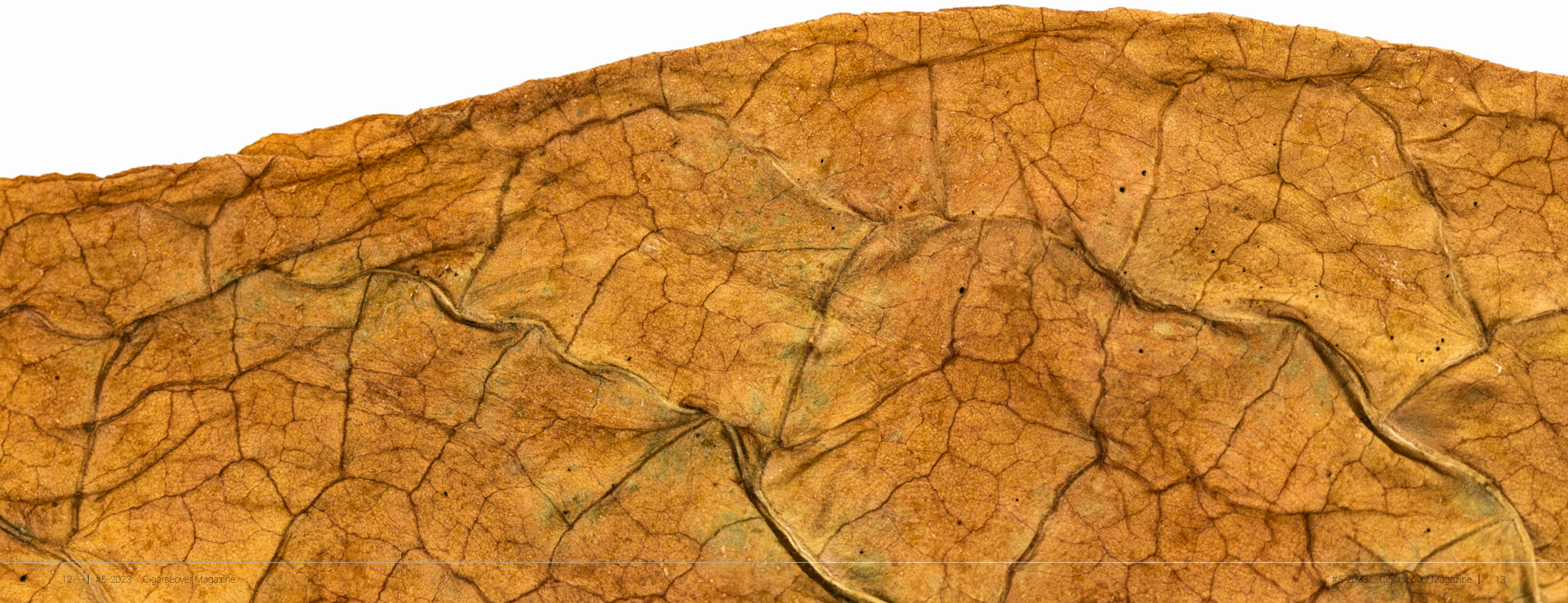




# CIGARS

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# The Chedi Andermatt

*We are cool, we are fresh. That is what defines us.  
All the things we do, we do differently than others.*

by **Michel Arlia**

**T**he Chedi Andermatt has been among the most desirable luxury hotels to visit in the world and has been awarded as one of the best hotels in Europe, receiving the best possible rating by Forbes Travel Guide 2023.

When The Chedi opened its doors in 2013, it attracted the who's who to the famous skiing region of Andermatt in Switzerland. Surrounded by the Swiss Alps the hotel is a sight to behold, especially during the winter season, when The Winter Village is set up in the courtyard of the hotel.

In this architectural fusion of Alpine chic, Asian-inspired elements, classic European comfort, and authentic hospitality, you will find another gem tucked away in the corner of the main building. It is the famous Cigar Library, known worldwide for the most extensive cigar collection in a hotel.

While the Cigar Library has been there since the hotel's opening, it did not have the reputation and look it has today. A hotelier with over 20 years of experience in the High-End sector and cigar connoisseur, Tim-Martin Weber is the guy who brought the humidor back into focus. After an extensive renovation of the humidor, he built out the list of offerings to what it is today. Now, Elmir Medunjanin, the Bar & Lounge Manager, is taking



over the reins of the Cigar Library and will guide it into the future. We had the chance to sit down and talk with them over cigars and cocktails at The Chedi.

**Tell us a bit about both of you.**

Tim-Martin Weber: I was always highly specialized in this above luxury area, that is, high-end and superior. And that culminated in The Chedi in this class.

Elmir Medunjanin: I learned my craft in Berlin and perfected it in a speakeasy cocktail bar in Oslo (NOR). I then worked in a couple of renowned bars in Austria. Since 2019, I've been at The Chedi.

**The Chedi has been awarded top ratings and ranks for years. What sets the Chedi apart from other five-star luxury hotels?**

Tim-Martin Weber: The Chedi is different, and that's the most important thing. We are now turning ten years old and have changed the marketing for next year, which is called a Decade of Difference. There are 40 Swiss Deluxe hotels in this five-star luxury segment, 30 of which are Leading Hotels of the World, which we are both. Most of these luxury hotels are led in the classic grand hotel style. There are a few fresh hotels that are extremely modern, but none are as fresh as The Chedi. We do this less through the hardware than through the software, through the employees. That means no



one was at The Bar at The Chedi over the weekend, but they were at Elmir's on Saturday evening. This is our storytelling, and this is hospitality at eye level.

Elmir Medunjanin: We are very young, relaxed people who serve guests at eye level. Nobody is arrogant. We are cool, we are fresh - and that is what defines us. All the things we do, we do differently than others.

**Lounges in many restaurants and hotels are somewhat handled as a piece on the side. What do you do to keep the level of the Cigar Library so high?**

Tim-Martin Weber: The quality. This means that the humidification has to be perfect, the storage has to be perfect, and there must be people there who can answer questions if necessary.

**You have built out the inventory of the humidor quite substantially. What are some of your guys' criteria for adding to the list of cigars?**

Tim-Martin Weber: So if there's cool storytelling behind it and the cigar is good, then our team has the opportunity to look at it and listen to everything. We give everybody a chance, small, private brands or large multinational companies. The only important thing is that the team makes a selection.

Elmir Medunjanin: The team and I try everything - some brands have 25 blends in seven sizes each. We don't need to have everything here because the space is limited. Afterward, the team can make a special selection where the blend and the format make sense together.

**How do you build up the reputation of a humidor in a hotel to the level that you guys have?**

Tim-Martin Weber: People started talking about our project and collection relatively quickly through our international network.

Elmir Medunjanin: When you have partners telling their customers who are looking for something ultra-rare and they tell them that they either have to wait for the London Cigar Auction or drive to The Chedi, you have created the right reputation.

**Before we get into your impressive collection of Cuban cigars, what piqued my eye is also the vast selection of cigars from other countries. In many lounges around the world, the focus is mainly on Cubans, Davidoff, and other big names. Why spread the list so broadly?**

Tim-Martin Weber: We are different as a hotel, and that's why we do it our way. We always want to have a bit of everything there, but it's not Cuba over everything. That means, if you look through it, Cuba makes up almost 60% of the menu, and these are things that you have to have as the kind of lounge that we are. We want to have as complete a collection as possible so the total number of Cubans is larger than the rest. But we actually have everything we need from the rest of the





world. We have 15 countries represented on our menu.

Elmir Medunjanin: If we focus on the standard cigars, the readily available cigars, Cuba is not dominant. We have more choices from the Dominican Republic. Ultimately, Cuba is generally more because that's where all the great rarities, the "museum" cigars, come from, or all the old ones. The other countries don't have that.

#### How high would you estimate your collection?

Tim-Martin Weber: The entire collection's value is estimated to be several million. Of course, I can now tell you any value because how much does a La Corona Especiales Finos from 1885 cost? I can tell you: I don't know. I can tell you what I bought the box for, but the price is invaluable. Our challenge is not to buy the most expensive thing but rather that you have this extensive range of everything, including exceptionally priceless cigars.

As mentioned before, the Cuban collection is impressive, but what is most interesting is how approachable it is. You allow single acquisition of rare cigars and even open up boxes, which would make any hardcore collector turn in their grave. Was it always the intent to make everything available to be smoked?

Tim-Martin Weber: We are here for enjoyment. Just showing it is a bit chivvy. We're freaks enough to open the boxes because the stuff is meant to be smoked. At least, that's what I've been told. And, of course, we open up the boxes for that. Some people are willing to spend a lot of money on a special cigar but certainly don't want to buy a whole box of them.

Elmir Medunjanin: Of course, we also have many rare boxes that have been sealed since they were manufactured, with the etiquette and all the trimmings still intact. Those rare boxes will stay closed. They aren't available for sale.

What are some of your major points to get right to give the visitor the best experience possible? And what would that experience look like?

Tim-Martin Weber: Before Elmir thoroughly answers the question, it's pretty simple: We don't want to be know-it-alls. That means we're taking things slowly, and we want to avoid giving the impression that we would roll our eyes if the guest is not yet that knowledgeable. That lies in the perfection of our selected employees, who have a feeling for how far they can go now.

Elmir Medunjanin: It depends on the guests themselves how far I can go. You have to feel it out at the beginning. Some guests who have never smoked come in here, and some guests come here to smoke a cigar and then leave. It also depends on the employee who serves the guest. As Mr. Weber says, only certain employees are allowed to do the service in the lounge because they are trained for it. Luckily, in our lounge, we can engage with the guests much more intensively and take 15 minutes, 20 minutes, or half an hour for them.



Pairing is always a big question when you are smoking a cigar. Usually, they are kept relatively simple. Elmir, what is an underrated spirit/cocktail that pairs well with a cigar?

Elmir Medunjanin: There are generally many things that don't always have to be the classics. It mainly depends on the cigar and the mood. I won't drink cognac or anything like that in the morning, but the client can, depending on the mood and the situation, whether you have something to celebrate or casually stop by in the afternoon. I think when it comes to cocktails, for me, it's always the classics from before 1950, really old, old classic drinks like Hanky Panky, which only has gin, vermouth, and a little bit of Fernet-Branca in it. Something bitter, heavy, and dark always goes well with a cigar. But I'm also surprised at how good a gin tonic or Mezcal can sometimes taste with it, or even something non-alcoholic.

Tim, you and your team also organized the famous Chedi Cigar Circle in the past. Can you explain the concept?

Tim-Martin Weber: There are various cigar events where you get a few cigars to try, then a brand ambassador from a spirit comes along, and you start selling tickets for that. Then it's about making a presentation of the cigar - and we don't want that. We have it all there, but there is no presentation. People are forbidden from turning it into some kind of sales event. We meet in a setting for which you cannot buy a ticket for any money in the world. There's drinking there, there's good eating there, there are cigars there. Whether you are invited or not, we then celebrate ourselves and the project itself. Simply put, it is more of a get-together of friends.

What is the most proud moment you have ever experienced in The Chedi Andermatt?

Tim-Martin Weber: We would run out of time trying to answer this. But the only thing I'm proud of, for all the superlatives we've delivered, is the people we do it with.

Elmir Medunjanin: I agree with that.

Lastly, Elmir, what are your future goals for the cigar experience in The Chedi?

Elmir Medunjanin: Well, for me, in general, the most essential thing in everyday life is simplicity, that you make life a little easier for yourself, that means for the guest himself. We live in a world where social media is very important, and we evaluate everything based on pictures. That means we read a lot less than we used to, and we judge based on images, so we changed the bar menu. The first thing you see on the card is always the picture of the drink. I want to expand this visual concept for the cigar menu and perhaps simplify it a bit. So that the guest can find his way around himself if we do not have enough time at the moment. Other than that, we continue to maintain our standards and quality while pushing the envelope.



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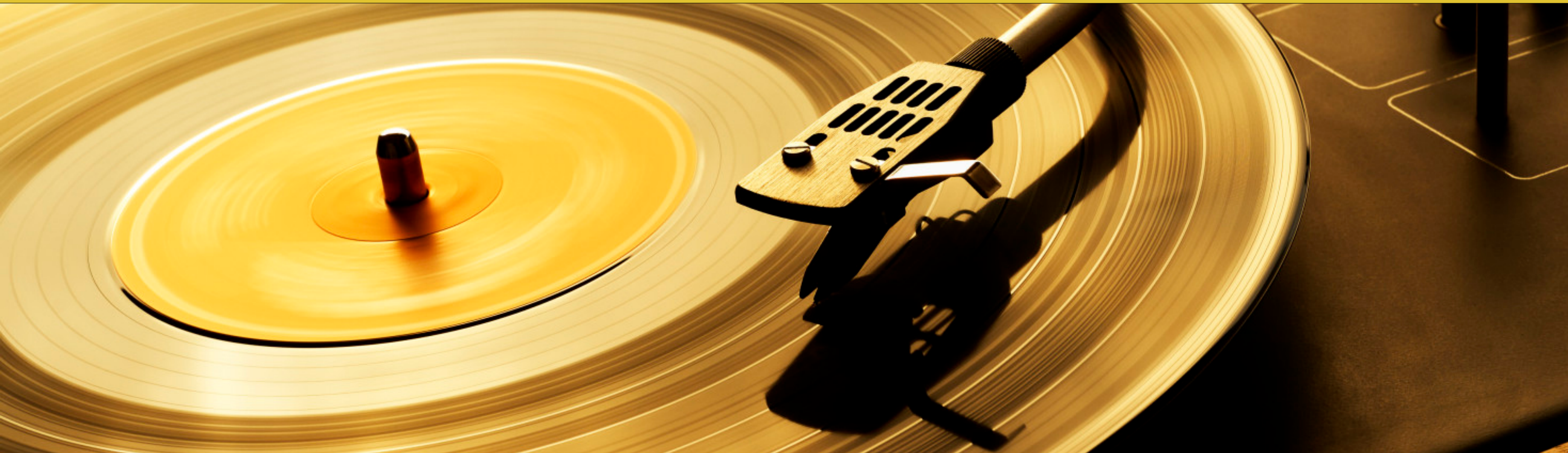


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# An alternative pairing

*Cigars and music on vinyl are worlds that may seem distant from each other, yet they have many more points in common than you might imagine.*

by **Giuseppe Mitolo**

Very often the world of cigars is considered conceptually similar to other epicurean fields of everyday life, such as the world of wine or, more generally, to that of spirits. Sometimes those who discover the pleasure of enjoying a certain product are led, driven by curiosity, to explore another. Think of how many sommeliers or wine tasters have then approached the cigar sector and vice versa. The reason for this "leap" (or expansion of knowledge, if you like) is recognized to be caused by the points of contact between the two areas. However, what really pushes us towards knowledge is the natural curiosity of the new field that is similar to the one we already have knowledge of and that could well complete and enhance a "comfort zone". Many spirits tasters approach the world of cigars because they find the combination of the two products sti-

mulating individually but sublime in their combination. In the ten years of publication of CigarsLover Magazine we have proposed combinations and affinities between different products, almost exclusively related to the taste experience. This time we will try to explore another space of combination, the one between cigars and music, with exclusive regard to the one recorded on vinyl or, if you prefer, on LP.

We will overlook the reasons that triggered the resurgence of vinyl, where the sound will be perceived as warmer and deeper. The elements that unite the two areas of enjoyment are many and not too dissimilar. First of all, we start from an undeniable common base: both give ethereal sensations, even if starting from tactile feeling that already give a certain pleasure in handling them.

Choosing a cigar from the humidor means taking an artifact, feeling it, caressing it, then maybe the eye lingers on another cigar, which is promptly picked up and analyzed again with the gentle touch of the fingertips. Vinyl is music on a physical, tactile object (but woe to touch the grooves of the tracks with your fingertips!). In both cases, the two physical objects, once "turned on", return sound and smoke, two elements that need air to propagate. All this is accompanied by the pleasantness of the view. Think of the graces, colors and reliefs offered by boxes and anillas in cigars as well as by the iconic covers that contain the vinyl disc.

So let's move on to the actual consumption. When the vinyl disc was born, the idea was to collect the artist's expression and make it portable for enjoyment at any

time the listener may choose. The LP was born with the idea of offering the artist a medium on which to tell his way of perceiving the world (regardless of the genre played) which he then decided to list and detail in more songs. It is no coincidence that, at the turn of the 70s and 80s of the last century, many albums were made so as not to have discontinuity between the tracks. Indeed, many of these closed with what were called "ghost tracks", music tracks or real songs not indicated in the list on the cover. This conception of music, of albums, was realized thinking of the final user who, positioned the disc on the player, listened to the whole performance, simply because... There was no "skip" or "fast forward". Obviously there is always the possibility of placing the head on the desired track, but it is really a residual hypothesis for LP listeners. All this cannot fail bringing



us back to the cigar world: once the cigar is lit, the user remains attentive to all its evolution, from beginning to end, without any possibility of "jumping" to the second tercio to hear a preview of "how it will be". In fact, if we want to make a more risky comparison, we could also go so far as to argue that even the cigar, like an LP album, is a story artfully imagined by the master blender who, with that product, with those leaves and with that receta wanted to tell an idea of smoke (his or the company for which he works). Wanting to synthesize to the extreme music on vinyl and cigar share a great factor, the slow consumption that undeniably creates atmosphere. A vinyl album contains, on average, about 45-60 minutes of music, which can be accompanied by a smoke of most formats on the market. Too few for a double corona or a lancero? No problem, this will involve listening to more albums in a row and, why not, also draw up a nice and alternative pairing reference, from the most successful to the least performing.

With regards to the atmosphere created, the latter becomes an appropriate scenario for every aficionado who tries to take care of the smoking environment as much as possible. The lucky owners of a man cave furnish this space with everything that can be used to pamper themselves and make the use itself more comfortable and satisfying. For this reason, a turntable player, in addition to creating furniture in itself (on the market the proposals range from vintage models to more avant-garde ones), is an indispensable element for the correct execution of an album. And that's not all. As with the cigar, a world in which the efficiency of cigar cutters and lighters is crucial for proper ignition, the disc also requires attention and care, very similarly to the former. It is necessary, in fact, to maintain the perfect efficiency of the stylus, take care of the cleaning of the vinyl before and after its execution, always store it vertically, etc. Another effective similarity for our comparison concerns fruition in the strict sense. Just as smoking a cigar is not a simple smoking, because it is necessary to pay attention to the mechanics of smoking, evolution, aromatic nuances, in the same way a vinyl is not hearing but listening to, just to perceive all the nuances, depth and power that the combination of seven notes can give only to the most attentive listeners.

We would have liked to conclude these lines by suggesting combinations between cigars and some of the most famous music albums in history, but we will not do it, for two reasons. Narrowing the circle to a few albums (even twenty) would be an unfair choice: too many LPs would be unjustly discarded, with the risk of indicating, of course, products that would still be spoiled by an undeniable subjectivity. The second reason is more technical and trivial: despite the extensive debate within the Cigar-Lover staff, it has not been possible to find convergence on any combination. And this for us is cause for further reflection: music and cigars tend to enter our satisfaction scales more than we can imagine. Therefore, we just have to leave to you the discovery of this interesting and alternative possibility of sensory combination.

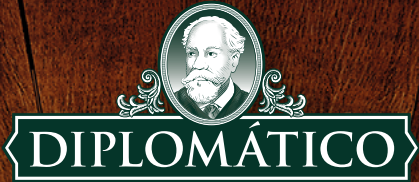


"If you can't send  
money send  
tobacco"

-George Washington

"And  
Whiskey"

-Reservoir Distillery



— THE HEART OF RUM —





# Which humidor?

*When buying a humidor, many factors affect the choice and the final price, but you must pay special attention to materials and finishes*

by **Mario Amelio**

The real turning point that marks the transition from occasional and interested smokers to cigar enthusiasts is often the purchase of a humidor. It is the moment we start cultivating a passion that deserves particular attention and time, choosing a container that can accommodate the appropriate number of cigars to our needs. So the searches begin, and, whether through physical stores or e-commerce, one is bombarded with information: dimensions, types, timbers, brands, and, last but not least, price.

How to unravel this tangle of information? How to orient one's choices in the awareness of having respected our needs and desires? In the following lines, we will review the features to pay attention to before buying.

## Capacity

The first need to answer is the capacity of the humidor. Once this range has been identified, narrowing down the field of choice will be much easier. Many suggest analyzing one's cigar consumption (weekly or monthly) and the frequency of smoking: this would return numerical data that would indicate how many cigars, on average, rest in the humidor over the period under consideration. Not an incorrect suggestion but not entirely exhaustive if we consider that, at the beginning of the passion, one is led to experimenting with great curiosity about the different products that the market offers, thus distorting any elaborate media. Therefore, the general advice is to opt for a product with a slightly higher capacity than current needs. Choosing a gigantic humidor would require a more elevated and pointless economic investment.

## Materials and finishes

Once the capacity range of our humidor has been identified, the essential characteristic is the shape. The humidors we see are all beautiful and precious. Let's analyze how a humidor is structured. We could break down



the section of the walls by identifying three levels: starting from the inside, we will have the essence (the type of wood), the body and finish.

The essence is the most crucial part of the whole humidor since the wood is in direct contact with our beloved cigars. It must be an essence with specific properties to be in contact with the cigars without altering their perfumes. We will not dwell too much on this level (referring to the article "Humidor wood" published in Cigars Lover Magazine III-2022). However, it should be noted that not all humidors are constructed in the same way. Often the part in contact with the cigars is a thin layer of Cedrela Odorata with an average thickness of 2-3mm. So let's make sure we have some insulation between the essence (the innermost part of the humidor) and the body.

The body, which in commercial humidors is usually made of less precious wood, is made up of non-noble materials such as multilayer or MDF (Medium-Density Fibreboard). The first, as the word suggests, is a material made up of at least five layers of wood glued by crossing the fibers to obtain an extraordinary resistance to bending and canceling out the movements of the solid wood. MDF, on the other hand, is a wood-derived material made up of wood fibers obtained by chopping up roundwood (trunks) and processing waste. Simplifying the production steps, we can say that once the paste derived from shredding has been obtained, it is pressed to create panels intended for cutting, which will then be used to build structures such as the humidor. Last but not least is the finish that covers our humidor or the part that satisfies the eye. We also have many choices, including enamels, lacquers, shellacs, waxes, or veneers.

Enamels, or rather enamel paints, are very opaque finishes and can be water-based or solvent-based. They are not very bright, but they are excellent for "hiding" the ma





from which the humidor is made. Sometimes, in the presence of a solid wood structure, you can opt for this choice in order to keep the visible grain of the wood. An example could be the open pore finish of Ash or Oak.

Lacquers cover products based on polyurethane or acrylic. They can be colored or transparent and are the most used on humidors. They can be recognized immediately as they give a very shiny, almost mirror-like finish. They are generally used for MDF humidors because, since this material does not have veins, it guarantees a surface that is already smooth from the outset. However, they can also be used to leave the grain of the wood visible through the open pore finish or, after having closed the pore of the wood well with special products, with several layers of transparent lacquer to obtain a very glossy, very smooth but visible finish. The grain of the wood.

Shellac, usually used in handcrafted humidors, is a highly valuable finish produced thanks to the secretions of Kerria Lacca, an insect present in the forests of Assam and Thailand. These secretions, once treated, are made in the form of flakes which, by dissolving in alcohol, become shellac. This finish is very laborious as the surface must be prepared to close the pore using pumice stone powder, and then, using a cotton swab, the shellac is spread. To obtain a warm, shiny, or very shiny look, many coats must be applied, even 24 hours apart, with different percentages of

alcohol based on the desired effect.

The waxes, also used in artisan humidors, are products based on beeswax, which performs a protective and nourishing action on the wood, highlighting its beauty. It restores an exquisite patina and gives warm and bright tones simultaneously. It is a finish that is widely used in the restoration and maintenance of antique furniture.

Finally, we find the veneer. Technically it is not a finish but a layer of noble wood (such as walnut, olive, or other essences) a few tenths of a millimeter thick, which covers the entire structure of the humidor. It is used to obtain a beautiful result even if the wood used for the humidor (such as MDF or plywood) is not a quality one or the wood doesn't have a great aesthetic (such as Cedrela Odorata or Beech). It is applied to the humidor structure using contact glues to be smoothed and finished with the finishes mentioned above. The most used finishes for this type of coating are shellac or waxes.

#### Airtightness

It is the key property of any humidor that allows the correct conservation of cigars. A well-made humidor must store and preserve cigars by keeping the internal humidity as stable as possible and, within limits, also the temperature. A detail to pay close attention to in order to understand the degree of airtightness with the outside is to check that the

closure between the base and the lid is not flat but that it has a lip or edge, which allows the "male/female" joint. With this system, once the humidor is closed, insulation is created from the outside, which will favor the correct conservation of the cigars. Therefore, avoid the classic lids with a simple stop.

#### Glass window

Among the models on sale, there are products equipped with a glass on the lid to make the cigars visible from the outside. As pleasing as this feature is to the eye, it could turn out to be counterproductive since, if the humidor is not correctly positioned in the room, the glass could favor a "greenhouse effect." Leaving aside the fact that the light could alter the colors of the cigar bands, the sun filtering through the glass can significantly raise the internal temperature and increase the humidity rate.

#### The price

A humidor's sale price is its own characteristic and a personal parameter for the purchase. From this last point of view, there is not much to talk about: there are those who want to be able to spend a lot and those who are looking for a friendlier product for their pockets. However, the price can be an effective indicator of understanding what type of product we have in front of us.

We try to exemplify. A humidor with a capacity of 25 cigars could be sold at a price close to 100 euros/dollars

for commercial products, just as it could cost more than 300 euros/dollars for a handcrafted piece. The reason for this substantial difference is easily explained if we analyze the previous item relating to materials and finishes. A 100 euro/dollar humidor, made on an assembly line, will certainly have all the credentials to guard and preserve cigars, but it will undoubtedly be far from valuable. Most of the humidors on the market are made of MDF, or plywood, lacquered externally and with only a few millimeters of internal coating in Cedrela Odorata. An artisan humidor certainly offers much more precious essences with solid wood structures, veneered coverings, customizations, decidedly more valuable finishes, and, last but perhaps most importantly, the fact that they are built by hand. Craftsmanship is an added value that makes each humidor unique, as well as designed and built specifically for the customer.

In conclusion, if you intend to buy a valuable product, you will need to invest more money than in a commercial humidor of equal capacity. The materials can be taken into account if the choice is to be made between commercial humidors, as one is as good as the other given their purely structural function. Ultimately, on the basis of the choice of the humidor, we should first ask ourselves whether we prefer a high-quality and well-made product. Because, after all, buying cigars with an appreciable economic value, how much are we willing to save for their conservation and thus compromise the result of the smoke?





# Artista Cigars

*We want to grow a business, and give our people an opportunity to do their best work."*

by Michel Arlia

Artista Cigars has grown in popularity internationally over the last couple of years, but what at first glance might appear as a small cigar brand is much bigger than you think. It is a large, vertically integrated company that has been in the business for almost 70 years. We talked to the driving forces behind the rebranding of Artista Cigars, Radhames "Ram" Rodriguez and Kevin Newman.

**Ram, you were born into the tobacco world since the family has been in the industry since its inception in the late 1950s. Did you always plan on joining the company?**

No, when I was a kid, I wanted to be anything but a cigar manufacturer. But my parents outsmarted me. They always encouraged me to explore what profession I wanted to study; the only thing was that regardless of my vocational preferences, I had to visit the factory after I did my school homework. In the summertime, I had to go to the factory for half a day to understand the operations. I realized that this was my passion when I went to a tradeshow for the first time and saw what happens with our cigars after we load them onto the truck. I discovered the passion and love people have for this industry, and I felt for it!

**Kevin, how did you get involved with Artista?**

Officially I began in the Summer of 2016, however I had been working with Tabacalera El Artista for years prior as a customer – my job at the time was Director of Marketing for a distribution company in the USA and I managed a few brands, one of which was made by TEA. I was always impressed by their operation and how just about everyone

on the Dominican island knew and respected Tabacalera El Artista. A few years later, I left that employer and took a few months off of work. After my 6-month sabbatical, Ram called and asked if I would be willing to work with him and build something new.

**How is the working dynamic between you two?**

Ram: I feel we have synergy; we come from completely different backgrounds but from the same industry. When I see a project, I usually see it from an operational standpoint, while Kevin sees it from a commercial standpoint. We are both open to hearing each other and finding a middle ground in a way that works on both sides.

Kevin: We have a shared passion for tobacco, and we have common goals. We want to grow a business, bring attention to the factory, and give our people an opportunity to do their best work. These goals keep us grounded in our discussions on all projects, and we then wrestle with the details. I provide a creative and commercial perspective, and Ram offers the operational. It's a lot of fun to engage with Ram. He is a multivariate thinker, always looking for a solution; our discussions have resulted in some excellent projects.

**From the outside looking in, Artista may come across as just a cigar manufacturer, but Artista is way more than that. What does the whole company consist of?**

Ram: We are a vertically integrated company that handles its own tobacco growing in 2 countries, sorting and fermentation warehouses, cigar manufacturing facilities, a wooden box factory, and two distribution companies (one in the DR and one in the USA). We grow tobacco on over 2800 hectares







of land and have over 2,000 members working in our team.

**Which aspect of the company has changed the most since you guys joined?**

Ram: Transitioning from being the least-known tobacco supplier and private label manufacturer and becoming a brand.

Kevin: I would add that while it's true Tabacalera El Artista is not a house-hold name in the global community of cigar smokers, it is very well-known on the supplier side. What has changed in the seven years since I joined Artista is the marketplace recognition of a "new player" in the retail space, one that has almost 70 years in the business. We joke that Artista will be the overnight success that took 70 years.

**With such a multifaceted company, what are your most significant assets and why?**

Ram: Our people. Because we rely on them to achieve our goals, and without them, we wouldn't be the Artistas (artists) of this Industry.

Kevin: It is our people. The hands that move the tobacco, the minds that shape the conversations, and the hearts of the collective employee pool push us forward each year. The family puts people first.

**Considering the whole company operation, where do you guys see the most growth potential?**

Ram: Europe and Asia, because the market is really hungry for cigars with quality and value. That is why we are putting so much effort into this market.

**You both bring a fresh approach to such a traditional business as tobacco and cigars. What has been the most challenging project to convince people in the company to get on board with, and what was the easiest?**

Ram: All of them have been hard. We are a very traditional company owned by a very traditional family. In the beginning, my father (the current president of Tabacalera El Artista ) was never convinced of my approach. He didn't want me to change the logo of the factory back in 2005, and he didn't want me to establish a company in the USA. But he trusted me and gave it a shot.

Kevin: Every project has challenges. For me, the easiest was Buffalo TEN. We were able to fast-track the project and, within a few months, had a production going. Buffalo TEN is obvious, and the details fell into place very quickly – when luck meets preparation, the whole project feels smooth. However, the most challenging has been retailer acceptance. I like this challenge, and I spend a lot of time working with retailers and distributors to help them understand how we work, what we do, and why they should consider Artista Cigars.

**Over the last couple of years, you have rebranded the name and the overall design. What prompted make you decide to go for all these changes?**

Ram: We were looking to have a new face for the consumers to know us. Before, we only used the factory logo (which we still use for the factory), but we needed a new, fresh look for the brand. It took us two years to achieve it, but Kevin and his team did a great job with it, and we have been getting very positive feedback from distributors, retailers, and consumers.

Kevin: Tabacalera El Artista is a multifaceted mega-operation with farms, pre-industry, factories, logistics, distribution, and customers at each level. This is a lot to brand with a single unified corporate image and message that effectively communicates to each customer group. When we looked at the future of our Consumer Operations, with plans to launch a brand with the factory namesake, we wanted a fresh look and clear denotation between the Factory Operations and Consumer/Retailer Operations. Tabacalera El Artista was shortened to Artista for ease of pronunciation for consumers and retailers, who are largely non-Spanish speakers. Additionally, condensing Tabacalera El Artista to Artista benefits marketing communications and brand recognition. Our team ensured that we maintained a golden thread between the two entities in a visual sense, specifically the tobacco leaves in each logo. The three tobacco leaves represent the three generations of the Rodriguez Family, starting with Ram's grandfather. The leaves in the Factory logo point upwards, connoting tobacco growing upwards out of the ground. The leaves in the Artista logo point down, indicating the distribution of the product into the hands of our final customers.

**Under the rebranding, you released two new lines, Artista Harvest and Midnight, which, for the first time, bear the company's name on it. What do these new lines mean to you both?**

Ram: It means the world to me. It is the first time ever that we have used such a meaningful name. That is why we took so long to make sure everything was perfect, with great images and an even better blend.

Kevin: It means everything. Tabacalera El Artista is a powerhouse in the Industry and deserves an opportunity to showcase its strengths with a phenomenal finished product that presents well in the marketplace. The company's care and dedication to the cultivation of tobacco and the stewardship of our people distills down to a single cigar that can be held in the hand and experienced at will by consumers. That is an accomplishment; It is only fitting that our best blends be branded with the namesake of the factory.

**What can we expect from Artista in the future?**

Ram: We are working on some new projects for the Artista Series and Big Papi series that will be released in the next year.

Kevin: We will continue to do our best work every day. We will share the history of Artista Cigars and thoughtfully release new Artista lines into the marketplace. My hope is this work resonates with the cigar community such that when an individual makes their next cigar purchase in the shop or online, they consider Artista Cigars.





PAGE

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# Reservoir

*What is behind the brand's most exclusive bottlings.*

by **Zac Mitchers**

Reservoir is a distillery established in 2008 in Richmond, Virginia. From the get-go, they specialized in a core range of 100% single-cereal mash bills from locally grown rye, corn, and wheat. Their whiskies are aged in a variety of custom made American white oak cask sizes ranging from 40L to 200L with an Alligator char. Everything is painstakingly handmade, from pot-still distilling to small-batch bottling at 50% ABV. Over the past decade, their core range has won countless awards and accolades for the elevated quality and loving attention to the territory of Virginia, making Reservoir one of the top-tier craft distilleries in the world.

Over the years, Reservoir has become a staple guest on these pages. The impressive quality of their core range and their series of stunning experimental bottlings have never ceased to amaze us, and we totally fell in love with their idea of craft whiskey. This time, we will discuss Dave Cuttino's Reservoir's approach to barrel finishing, particularly their premium Holland's Series & Maison de Cuivre.

**How did you design your limited Holland's bottlings? Is it simply an experimental program in innovative barrel aging, or is it the final product of the know-how you have accrued over the past fifteen years?**

A lot of what we do is experimental. We are always looking to improve upon our past successes. The Holland's Ghost line originally came about as a collaboration with a local whiskey bar. We were asked to recreate a 1960's



bourbon. Since our core production line is 100% single grain whiskies, blending and creating new mashbills or recreating a distinct blend, is always a fun experimental part of the business. For the original Holland's Ghost we tasted through verticals of barrels and came up with a blend of wheat, corn and rye. Since we did not have barley, we borrowed a cask from a local brewery that held an aging stout beer. We took a page from our friends in Scotland and used that barrel to finish the whiskey with the barley note we wanted. It turned out to be a dead ringer for a 60's Bourbon and proved to be quite popular, so we extended the line to include a whiskey finished in a milk stout barrel and also a rum cask. Shortly thereafter, we got hold of our first Burgundy Grand Cru casks and Maison De Cuivre was born. It was all very early on in the US market for finishing. I really took direction from what I was enjoying out of Scotland at the time.

**In terms of both taste and success, which Holland's bottlings have surprised you the most?**

I think the rum cask finish—Holland's Blade Rummer—has personally really been a delight because of the range of responses we get from the bottling. It is so unique in flavor composition that sometimes it baffles industry folks. Not in a negative way; they are just surprised by the confluence of flavors as unlike anything they have had before. That bottling has been able to capture myriad medals, including Double Golds. I always wish we had more of it but to maintain its quality, we need exceptional barrels, so we only produce a few barrels each year.



**What's the secret of the Maison de Cuivre? How does it represent the pinnacle of your premium range? Is it really a limited-time offering, or will you try to reproduce it in the future?**

The secret is great casks. You must get the right varietal to work with the whiskey. Each time we have done a set of barrels, it has been a different varietal and cooperage. To get there, you must work closely with the vintner. This is where the collaborations are the most fun and, as you say, the pinnacle of the premium range. The whiskey really represents the palates of the wine maker and of Reservoir. We are always looking to do collaborations with other alcohol manufacturers particularly if they are better than us at what they do. This way we learn something, our network increases, and most of all, we have fun. So yes, we will do more but timing is always a mystery. These bottles won't be mass produced and will be different batch to batch.

**Let's move to a more general discussion. How has Reservoir been growing over the past years? For instance, do you think that wheat whiskey is now universally acknowledged as a valuable product, or is there still quite some work to do?**

We have been lucky to experience steady growth over the last fifteen years. Our goal has always been to build something uniquely ours and that takes a long time when your product is an aged spirit. Slow and steady is the path to perfection. Wheat whiskey is still something not widely understood. Bourbon is the American spirit, and so it dominates. Even Rye, which has gained a lot of traction, is still not a large portion of the market, relative to Bourbon. Wheat, in my opinion, is waiting to be discovered, and we are happy to be one of the few distilleries delivering a unique classic to the market.

**How did the COVID years impact your production and market outreach outside the US? Is it still fun to make craft whiskey as a small-batch distillery, or is it beco-**

**ming more and more difficult?**

We have the "before COVID" and "after COVID" time frames now. Yes, it had a big impact on us and the industry. Production continued during the pandemic but with a focus on sanitizer in the early days. Market outreach to Europe was practically zero during that period and, coupled with tariffs, it was difficult to keep a foot in the international door. We are committed to the global market, and I believe it will continue to grow. I love feeding European markets and meeting consumers. They are highly educated spirits consumers. Most important, they are open to new things and to craft distilleries. They have an appreciation for quality without prejudging a brand because they are trying something different. That makes this fun to do, even if it becomes more difficult due to market forces.

**Do you think that the Reservoir model, firmly rooted in its Virginia-based operation, has impacted the US whiskey-making industry?**

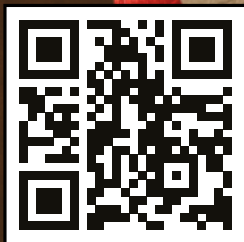
In a small way, I think so. We began with a regional focus. We are trying to answer the question "What does Virginia taste like?" We thought pretty damned good, so let's share this with the world. As an industry in Virginia, we have taken it a step farther with a Governor appointed commodities board to develop our state as an appellation—like the regions in Scotland. I have been honored to lead that newly developed board as Chairman and to support Virginia products. This movement is spreading throughout the USA, and we are starting to see distinct regions beyond the traditional two that everyone knows.

**Where is Reservoir in five years?**

That's always a great question that we redefine every year from a business perspective, but the one thing that stays constant is our core value of continue to innovate and improve. Markets can go up or down, but good whiskey is good whiskey. Refine what you have, and always be open to something new and interesting.







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# Prohibition

*What is the price  
of limiting citizens' freedom?*

by **CigarsLover Magazine 10th Anniversary**

All men will stand on their legs, all women will smile and all children will laugh. Hell's gate has been closed forever. These are the words pronounced by Senator Andrew Volstead in 1919, at the beginning of a period deeply changing the history of alcohol consumption in United States: Prohibition.

Movies, books and legends on this decade tell us a different story: a period when it was still possible to drink alcohol and many people drank simply to show their opposition to a law which created very hard time for the commercialization of spirits to the legal distilleries and distributors in America. Let us start providing some historical notes.

Since the beginning of XIX century United States started to acknowledge the growing problem of uncontrolled alcohol consumption: men were strong drinkers, up to spending a week's pay in one night and once back home, women and children were suffering domestic violence extremes. In that historical period when women had very limited social rights and divorce was still not a viable solution, they were the first ones to start specific rallies (such as bending on their knees praying in front of saloons, to prevent people from entering) and formed groups devoted to inform the public regarding the negative effects alcohol could produce on the society. This battle, even though morally noble in its essence, ended up enlarging alcoholism problem. Elmir Medunjanin: rather quickly people started thinking that without alcohol United States would be a richer, more equal country, with a smaller rates of crimes and more social equity. After almost a century of battles and rallies all over the States, it was Volstead





act, published in 1919, to ban not only any alcoholic beverage consumption in United States territory, but also the sale, the purchase and the production of the same, implementing the Amendment XVIII to the Constitution of United States of America. The act specifically defined "inebriating beverage" as any beverage containing more than 0,5% of alcohol, thus including also wine and beer. The act became effective on 16 January 1920 and its effects were perceived up to 5 December 1933: quite a long period during which an illegal market appeared. This illegal market helped the industry to survive but also created effects to be considered even worse than the ones the Amendment wanted to fight.

The prohibition on commercialization and consumption of alcohol did not stop crime (more or less organized) from attempting to identify different methods to produce and distribute it. A ubiquitous example was Al Capone, a crime boss who accumulated a fortune with smuggling alcohol. Prohibition opened the door to this illegal practice, strengthening its relationship with society. Al Capone (and many similarly to him) was required to answer the problem of sourcing alcohol before selling it. Alternatives were internal production, by creating illegal distilleries in abandoned areas away from curious eyes, or illegal import from neighboring countries such as Mexico and Canada (areas where spirits were produced in large quantities). Clandestine labs, built far from everything rarely with professional planning, with no safety rules and strategies, according to no quality standards, were severely impacting on the finesse of the final product, also sometimes putting the drinker at risk. Illegal import, on the other side, was relying on a heavy corruption system targeting customs agents or port employees, jeopardizing the credibility of police and Government workers. These aspects also generated a major end-user cost increase, which raised prices up to ten times. Thus making those who were dedicated to these activities very rich. Al Capone himself, in 1927, declared earnings for over 100 million dollars to Tax Department, a really incredible amount when projected today. It seems even Joseph Kennedy, father of the future president JFK and progenitor of the vastly influential Kennedy family, was involved in smuggling. Even though Al Capone was processed and put in jail in 1931 (for evading taxes on his sizable wealth), many others did not experience the same punishment and continued their activity up until the point alcohol was legalized in 1933.



Many people were advocates of the act and talked highly about its positive effects on the society, but historical data tells a different story. Cases of drunken violence basically did not change in number, since those who wanted to drink still had relatively easy access to stores with good stocks of spirits. Later on the speak-easy locations were born, mere clubs where alcohol consumption was encouraged by the hidden location, to which guests could only access by a password which continuously changed. Margins for retailers and speak-easy bars were gigantic, and customers not only continued to look for drinks, rather they accepted increased cost to drink, often even consuming very low quality products. In this period a very popular drink was the so-called moonshine, a spirit which has recently become trendy again, currently available in home-made style bottles. However, the product available today is a marketing gimmick to commercialize a controlled product, while at that time moonshine was synonymous of health risks from the homemade nature of the product.

Moonshine was a nickname for any alcohol production created outside of real distilleries: the word itself underlines the preference to produce alcohol away from prying eyes and city lights, favoring the dark of the night and the uncontaminated nature of American forests. Moonshiner is the person in charge for the distillation, ending up with a very home-made product, limited to very small batches (for friends and relatives) and distribution in the nearby areas. Since 1920 the entire moonshiners category became illegal: this from one side incremented the risks towards police, from another side they became more interesting for organized crime, always looking for new sources of products to introduce into cities, shops and speak-easy bars. As mentioned, moonshine was often produced by non-professionals, with improper tools, no clear regulations, and ending up creating major health concerns. The biggest health concern related to methyl alcohol, a substance poisoning and killing all over the World still to this day. Only in the thirteen years of Prohibition, approx. 10.000 deaths were registered in United States for this cause, without taking into account the undeclared deaths, the crime battles, the deaths related distillation phase among producers and the degenerative diseases involving liver and pancreas.

Let us go back to the heavily urbanized city, away from the





rural poetry of the moonshiners. The American city during Prohibition was thirsty, so thirsty that honest citizens turned into criminals, purchasing and consuming illegal alcoholic beverages in places which were illegal themselves. Many shops became blind pigs or blind tigers: shops where managing alcohol was initially done very cautiously, selling only to known or recommended customers. While later on, due to the very minor number of controls, this commerce took off, almost completely substituting these activities' core business, soon becoming a treasure chest, full of very expensive alcohol. In the same context, speak-easy bars that were often controlled by organized crime became more and more popular. The term speak-easy referred to soft talking, a way of whispering the entrance word at a door or at an individual to be allowed to enter into a shining world of alcohol and good life, as we can admire in many movies narrating that epoch. At the bar no professionals could be found, rather simple young guys, thus the United States tradition of mixing drinks was, in that period, almost stuck.

The end of the Prohibition era started towards the end of the '20s, when the sponsors of the temperance movements were confronted with the harsh reality of the unintended consequence of the criminal market their law had created—moved their sponsorships towards more permissive acts allowing alcohol consumption. Initially prohibitionists sought to curb alcohol and its adverse effects as a way to protect the working class families but ultimately prohibition was found to further harm the working class by driving many in that class to a life of crime without having much effect on alcohol abuse. Additionally Prohibition played a huge role on organized crime, specifically the rise of the mafia. In 1931 Lucky Luciano, a Sicilian who moved to United States and head of the Genovese family, pooled together all the contemporary mafia bosses to create a Superior Commission to avoid battles against internal groups and promote more efficient activity by replacing infighting between mafia groups and replacing it with a more cooperative mentality. This was the sign of a mafia which was re-organizing to avoid burning men and money favoring secrecy and, consequently, more opportunities. Even the Government acknowledged the enormous amount of money invested in the attempt to have the Act applied, and the differences between reality and targets in limiting United States of America citizens' freedom.

In 1933 the introduction of Amendment XXI abrogated and repealed Amendment XVIII, thus terminating the period today known as "Prohibition".

*A short list of the movies and series dedicated to this period.*  
*Once Upon a Time in America - Sergio Leone*  
*The Untouchables - Brian De Palma*  
*Road to perdition - Sam Mendes*  
*Public enemies - Michael Mann*  
*The great Gatsby - Baz Luhrmann*  
*Miller's crossing - Joel/Ethan Coen*  
*Lawless - John Hillcoat*  
*Boardwalk Empire – TV Series*  
*Prohibition – Netflix Documentary*



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# Bubbles & cocktails

*The world of cocktails and the world of bubbles follow their own precise path, which sometimes meets to give life to something new, unique, exceptional.*

by **Vincenzo Losappio**

The most famous cocktails that have bubbles as an ingredient are certainly the Spritz and the Negroni Sbagliato, in whose composition we find Prosecco. But are there cocktails with Champagne? Although this combination may seem strange, there are lesser-known cocktails with an important history, within which there is the French bubble par excellence.

In the latest I.B.A. (International Bartender Association) cocktail list (that list of cocktails that every bartender in every part of the world should know) there are two cocktails in which there is Champagne. One is called Champagne Cocktail, the other French 75. The Champagne Cocktail is included in the category of classics even if its consumption has been declining, and it is

probably the basic Champagne drink par excellence, the father of all sparkling cocktails.

According to one source, it was conceived in 1889 by Mr. Dougherty, a newspaperman, who organized and won a mixing contest with his New York print colleagues. His intuition was to add Champagne to a cocktail based on cognac, sugar, and Angostura.

The drink had immediate fame, and in the early twentieth century, it became such a trend that it was an ally of the Champagne sales boom in the Thirties. Some, instead of Cognac or Brandy, added Grand Marnier (which today is included as optional in the I.B.A. version), a Cognac-based liqueur flavored with bitter orange peel, which adds greater complexity to the cocktail.

The success of the Champagne Cocktail is also witnessed by the American writer Ernest Hemingway, who mentions it in his book A Farewell to Arms. The Champagne Cocktail is mentioned in numerous films, including "Casablanca" from 1942, "The Thin Man" from 1934, and Raymond Chandler's famous novel "The Big Sleep".

The French 75 is also included in classic cocktails; the name is undoubtedly linked to the French 75 mm cannon, one of the weapons that determined the First World War. The name could be due to the fact that it is a deadly mixture, almost as fast and precise as the cannon's fire. The drink is one in which gin and champagne mix perfectly.

The history of the cocktail is controversial, with some variations and mysteries about the creator. In 1915, it appeared in an American newspaper where the cocktail

was not written in numbers but in letters, Soixante Quinze (French for seventy five), and included the use of gin, calvados, lemon juice, grenadine, and champagne. Another hypothesis is that the creator was Harry MacElhone, a world-famous barman who wrote various mixing books, who worked at Harry's Bar in Paris, who, in his book Abc of Mixing Cocktails of 1926 codified a 75 with absinthe, calvados, gransatina, champagne. The French 75, like many other cocktails, has also been mentioned in some films: Casablanca (1942) and in the John Wayne films A Man Betrayed (1941) and Jet Pilot (1957). In 2016, he also appeared in the series Mr. Selfridge, set in London between the 1910s and 1920s. Today it is one of the most drunk cocktails for a fresh and pleasant aperitif on any occasion, but also refined, almost luxurious, thanks to the use of champagne.

For success it is not necessary to have a champagne costing hundreds of euros, but a basic one do the job.

## CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL

### INGREDIENTS

- 90 ml cold champagne
- 10 ml cognac
- 2 dash angostura
- A few drops of grand marnier (optional)
- 1 sugar cube
- Garnish: orange peel and maraschino cherry

### GLASS

Champagne cup.

### PREPARATION

Pour all the ingredients together, stir and add the champagne at the end.

## FRENCH 75

### INGREDIENTS

- 30 ml gin
- 15 ml fresh lemon juice
- 15 ml sugar syrup
- 60 ml champagne

### GLASS

Flute.

### PREPARATION

Pour all the ingredients together, shake and add the champagne at the end.





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# Kavalan Podium

## Custom-Tailored Pairing

By **Simone Poggi**

Normally the pairing selection process is confined to a couple of minutes in which you look at whisky bottle selection and open the humidor, grabbing a stick; few intense moments, in which you keep in mind the suggestions of this rubrica, to then start the enjoyment phase. What if the selection would be detailed and well-thought out? This is very similar to contrast between quickly purchasing a standard business suit, or to spoil yourself with a custom-made, fitted one. Let us analyze some of the aspects involved in selecting cigars which are the best choices for the Kavalan Podium whisky. The selected bottle from the Taiwanese distillery is a reasonable ABV core line products, to avoid the high ABV, extreme extraction and unique characteristics of single casks bottlings, such as the Solist line.

Kavalan Podium features a complex, incredibly aromatic nose. The first suggestions are fragrant, with oak and cedar. Exotic fruits such as mango, pineapple, and coconut are boldly coming immediately after. In the background, there are some classic bourbon barrel aromas, such as vanilla and caramel, with a nice buttery texture. The palate is sweet and mouth-watering, intense, and with nice complexity. There are mango, banana, dried apricots, caramel and honey. ABV is perfectly balanced. The finish is medium duration, with more mango, sweet cedar, and sweet spiced orchard fruit. Coconut milk at the very end. It is overall a very nice product, truly evocative and balanced. The ABV of 46% is really well chosen and creates an intense bouquet of perfumed cedar, tropical and orchard fruit, great quality vanilla, and caramel.



## SIMILARITY PAIRING

One of the aspects that immediately surprises is the intense nose, the almost perfumery style of the first perceived aromas. This very pleasant entrance has to be replicated in the cigar, spreading a sweet, vanilla-driven hint which will allow the first similarity. The second dimension we wanted to enrich is the buttery texture, the mellow notes that literally enveloping the nose, but especially the mouth during the palatal phase of the pairing. On this creamy profile, we will try to identify a cigar that can add to the fruity side of the whisky some nuttiness, an integration which we believe will work very well, as the combination of nuts, vanilla, and fresh fruit with creamy texture that can remind of gourmand dessert aromas.

A Connecticut Shade wrapper cigar is the first choice. A perfect similar profile is the one provided by the Undercrown Shade line, as it develops seasoned sweet cedar wood notes, sweet nutmeg, and some evident perfumery nuances, almost identical to the whisky ones. The buttery texture and overall sweet profile can only add layers and layers of similarity. The nuttiness is also quite evident, a very nice addition. There is, of course, some white pepper adding to the fruition at times, but the profile is exactly what we have been looking for.

### Other suggested cigars

- Zino Nicaragua
- Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure
- LaLey
- Padron Damaso
- Brickhouse Double Connecticut
- The Griffin's Nicaragua
- CAO Pilon
- Zino Platinum Crown
- Highclere Castle

## CONTRAST PAIRING

In this contrast pairing, we are taking on a major challenge; we decided to select a creamy cigar, which is similar to the whisky, yet one with an evident salty, mineral, and spicy characteristic. We are aiming for a contrast, yet keeping the essential aspects of both products, a refined, complex spices mix with nutty and woody touches, which can be flanked by the fruitiness, creamy texture of the whisky for a deep, complex experience, moving from sweetness to mineral sensations with continuity and integration. The aromatic aspects are important for the cigar, as the whisky is pretty flavorful, thus selecting a cigar with an extensive percentage of wrapper such as cigars with a smaller ring gauge.

A perfect contrast profile is the one provided by the Macanudo Inspirado Orange Lancero. The noses deliver the expected contrast; on a fruity, velvety main spirit note, the spices of the cigar stand out and create an intriguing perspective. The sip is the triumph of the experiment; at 46% ABV, the whisky is solid and intense enough to keep the profile in front of the salty, spicy tobacco. The spirit enriches the spicy touch, making it more mellow. The finish is quite long and, in continuation with the palate, more sandy and less creamy, yet delicious.

### Other suggested cigars

- Villiger Miami Laguito N.1
- Hiram & Solomon Veiled Prophet Lancero
- Caldwell Anastasia 2022 Igor
- Montecristo Especial
- Tatuaje Seleccion de Cazador Lancero
- The Wiseman Maduro Lancero
- Plasencia Alma del Fuego Flama
- La Aurora 107 Lancero
- Davidoff 702 Signature N.2



# TASTE

"In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is Freedom,  
in water there is bacteria."  
*Benjamin Franklin*





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DIFFERENCE

# TASTE THE DIFFERENCE



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# The Timelessness of Burgundy

*The Infinite Elegance of the Most  
Exclusive Pinot Noirs in the World*

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

Burgundy's red wines are the quintessential epitome of pinot noir wines in the world. Simply put, they are some of the best wines made with this grape, as well as some of the best wines that money can buy. Why is this so? Well, as the local classification by the vineyards instead of by the producers shows, these wines really are all about the terroir. Like in other paradises of the wine world, a complex human and geological history has made this terroir is nothing short of the joy of all wine lovers with its spectacular expression of the character of pinot noir (and chardonnay, but that is for another article). Hundreds of millions of years ago, the region was part of an ancient tropical ocean. Time slowly transformed the seabed into limestone and marl soils, a feature that would later give Burgundy wines their most important characteristic: minerality. One should not expect the

structure, alcoholic strength, and gluttony of potent reds. In fact, Burgundy wines are not Bordeaux wines: here it is all about elegance and a fine aromatic palette. Nested in the heart of France, with cold harsh winter and warm summers, Burgundy is further characterized by local climats, microclimatic local areas developed around small villages along the course of rivers and on the eastern side of a hill region, that offer the best combination of sun exposure, heat retention, drainage, and protection from winds and rains. Only the wisdom accrued over the centuries by daring farmers and winemakers, above all the laborious dedication of Cistercian monks, allowed wine enthusiasts to discover the incredible variety of facets that the same two grapes can be obtained by parcels being only two feet apart, yet distinguished by a completely different climat. In fact, Burgundy has a total of 1247 different climats.

Indeed, following the success of the 1855 Bordeaux Wine Official Classification, Burgundy vineyards (28,000 hectares) were classified between 1861 and 1930 according to four main quality levels which today are grouped in about 100 Appellations d'origine contrôlée: Grand Cru, only 2% of wines made in the very best parcels (about 2.5 million bottles); Premiere Cru, marking 12% of wines made in the second-best vineyards; Village Wine, 36% made in one of the forty-two villages comprised in the Burgundy Wine Region; Regional Wine, the remaining 50% of wines made in Burgundy are blends of grapes harvested in multiple villages, ideal for daily and ready to drink bottles. In terms of geographical areas there are five main wine zones: Chablis, home to fresh chardonnays and only one white Grand Cru wine; Côte de Nuits, home to immortal pinot noirs and the most important red Grand Cru wines; Côte

de Beaune, home to structured chardonnays and several white Grand Cru wines (but also three important red ones); Côte Chalonnaise and Maicônnaise, home to great-value and more affordable wines. The most important villages in these areas are Chablis, Gevrey-Chambertin, Morey-Saint-Denis, Chambolle-Musigny, Flagey-Echézeaux, Vosne-Romanée, Aloxe-Corton, and Puligny-Montrachet. Most often the Grand Cru vineyards do not correspond with the name of the village, or at least they can have a slightly different name (for instance, Chambertin is a Grand Cru in the village of Gevrey-Chambertin). A few cru areas are quite extended, ranging between 50 and 100 hectares (Chablis, Corton, Corton-Charlemagne, Clos de Vougeot, Charmes-Chambertin), but many others are much smaller, below 10 hectares, and most are only a few hectares, or even less like the tiny La Romanée (only



0.84 hectares). Indeed, the incredible prices of the top red Grand Cru wines depends on the size of the parcels on which they are grown, as their allure depends very much so on the extremely limited quantity of bottles produced each year. Just to give an idea, one of the most famous and sought after crus, Romanée-Conti, is a parcel of only 1.88 hectares that can produce between 3,500 and 5,000 bottles each vintage (depending on how the harvest goes). The combination of such small numbers with the immense lore it has gained over the decades explains how the auction prices of a new Romanée-Conti can reach several thousand euros per bottle and constantly grow year after year. For an older bottle of a top, or even a simply well regarded vintage, you must consider numbers that are often ten times larger.

If certain crus are de facto unreachable for the common wine enthusiast – not just for the cost, but also for the rarity and difficulty to get access to such an exclusive sale market – others are more approachable and constantly improving on their quality and brand image. As mentioned, Burgundy pinot noirs are synonymous with elegance, class, longevity, and intense aromaticity. The special climate and the wise winemaking elevated these wines to



the best possible expressions of their grapes: high acidity, freshness, minerality are the main characteristics of pinot noirs that express light colors, intensely fragrant noses, medium-bodied structures with a fruity, elegant palate redolent of black cherries and low levels of tannins. These features translate to red wines with a stunning aromatic palette, but a very delicate body, elegant and age-proof, but not potent and impressive from the get-go. Obviously, there can be major differences between Grand Cru and even Premier Cru wines, for the simple reason that winemakers needed to study how to best valorize the grapes they are using to make these wines... starting from the plants! The cru classification is not only a matter of quality, but also an indication about what to make with the grapes growing there. Consequently, each step in the winemaking process is based on the valorization of the soil, the weather, and the logistics in order to improve the quality of the harvest. In a way, this simplifies the decision of which wine to drink, as both the cru labels as well as the AOCs will be a clear indication of what to expect from a certain wine. If we want complex, layered, oak-elevated wines we will have to consider cru wines. On the contrary, Village and Regional wines will be easier, ready-to-drink, and enjoyable wines. Of course, the vintage and the age



of a wine will mark a strong distinction: every year experts and professional tasters will analyze the new vintage to understand its promises for future evolution, as most cru wines will reveal their true value at least a decade later. It is not always an easy task, as climate change and difficult weather conditions are making it increasingly difficult to understand the evolutionary potential of new wines.

As previously mentioned, even before talking about wine-making style, one must know the cru where a wine comes from. In fact, in Burgundy the best land where pinot noir is grown is only a tiny fraction of the region. The stratified pedo-climatology of Burgundy has sprouted several varietal clones of pinot noir (and chardonnay) to best suit the diversification of soil and climate in the best locations. This means not only that each cru is unique, but also that each owner of a parcel in that cru has the responsibility to properly preserve the specificities of that terroir. Indeed, there is a peculiar difference in ownership of the land vis-à-vis the wine estates in Burgundy: most cru vineyards are parceled among multiple owners, so each of them is often also an individual winemaker, bottler, and seller of the wine. In the best Burgundy crus, there are very few negociants or cooperatives compared to other French wine regions. There cannot be a big land corporation making one single mass-market famous wine, but instead there are several small producers trying to make the most out of the peculiarity of each slope and small plot of turf they own, with their decades-old plants, their history, and even their endemic troubles. Pinot noir is a difficult grape to grow and does not – it cannot actually – give massive yields. Chardonnay is more forgiving than pinot noir, and that's why Burgundy white wines are another story. In general, given the fractioned ownership of the parcels, the harvesting model of pinot noir in Burgundy is very demanding, completely manual and forcing collaboration amongst the small owners. This led to a strictly mandatory step-by-

step process that does not leave much leeway to a single harvester, and that can also be quite harshly impacted by unlucky climatic conditions and parasitic infestations in the few days in which harvesting is allowed (usually 6-8 days). These difficulties make Burgundy red wines much more expensive to make than in other famous areas like Bordeaux: there you can easily find good red wines for less than 20 €, while it is impossible in Burgundy.

The disadvantage of this system is that the various producers in each cru are not classified. As fragmented as crus are, even wines from the same Grand Cru can display a substantial difference in quality and style among producers, with some making superb quality and others making inferior quality which is not worthy of the appellation on the label. Getting to know and appreciate Burgundy red wines is not an easy task: they are not immediate wines, they are expensive, and they demand prior study just to understand what kind of pinot noir one is purchasing and drinking to avoid disappointment. Making a list of the best producers is quite difficult too. Among the most famous and historical producers we can find Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Armand Roussau, Leroy, and Comte Georges de Vogue, but their wines are not easy to obtain as they are nowadays regarded more as a form of global financial investment rather than a mere consumer good. More affordable options to start the wonderful discovery of this incredible terroir would be names like Arlaud, Bouchard Pere et Fils, Bruno Clair, Alain Burguet, Denis Mortet, Louis Jadot, Comte Armand, Trapet Père & Fils. The best recommendation, anyway, is to try a few Village Wines and then work the way up to the Premiere Crus and the Grand Crus, picking up bottles both among different terroirs and among different producers of the same terroir to start appreciating the differences. With patience and curiosity, you will be rewarded with one of the most stunning wine experiences in your life!







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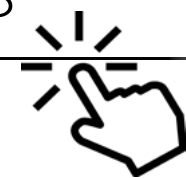
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# Perlage & Cigars

*Five great champagnes  
paired to five great cigars*

by Giuseppe Mitolo  
& Luca Cominelli

Let us abandon ourselves to memories, to return to a distant Christmas. It was the time when gifts and sweets were received to varying degrees for multiple reasons. Let us pause to contemplate the emotions that pervaded us, the aromas and flavors that we associated with Christmas, rich in spices, sweet tones, and that warmth, almost palpable to the nose, of the notes of oven cooking. Although the years have passed, that inner child remains latent, ready to be awakened by the

slightest memory, as small as that little piece of the madeleine in tea, which allowed Proust to perfectly narrate the breaking point of the dichotomy between past and present. The cigar smoker is a seeker, not only of the pleasure related to a good cigar but of the emotions connected to the smoke itself. The holiday season can add more time to allow us to enjoy that childish glee latent in us. To do this again this year, we suggest five exciting combinations of champagne and cigars. Our way to always wish you the best. Prosit!





# AYALA

## Brut Majeur

GRAPES
Chardonnay 55%, Pinot Noir 30%, Meunier 15%
DOSAGE
6 g/l
AGING
3 years
PRICE
\$ 40 - € 40

Founded in 1860 by Edmond de Ayala, with headquarters in Ay, after various historical changes, it was acquired in 2005 by the Bollinger Company, intent on bringing the brand back into vogue. Currently, the Maison is one of the few to satisfy its grape needs, thanks to its own vineyards. Brut Majeur, for example, is obtained from the blend of over 70 different crus. It appears rich and expressive on the nose, with citrus, floral, and fruity scents (white pulp fruit). All the fruity sensations are confirmed on the palate, always remaining balanced but appearing extraordinarily fresh and long in the finish. The Gloria Cubana Turquinos, the latest addition to the brand, known for its products with moderate strength, is the right cigar that does not overshadow the flavor profile offered by the Brut Majeur. The toasted notes, cedar wood, spices, and citrus aromas, all with a contained intensity, are best balanced with the citrus, floral, and fruity notes of this champagne.



# LAURENT-PERRIER

## Blanc de Blancs



GRAPES
Chardonnay 100%
DOSAGE
0 g/l
AGING
8 years on the yeasts
PRICE
\$ 85 - € 90

Although the Maison boasts a history dating back to 1812, the inclusion of Blanc de Blancs in the portfolio is relatively recent (2019). Still, it immediately attracted admirers, particularly those who love pure Chardonnay. This version uses grapes grown in the Côte des Blancs and the Montagne de Reims. Another peculiarity is the choice not to use liqueur de dosage. The nose immediately perceives the mineral notes of chalk and citrus, with nuances of yeast and pastry. On the palate, it expresses a very respectable complexity, extraordinary elegance, balance, and vibrance, with a long finish primarily denoted by citric (lemon) notes. The Sobremesa Brûlée Blue, with its creamy, almost chewable smoke, pairs very well with the minerality of the champagne. Aromatically, the notes of cocoa, coffee, wood, nuts, and flowers find a worthy background in the pastry nuances. This interesting combination will surprise you with a convincing final result.



# LOUIS ROEDERER

## Collection 244

GRAPES
Chardonnay 41%, Pinot Noir 33% , Meunier 26%
DOSAGE
7 g/l
AGING
4 years
PRICE
\$ 55 - € 60

Louis Roderer's Collection series started ten years ago to highlight the peculiarities of each vintage. This 244 harks back to the 2019 harvest, a distinct year characterized by scorching heat waves. To best describe the vintage, we proceeded to select, piece by piece, the blends that could best create the final product. The result is a fruity champagne (white peach, pear) and citrusy on the nose, with hints of dried fruit and chalk. It is powerful and rich on the palate, with a freshness that gives it a respectable depth and a flavor profile that confirms the ripe fruit but leaves room for a greater representativeness of the toasted traits. The Flor de Selva Maduro Toro, with its flavor profile centered on cocoa, coffee, white pepper, leather, and nuts, plays very well in combination with the fruity and citrus sensations of Collection 244. Furthermore, its marked depth and focused finish on ripe fruit help tone down that "noir" note typical of products with a Maduro wrapper.



# MOËT & CHANDON

## Rosé Imperial

GRAPES
Pinot Noir 40-50%, Meunier 30-40%, Chardonnay 10-20%,
DOSAGE
7 g/l
AGING
2 years
PRICE
\$ 60 - € 55

For those who like the distinctive traits of the Maison or those who prefer rosés, this version by Moët & Chandon will captivate with its seductive fruity taste but also with the typical maturity of the brand. To achieve this objective, it is made with grape varieties in variable percentages depending on the vintages and the use of red wine for vinification (Pinot Noir) and thermovinification (Meunier). The red fruit notes on the nose can be noticed, with strawberry, raspberry, and cherry leading to a flavor profile rich in floral hints of roses and peppery nuances. On the palate, it is intense, powerful, creamy, in perfect continuation with the perception on the nose, and with an acidity that is not too marked but is finely present. The Arturo Fuente Anejo No. 77 Shark offers a refined smoke with a creaminess supported by nuts, wood, and vanilla aromas. A cigar that finds in this Rosé a profile of contact with the creaminess and peppery nuances and interlocking with the notes of red fruit and the delicate acidity. A bold yet vibrant combination.

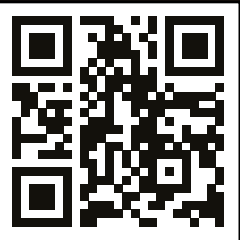


# VEUVE CLICQUOT

## Jaune cards

GRAPES
Pinot Noir 50%, Chardonnay 30%, Meunier 20%,
DOSAGE
9 g/l
AGING
At least 3 years
PRICE
\$ 55 - € 45

The brand's flagship product and one of the most famous champagne labels in the world, Carte Jaune (from the French "yellow paper"), sold after a variable period of rest on the yeasts and after a rigorous assembly which involves the use of 45 -50% vins de réserve, to ensure the consistency of the brand. It is intense and rich on the nose, with white fruity aromas, nuances of toasted notes, and the inevitable notes of brioche and vanilla. When tasted, it perfectly balances the sweetness and flavor of the minerality, confirming the fruity notes and adding floral and citrus tones, which give it even more freshness. Refined and powerful at the same time. The Davidoff Aniversario No. 1 Limited Edition Collection is the prestigious cigar designed to best match the Carte Jaune. Its flavor profile is marked by wood, hazelnut, honey, and coffee but also by more lively tones, such as pink pepper and balsamic herbs, which find the right balance in the brioche and vanilla nuances of the glass. The freshness of the closure then will only be the prelude to the new glass.



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# AWARDS 2023

At the end of the year, it is time for the big rankings, those collecting the best products tested during the year. Since 2015 CigarsLover Magazine has divided cigars into five terroirs, to showcase the

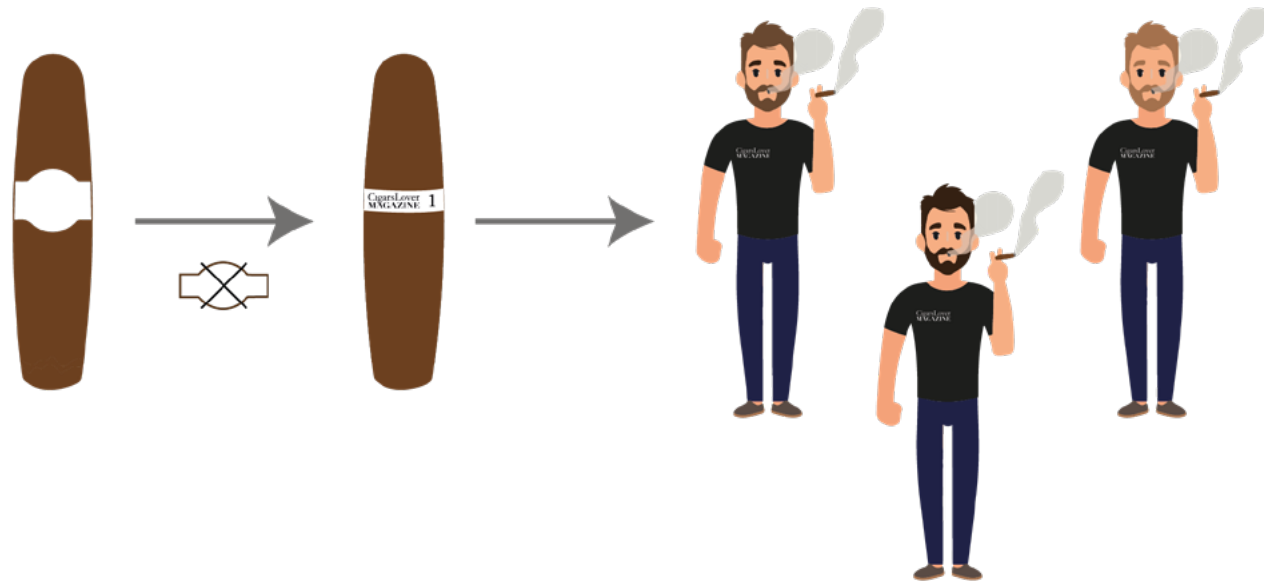
best products each country offers. Since 2018, the TOP50 has also been added to the Awards, as the all-inclusive list without distinction of territory. This is accompanied by the Best Brands, Best Buys and the best Boutique Brands.

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





# HOW ARE THE AWARDS MADE?



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

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



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

## BEST 50 CIGARS of the YEAR

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



## BEST RUM & WHISKY of the YEAR



# THE BEST 10 RUM





1

# Mount Gay PX The Sherry Cask Expression

*VELVETY & DEEP.  
DARK CHOCOLATE, TROPICAL  
FRUITS, AND BUTTERSCOTH.*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Barbados	45% - 90	\$ 240 - € 240

This 20-year-old sherry cask is the 6th issue in the Master Blender Collection, Mount Gay's yearly limited release that celebrates their heritage in more than 320 years of rum-making expertise. The cuvée is a blend of pot still and column distilled rums, aged for a minimum of 20 years in ex-American whiskey casks and finished for a year in ex-PX casks in the tropical heat of Barbados, and finally bottled without chill-filtering or additives. Only 4.200 numbered bottles were produced worldwide.

It delivers rich, ripe fruity scents, with plums, dates, and mangos, enriched by butterscotch and a mix of baking spices, cinnamon, cloves, and vanilla. Then it is the time of maraschino, together with oak. After a few moments in the glass, dark chocolate and leather. The palate explodes in dark chocolate and tropical fruits, with dates, plums, and mango confirmed. The butterscotch and the vanilla are there as well. There is also a light vegetal touch that refreshes the flavor profile, accompanied by pecans and custard. The finish is long and broadens the flavor profile with coffee beans, salted caramel, red licorice, and tobacco. A velvety rum boasting a great balance and intensity. A meditative product, delivering a large and complex flavor profile with incredible depth and structure.

95



2



## JM Millésime 2006 - 15 years

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	41.5% - 83	\$ 240 - € 240

*MEDITATIVE, DEEP AND MAGNIFICENT.*

It is an agricultural rum distilled in 2006. The bottling occurred on February 24, 2023, without reduction or addition. As it happens for this series, it is sealed with green wax, and the bottle is placed in a wooden box.

It delivers honey, wood, ripe fruits, vanilla pod, licorice, pecans, cumquat, some vegetal hints, and sugarcane. The palate is elegant and it plays out a wonderful mouthfeel of visou and vibrant herbs that dovetail on the rich nose: rosemary, and thyme dance together with luscious suggestions of chocolate, licorice, and tobacco. The finish is long, with noble wood, leather, orange zest, and a touch of cinnamon. Balanced and deep, with an amazingly harmonious flavor profile.

94

3



## Plantation Rum Australia 2009-2022

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Australia	45.4% - 90.8	\$ 85 - € 90

*A RIOT OF INTENSE FLAVORS.*

It is a single cask from the 2022 collection, distilled by Be-enleigh distillery in Queensland, Australia. It is the result of a long 12-day fermentation followed by pot still distillation. It is then aged for 11 years in bourbon casks and finished for four months in Palo Cortado Sherry casks.

It develops rich scents of trifle, followed by apricot, mandarin, and a touch of pear. All is enriched by ginger, mint, and cloves. The palate exhibits toasted nuts, salted caramel, muscovado sugar, as well as mineral saltiness, and some spices. The finish is medium-long, with brown butter, honey, and cloves. It is a well-balanced rum, boasting an extreme elegance. The flavor profile is rather unique and it is fairly broad.

93



4



Clément Vieux  
15 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	42% - 84	\$ 135 - € 135

*INTENSE, RICH AND FULFILLING.*

This agricultural rum comes from the best crus of sugar cane on the island. It is aged for one year in new Limousin oak barrel and then in bourbon barrels for fifteen years in a tropical climate.

It develops rich scents of dried red fruits, toasted pecans, caramel, vanilla, elegant woodiness, and raisins. There is a nice licorice hint as well, enriched by spices and cloves. The palate is complex, with vanilla, oak, red fruits, tobacco, and white pepper. The finish is long, with red fruits, peppercorns, and spices, together with lightly roasted coffee and vanilla beans. It boasts a deep and structured flavor profile. The complexity makes it a meditative rum.

93

5



MacNair's  
Panama 7 year old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Panama	46% - 92	\$ 65 - € 55

*DEEP, INTENSE, AND LONG PERSISTENCE.*

Made by GlenAllachie's Master Blender, Billy Walker, this rum was aged in the tropics in American oak casks and then moved to mature in the Speyside in red wine, virgin oak, and ex-bourbon casks. The color is natural, and there was no cold filtration.

It exhibits scents of vanilla, almonds, honey, raisins, honeydew, and apple peel. Nuances of coconut. The palate is round and explosive, with aromas of crème brûlée, toffee, candied tropical fruits, orange zest, licorice, and marzipan. The finish is long, delivering a touch of coffee and rich spices: cayenne pepper, paprika, candied ginger. A complex rum, capable of delivering a rich and deep flavor profile. The persistence is long-lasting.

93

6



Bielle  
2016 Brut de fût

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guadalupe	54.2% - 108.4	\$ 125 - € 115

*POWERFUL, DEEP, AND FULFILLING.*

On the island of Marie Galante, this rum was distilled in Savalle columns in 2016, racked in 2023, and bottled without reduction nor cold filtration. It was aged for 7 years in bourbon casks and grain oak barrels.

It develops elegant and delicate scents of candied citrus, orange oil, marzipan, sponge cake, and some vegetal nuances. The palate is warm and powerful, blasting vibrant visou together with salty and peppery notes. Minor mineral notes. The finish is very long, with orange peel, patisserie, a smoky note of crème brûlée, toasted almonds, and that vibrant visou. Rich and nicely structured, with a wide flavor profile.

92

7



Trois Rivières  
Millésime 1999

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	42% - 84	\$ 150 - € 135

*STRUCTURED, VELVETY AND COMPLEX.*

It is an AOC Martinique agricultural rum, made from the distillation of pure cane juice, on the site of La Mauny. This rum is from the 1999 harvest. It was aged in ex-bourbon casks for more than 10 years before being bottled.

It delivers scents of sandalwood, a touch of cinnamon, myrtle-leaved orange, and stewed apple. After a few minutes in the glass, some vegetal hints appear as well. It boasts a nice mouthfeel, with vanilla, wood, ripe fruits, vegetal nuances, and walnut notes. The finish is medium-long. There are spices, a touch of cinnamon, and vanilla. It boasts a deep and structured flavor profile, together with a marked complexity.

92



8



Manutea  
Blanc Bio

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Tahiti	55% - 110	\$ 75 - € 65

*SMOOTH, BALANCED AND CLEAN.*

It is made from sugar cane plantations in Moorea. Here grows the O’Tahiti variety, a noble cane with particular aro-mas. The freshly hand-cut sugar cane is crushed on the plantation the same day before being fermented. Since 2018 Manutea Tahiti has been committed to sustainable development.

It develops sugar cane scents, together with cotton can-dy and a mix of mints, star anise, and a touch of cinnamon and chicory. The palate is about licorice aroma notes, su-gar cane, Sichuan pepper, and balsamic herbs. The finish is medium, with sugarcane, licorice, and anise. Smooth and balanced, it boasts a broad flavor profile.

91

9



Opthimus  
25 Whisky Finish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Mexico	53.8% - 107.6	\$ 65 - € 75

*INTENSE, COMPLEX AND FULFILLING.*

It is a pure amber cane juice rum made from organic cane in the city of Huauतेpec, located in Oaxaca, in the south of Mexico. It is aged for 18 months in American oak barrels, then bottled without reduction.

It develops scents of natural rubber, tropical fruit, her-bal nuances, sugar cane, wood polish, and some roasted scents. The palate is smoky, with notes of tar, olive bri-ne, roasted plantain, licorice, and cashews, enriched by a touch of honey and aloe. The finish is medium-long, with peppercorn, coffee, cocoa, and caramelized muscovado sugar. Despite the high ABV, it is enjoyable without the ad-dition of water.

91

10



Sampan  
Cellar Series Cognac

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Vietnam	47.1% - 94.2	\$ 65 - € 70

*DEEP, STRUCTURED AND COMPLEX.*

Distilled in Vietnam in September 2018 and aged for three years in ex-cognac casks in a tropical climate, this rum was bottled in March 2022. It is the first aged rum from Indochina Distillery, located south of Hoi An, Vietnam.

It boasts a wave of sweet scents of pan brioches, vanilla, cu-stard, candied pineapple, and ginger, followed by woodier nuances of lumber and resin and some notes of cherry in al-cohol, orange zest, and litchi. The palate, after the initial explo-sion of peppercorn, delivers brown sugar and candied ginger. A strong visou kicks in with brine and balsamic. The finish is warm and medium-long, with hints of brine, underbrush, mu-shrooms, candied tropical fruit, resin, wax, and leather.

91



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*"Davidoff digs deep into the brand's history for the third limited edition release under the White Band Collection."*

by Zac Mitches

Davidoff 在2023年开展了他们的 "The Difference" 活动，该活动将焦点重新放在成就了品牌的白带经典产品上。这些杰作是四块奠定基石，你可以称它们为公司命名的真正产品。白带产品线包括：Signature、Grand Cru、Aniversario和Millennium。

Davidoff重新回顾了丰富的历史，并以限量发行的形式带回了其White Band系列的一些经典作品。上面提到的四个产品系列中的每一款都保留了经典的尺寸。今年年初，Davidoff推出了第一款产品，即Signature No.1，然后是Millennium Lancero。

在他们的第三次发行中，他们转向了Aniversario系列。他们选择带来了特别的规格产品系列，无论是从字面上还是从形象上都是如此。这是一种Double Corona规格产品，也被称为Prominente限量版。它拥有相当悠久的历史。它正是Aniversario No.1。

创始人Zino Davidoff于1986年庆祝了他的80岁生日。为此，Davidoff制作出一款特殊的作品，后来被称为Davidoff 80th Aniversario。他们选择的尺寸是难得Double Corona规格。这是当时非常流行的尺寸。这款雪茄不仅是为了纪念一个偶像，而且也激发了后来创造Aniversario系列产品的灵感。包括现在这款令人瞩目的规格产品，它被称为Aniversario No.1。

当时发布的雪茄还有一个独特之处，那就是雪茄的包装是木制的，这是雪茄界前所未有的创新。这个想法是由巴兹的詹姆斯·施耐德博士 (Ernst Schneider，Davidoff公司历史上的另一位著名人物) 在公司内部提出并付诸实践的。雪茄被切割成一定形状，然后用木钉封口。在1986年，这是一个相当费力的过程，这款木质雪茄以限量版的方式重新回归，其整体设计灵感来自于过去的雪茄盒。

ANIVERSARIO Nº.1  
LIMITED EDITION COLLECTION

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THE  
BEST  
10  
WHISKY





1

# Mars

## The Y.A. #01

*ELEGANT & WARM.  
TROPICAL FRUITS, CUSTARD,  
AND VANILLA.*

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	52% - 104	\$ 180 - € 150

Mars The Y.A. #01 is the 2022 blended malt first release from the brand, which has been created to specialize in whisky aged in Yakushima. Made from malt distilled at the Mars Shinshu Distillery and the Mars Tsunuki Distillery, it has matured in the Yakushima Aging Cellar, which was newly established in June 2016 on the island of Yakushima, a World Natural Heritage site and the highest island in Kyushu, Miyagaura-dake, which is said to be the Alps floating above the sea.

Tropicality is the first and highly intense suggestion: ripest pineapple, mango, passion fruit over a high-quality vanilla and orange. There are also some minor peat hints. The creamy texture brings loads of cake with tropical fruit and custard, with some level of sweet and complex spices to the palate; making things even more interesting. Only later, a minor pinch of salt appears, bringing the stimulation of the tongue further. Warm and creamy finish, pretty long, excellent, reminiscent of refined custard with high quality tropical fruit on top. This exceptional blended malt is extremely warm, sophisticated, and elegant as possessed by few others. There is no trace of the 52% ABV, if not for the length of the experience. It makes very clear what a noble spirit can do when gifted with a refined aging: it becomes a great product.

96



2



# Arran

## 17yo Limited Edition

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46% - 92	\$ N/A - € 143

*DARK FRUITS WITH A SPICY KICK.*

It is limited release of 2023. A total of 12,000 bottles have hit stores. It is matured in a mix of first and second fill Sherry Hogshead and first fill Bourbon barrels.

Sherry notes, with bloody orange and strawberry jam, ripe plums and raisins. Secondary notes of butterscotch, toasted oak and creamy banana are also present. Sweet, with vanilla, together with cinnamon and an acidic fresh ginger note making it even more interesting. Rich and complex, with a broad flavor profile. The influence of the combinations of casks is evident, with both sherry notes and evident fresh bourbon casks aromas. Round, with an unexpected fragrant spicy kick at the end. Creamy and long lasting.

95

3



# George Remus

## Repeal Reserve Series VI

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% - 100	\$ 112 - € N/A

*FIG JAM, PLUSM AND BALSAMIC.*

This release is crafted with five rare bourbon reserves from 2008-2014 at the Ross & Squibb Distillery in Lawrenceburg.

Quite deep, yet vivid and fresh in profile. There is an interesting spicy note of nutmeg around the whisper of vanilla, and the toffee /caramel component is sophisticated and leathery. The fruity aspect is processed; fig jam and plums. Spicy sip with a fresh herbal, almost balsamic component which is rapidly reaching the nostrils. Here the oak is more pronounced, as well as the intensity of the vanilla. Medium-long, balsamic finish. This is an outstanding bourbon. The important aging of the bourbons are masterfully blended together.

94



4



Shizuoka  
United S First Edition

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	50.5% - 101	\$ N/A - € 199

*TWO SOULS IN ONE WHISKY.*

Second release by Shizuoka distillery, the result of the union between selected malt whisky from the legendary Karui-zawa pot still and a wood-fired pot still.

The main notes are centered around orange honey and apricots, with nice and mellow texture. The fruity spirit is gracefully married with bourbon casks, yet the creamy influence of virgin oak can be perceived. Butter, sponge cake and Navel oranges with sugary vanilla, and crepes suzette. Nice and tasty sip. A pinch of salt. Maybe a very distant, light hint of smoke. Roasted nuts towards the end. It is more intense and with quite a character compared to other Japanese products; two different souls in this whisky.

94

5



The Lakes  
Whiskymaker's R. N.7

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
England	54% - 108	\$ 120 - € 95

*A GREAT COMPLEX SHERRIED.*

This is the 2023 release of the Reserve series, which is an exploration of different casks and blending styles. Each release is intended to evolve while keeping a sherry cask influence as the core, yet with several explorations.

This release features a fantastic sherried nose of great integration: fruit is intense and ripe, dark and sweet, with strawberries, plums, figs with dark rhubarb, orange honey and sweet spices nuances. The wine casks' influence is more important on the palate, however still rich in dark red fruit with herbal components. Some slightly bitter aftertaste adds complexity and a minor toffee finish with dark chocolate. Very complex, yet vivid and with very silent alcohol.

93

6



Yellowstone  
American Single Malt

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	54% - 108	\$ 55 - € 88

*INCREDIBLY SMOOTH AND RICH.*

Distilled in Indiana, it is a single malt whisky made in US with the use of 100% malted barley and aged in new charred American oak barrels for four years. It was introduced in March 2023 and it joined the Limestone Branch Distillery Company's core range.

It delivers scents of cereals, oak, some vanilla, honey, and a hint of petrichor—nuances of stewed apples. The palate is smooth. There are cereals biscuits, vanilla pods, honey, and a touch of spices, together with ripe yellow fruit and some spices. The finish is medium in length, with vanilla, cereals, honey, and a hint of cinnamon.

92

7



Reservoir  
Grey Ghost

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% - 100	\$ 125 - € 150

*AN EXPLOSION OF FLAVORS.*

The Grey Ghost Bottled in Bond is crafted from 100% locally grown Virginia rye and has been aging in 5-gallon Gibb casks since February of 2018, maturing for nearly five years. As per the American Bottled in Bond Act, it is made by one distillery, during one season, proofed at 100 (50% ABV), and aged for at least four years in a bonded warehouse.

Scents of red fruits, with bitter sherry, oak, white pepper, a hint of vanilla, and milk chocolate with raisins. The palate is mellow and a little on the dry side. There are oak, and rich balsamic notes, with cardamon, chestnut honey, and star anise. The finish is medium long, with oak, spices, and balsamic notes. Complex and boasting a broad flavor profile.

92



8



Armorik  
Maitre de Chai

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
France	50% - 100	\$ N/A - € 81

AN ORCHESTRA OF FLAVORS.

This edition for 2023 from the French Breton distillery was released in a total of 2.500 bottles. It is a true "carte blanche" given to Cellar Master, Erwan Lefebvre. Several barrel types have been used: Savennières, Pineau des Charentes, Banyuls, STR Vinho, Bourbon, Sherry & French Oak.

Aromas are well interweaved, for great aromatic complexity. Winery components, fresh and fruity, provide a global white wine sensation, with orchard fruit, fresh grapes and yellow apples. Later sweet spicy notes take over on top of a balanced woody background. Fruity freshness is the leitmotiv. Some minor exotic fruits notes are ephemeral and fleeting. Light custard and vanilla ice cream. Interesting and complete.

91

9



Bernheim  
7yo Wheat Whiskey

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	45% - 90	\$ 45 - € 59

CLEAN AND BALANCED.

This release from Heaven Hill Distillery is named after the famed Bernheim Distillery in Louisville. The mash bill is composed of 51% wheat, 37% corn, 12% malted barley.

It is a hymn to pleasant drinkability, with medium intensity, clean, approachable and balanced. Body is light and the spirit is rather "high". Main aromatic notes are played on juicy orange, orange honey, vanilla, fresh oak and a refreshing, slightly bitter herbal component with some sweet spices. The core is sweet, of light toffee and caramel, with vanilla powder and juicy peach and orange. Compared to wheated bourbons, creaminess is not the main characteristic, rather it is dominated by the easy approach and the fruity dimension.

91

10



Bowmore  
10yo Aston Martin

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	40% - 80	\$ N/A - € 89

SHERRY AND PEAT.

This release is part of a collaboration between the two companies resulting in a series of 3 travel retail expressions (10yo, 15yo, and 18yo), named the Designed by Aston Martin collection.

Even if not possessing extended aging, it shows signs of products with much longer maturation. It is a well-crafted sherried product which, despite its basic 40% ABV, fills nose and mouth with elements such as tropical fruit and gentle peat( true trademarks of the distillery), raisins, bacon, orange and leather. The palate is also nicely put together, with several different quality sensations, such as "dark maple". This expression is far superior to the standard 10yo release.

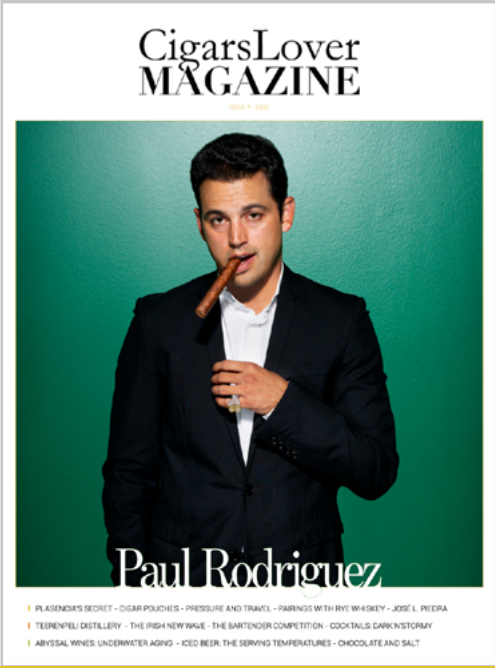
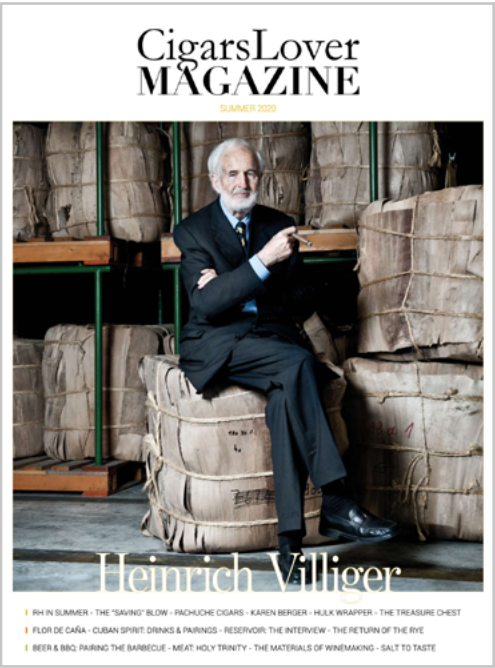
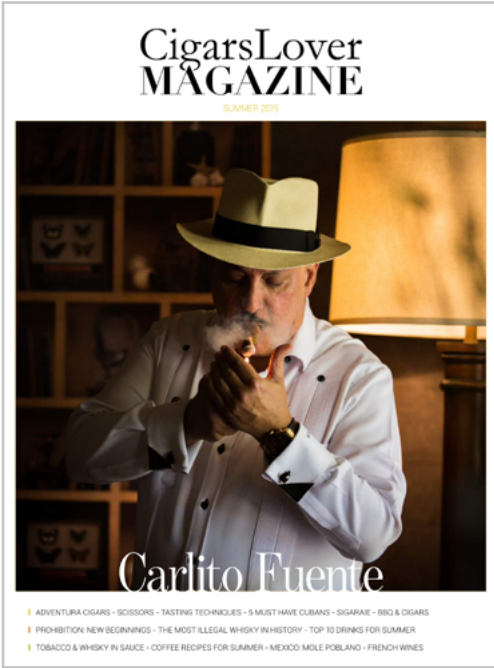
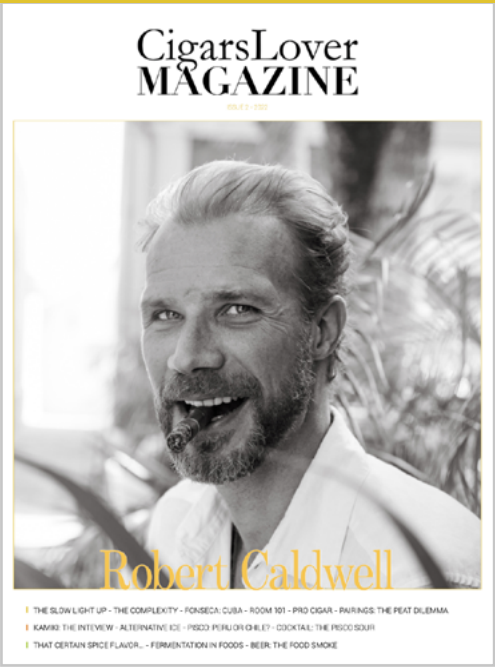
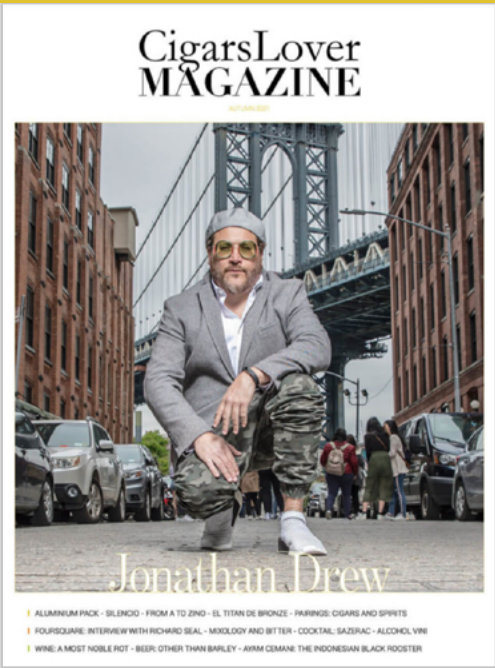
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BACK TO  
OUR ORIGINS

1947 ALADINO 1961  
BY JRE TOBACCO







# CIGARSLOVERS MAGAZINE

## DISCOVER ALL ISSUES







# THE BEST 50 CIGARS





# CUBA

1

## Bolívar New Gold Medal

*CREAMY, AND BALANCED.  
HAZELNUT, SPICES,  
AND LEATHER.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	48 x 165mm (6½")	N/A \$ - 27€	1h 30min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA

The Bolivar New Gold Medal was presented during this year’s Habanos Festival, and it was quickly made available to select retailers. Despite its name, the cigar is not entirely new. It takes inspiration from a previous cigar called the "Gold Medal," which was released in 2007 (Cervante, 42 x 165 mm - 6 1/2") for the La Casa del Habano distribution channel and discontinued shortly after. The new version has a different format from the previous one and is called Partagas No. 15 (48 x 165 mm - 6 1/2"). It was used by Habanos S.A. only in 2013 for the release of the Ramon Allones Replica del Humidor Antiguo.

Despite its freshness, the New Gold Medal cigar is already elegant, balanced, round, and creamy. A bit of age will enhance the smoke even further. The cigar’s strength complements its flavor profile perfectly.

The New Gold Medal releases vegetal and woody notes in the cold draw. Once lit, the smoke is very creamy, characterized by hazelnut, white pepper, and leather. In the middle section, the taste profile changes to include hints of balsamic herbs and fine wood. In the final third, coffee flavors emerge, reminiscent of espresso.

93





2

Quai d’Orsay  
Selection Royale  
ER Suiza

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x184mm (7¼")	N/A \$ - 30€	2h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



*ELEGANT & REFINED.  
VEGETAL, CITRUS,  
AND NUTS.*

The Selection Royale is presented in a format that Habanos S.A. reserves for particularly valuable and special productions, and not seen in standard offerings: the 109 size with its distinctive head. Sold in SLBs of 50, which quickly sold out, it offers a smoke in line with the brand's DNA.

The cigar starts with vegetal and woody aromas, which gradually transform into citrus and white pepper notes. As the smoke progresses, it delivers walnuts and leather, with a finish that has toasted notes. The strength of the cigar is balanced and not overwhelming, making it a very approachable smoke.

92

3

H. Upmann  
Magnum 50

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x159mm (5¼")	N/A \$ - 18€	1h 20min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



*BALANCED & BOLD.  
WOOD, LEATHER,  
AND EARTH.*

The Magnum 50 was launched in 2008, following the success of the Limited Edition of launched back in 2005. It is sold in aluminium tubes, 10, and 25 slide-lid-boxes. It quickly proved to be a standout smoke for the H. Upmann brand, and became a benchmark for comparing other sizes produced by Habanos S.A. Known for its refined and full-bodied profile, the smoke is never overpowering in strength.

The smoke begins with a combination of spices, wood, and leather notes, which gradually develop into earthy and walnut flavors as the smoke progresses.

91

4

Ramón Allones  
Allones No. 3

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x138mm (5¾")	N/A \$ - 16 €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



*ROUND & ELEGANT,  
LEATHERY, SPICY,  
AND NUTTY.*

The Allones No. 3 was announced back in 2021 but it was released in early 2023, as the new addition to the Ramon Allones portfolio after almost 50 years. It is now the fourth cigar in the brand's core range. It is sold in 10-count dress boxes. Despite being larger in size than the Allones Specially Selected, this cigar introduces a softer and rounder smoke that is just as satisfying as the brand's other offerings.

Upon lighting, the cigar presents notes of leather, cedar wood, and spicy nuances (particularly pepper). As it progresses, aromas of coffee, hazelnut, and vegetal hints are added to the mix.

90

5

Rafael Gonzales  
Coronas de Lonsdales

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	48x127mm (5")	N/A \$ - 11.5 €	45min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



*RUSTIC & COMPLEX,  
WOOD, WALNUT,  
AND COFFEE.*

Last February in Lisbon, the Rafael Gonzales Coronas de Lonsdales was introduced worldwide. This new size is a welcome addition to a brand that had previously only offered a few small, short sizes. It is sold in Semi boîte nature 10-count boxes. Despite being a relatively new product, it is a complex cigar that reflects the brand's rustic profile while also displaying traits of originality and elegance.

Upon lighting, the cigar delivers aromas of espresso, walnut, vanilla, and wood. Further into the smoke, the flavor profile reveals herbal notes, bitter cocoa, and nuances of white pepper.

90



# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



1

## Caldwell Long Live the Queen Queen’s Court

*GREAT COMPLEXITY AND EVOLUTION.  
SPICES, LEATHER,  
AND NUTS.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	52x127mm (5½")	14 \$ - N/A €	45min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	CAMEROON	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA

Caldwell Cigars’ Long Live the Queen line is the latest addition to the regular production portfolio of the brand. Originally planned for a fall release in 2022, the line didn’t arrive at stores until the beginning of 2023. Long Live the Queen comes in five sizes: Ace of Hearts (this was a limited edition that is now a regular production size), Club, Crown, Court, and Sword. The artwork is a nod to the African origin of the wrapper.

The cigars are sold in 10-count white boxes, and they are rolled at the Ventura family’s El Maestro factory. Two bands dress these masterfully made cigars, wrapped up in an oily Cameroon leaf. The cigar delivers a huge complexity and evolution. The flavor profile is unique and structured, while the smoke is, at the same time, satisfying but makes you crave another one immediately.

The first few puffs are spicy, with intense piquant notes enriched by citrus aromas. The first third opens up with white pepper, citrus, earth, and nutty notes. The middle third confirms the citrus and the vegetal notes; the nuttiness is still present but relegated to the aftertaste. The last third is a riot of spices, with vegetal notes, earth, leather, and roasted coffee beans. The balance is great from the first to the finale.

96

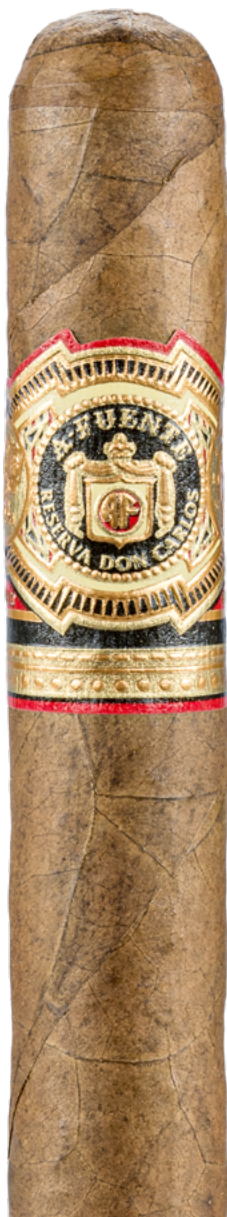




2

Arturo Fuente  
Don Carlos  
Presidente

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x165mm (6½")	13.5 \$ - 27.5 €	55min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	CAMEROON	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*CREAMY & COMPLEX.  
LEATHER, NUTS, AND  
COFFEE BEANS.*

The Don Carlos line was named after the Don Carlos Fuente, the creator of the blend. Vintage tobaccos, aged up to ten years, are used in this blend, that features an African Cameroon wrapper. Among the ten vitolas in the line, the Presidente is the biggest size. They are sold in 25-count dress boxes.

Nutty notes, together with leather and spices, give way to the smoke. Then citrus aromas refresh the flavor profile. The smoke is creamy and in the second half, notes of coffee beans and cinnamon are added. There are also rich spicy nuances, that intensify getting closer to the finale.

94

3

Davidoff  
Millennium Lancero  
LE Collection 2023

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	40x178mm (7")	29 \$ - 35 €	1h 30min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*COMPLEX & DEEP.  
COFFEE, COCOA, AND  
BALSAMIC NUANCES.*

This Lancero features an Ecuadorian 151 hybrid wrapper and it represents a restage of the former Millennium Blend Lancero. It is sold in elegant 10-count boxes. A masterfully balanced cigar, from the first to the last puff. The evolution is perceivable, and the flavor profile is complex and deep.

It delivers notes of roasted coffee, earth, cocoa, and a hint of undergrowth, together with balsamic nuances perceivable in the aftertaste. Then, white pepper and a touch of wild honey enrich the flavor profile, which is completed by walnut, oak wood, and a mix of black and white pepper.

93

4

La Aurora  
120th Anniversary  
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	14 \$ -12.4 €	45min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*BOLD & FLAVORFUL.  
BLACK PEPPER, NUTS,  
AND ESPRESSO.*

La Aurora is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year, and to commemorate the historic occasion, they have introduced a new regular production line. This Dominican puro is bold, flavorful, and full-bodied, with all these attributes in perfect harmony, resulting in a very well-balanced smoke.

It begins with intense black pepper and espresso aromas, which remain prominent throughout the smoke. Later on, walnut, leather, and balsamic nuances are added, accompanied by a light sweetness that occasionally comes through. The finale is spicy, leaving a pleasant and satisfying aftertaste.

92

5

La Gloria Cubana  
Serie S Maduro  
Robusto Gordo

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	56x140mm (5½")	8 \$ - N/A €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, DOMINICAN REP.



*BOLD & BROAD.  
COCOA, COFFEE,  
AND SPICES.*

Following up the La Gloria Cubana Serie S, the brand introduced the Maduro version this year. It is the first time the La Gloria Cubana brand has used a Mexican San Andrés Maduro wrapper. The cigars are made at the El Credito factory, an area within the General Cigar Dominicana. The hefty cigar is characterized by a bold, broad and flavorful profile, supported by a medium-full strength level.

The cigar opens with toasted bread and cocoa, later joined by leather, black pepper and walnut. Coffee and wood aromas are added in the second half. The smoke becomes spicier and balsamic towards the end.

91



# HONDURAS

1

## Gran Habano

### Connecticut #1

### Gran Robusto

*GREAT EVOLUTION AND INTENSITY.  
SPICES, VEGETAL NOTES,  
AND CEDARWOOD.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	54x152mm (6")	7.5 \$ - 10.5 €	1h 15min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

The Gran Habano Connecticut #1 belongs to the core range of blends from the company. They are made at their G.R. Tabacaleras Unidas S.A. factory in Danlí, Honduras. The Connecticut #1 comes in an array of classic and modern sizes: Churchill, Gran Robusto, Imperial, Lancero, Lunch Break, Pyramid, Robusto, Rothschild, and Short Robusto. All sizes are sold in beautifully ornate green boxes. The Churchill, Gran Robusto, and Pyramid are also sold in five-count fresh packs, while the Gran Robusto can also be found in ten-count boxes with the cigars in tubos.

The Gran Robusto delivers a creamy and smooth smoke. The cigar is elegant and boasts a nice evolution. The flavor profile is harmonious.

The opening delivers white pepper and wood, together with a vegetal hint. The first third turns to cedarwood, vanilla pod, and vegetal aromas, enriched by roasted notes and a touch of hazelnut. The persistence is long, with a rich mix of white pepper and piquant spices. In the middle third, the spices get more intense; the cedarwood is still there, now joined by earthy and slightly mineral aromas. There are some vegetal and balsamic notes in the background. The last third exhibits a riot of spices, with wild and white peppers, chili, and nutmeg. The cedarwood is now replaced with seasoned oak, the earth with cocoa, and roasted coffee beans.

95





2

Leaf by Oscar  
10th Anniversary  
Criollo Sixty

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	60x152mm (6")	12.5 \$ - N/A €	1h 30min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



*DEEP & EVOLUTIVE.  
COCOA, SPICES,  
AND LEATHER.*

The Leaf by Oscar, which is probably the most popular line from Valladares, celebrated its 10th anniversary. In honor of the occasion, this new regular production line was created. The enormous Sixty, a Honduran puro, doesn't smoke like your regular Gordo-sized cigar. It offers a complex and evolving profile you would expect from a smaller ring gauge.

The smoke opens up with an interesting mix of cinnamon, cocoa, nuts (mainly walnuts), and leather. As the smoke progresses, the profile changes to coffee and balsamic herbs, underlined by a noticeable sweetness, with the finale being spicy.

93

3

Flor de Selva  
Maduro  
Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	14 \$ - N/A €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



*COMPLEX & SMOOTH.  
COCOA, COFFEE,  
AND NUTS.*

Maya Selva Cigars is not known for frequently introducing new sizes to its portfolio, especially in the Maduro line. However, after seven years, they finally introduced a new Toro size to the Maduro line this fall. This Honduran puro delivers a classic Maduro experience, paired with a complex and smooth profile with a strength level that is always under control.

The smoke begins with flavors of cocoa, coffee, and white pepper, complemented by leather and nuts. Later, an espresso note is added, with a hint of cream in the background. In the finale, balsamic herbs appear, and the smoke becomes spicier.

92

4

Aladino  
Sumatra  
Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	16 \$ -N/A €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



*FULFILLING & BOLD.  
CINNAMON, NUTS,  
AND WOOD.*

The Aladino Sumatra introduces a more modern design to the brand due to the fourth generation of the Eiroa family playing a more prominent role in this release. This Honduran puro is made entirely from tobaccos grown by the family and reveals a broad flavor profile that gradually increases in strength, making for a satisfying smoking experience.

The smoke begins with notes of wood, earth, and hazelnut. As you progress, additional aromas of cream, herbs, and leather are added. The profile becomes spicier in the second half of the smoke, with a mix of black pepper and chili and the herbs turning balsamic.

91

5

Camacho  
Broadleaf  
Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	9.75 \$ -11.25 €	1h 15min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



*BALANCED & RICH.  
CINNAMON, PEPPER,  
AND TOASTED WOOD.*

The Camacho Broadleaf is the newest addition to the brand line-up. It features a broadleaf wrapper and this Toro is one of the three sizes available, the other two being Robusto and Gordo. The blend is made with a mix of Honduran and Dominican tobaccos and delivers a well-balanced smoke, enhancing the typical broadleaf flavors.

It exhibits incense and toasted wood, followed by cinnamon and some spices, mainly recalling the white pepper. Advancing in the smoke, more cinnamon and spices are developed on a rich and sapid base.

90



# NICARAGUA



1

## Plasencia

### Alma Fuerte Colorado Claro

### Eduardo I

*RICH AND FULFILLING.  
SPICES, EARTH,  
AND COFFEE.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	54x159mm (6¼")	22 \$ - 21 €	1h 15 min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

In 2016, Plasencia's Alma Fuerte line marked a new chapter for Plasencia, as it signified their renewed focus on cigars bearing their name on it. After the great success of these Nicaraguan puros, they introduced a new blend, in their signature Hexagon size, under the Alma Fuerte banner a couple of years later, the Colorado Claro. The blend was slightly tweaked, and the Colorado Claro wrapper, which it is named after, is aged for ten years. Now the Colorado Claro line is made up of three sizes, including the Eduardo I, named after Eduardo Plasencia, who was one of the first in the family to grow tobacco in 1865 in Cuba, after the family left the Canary Islands.

It develops a rich, complex and deep flavor profile, boasting a great balance and a never-ending persistence. The cigars are masterfully made, showcasing flawless construction.

It delivers earth, white pepper, and nuts enriched by piquant peaks. The middle third turns to a riot of spices, with wild peppers, white pepper, cinnamon, and hot spices on an earthy and nutty base. Then, hints of cappuccino, roasted notes of coffee with a touch of chocolate, and more hot spices, that intensify, reaching the final part, where the flavor profile is completed with vegetal and balsamic herbs.

95





2

Liga Privada  
10  
Selección de Mercado

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	N/A \$ -18 €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	U.S.A.	MEXICO	NICARAGUA, U.S.A.



*NUANCED & SMOOTH.  
CREAM, CINNAMON,  
AND NUTS.*

Introduced in the fall, the Liga Privada 10 Selección de Mercado is Drew Estate response to the international demand for Liga Privada. Exclusive for markets worldwide (US excluded), it took them years to gather enough raw material to create this new blend. The unique-looking cigar, finished with a flagtail and a closed foot, is not your regular Liga Privada.

Once lit, the smoke starts with cream, nuts, and light cinnamon notes. Further into it, leather and light herbal aromas join the profile. Towards the end, it becomes spicier, and the herbs become balsamic.

94

3

Metapa  
Maduro  
Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	16.5 \$ - N/A €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	U.S.A.	NICARAGUA



*RICH & FULFILLING. SPI-  
CES, HAZELNUT,  
AND LEATHER.*

Metapa is the latest addition to the portfolio of Foundation Cigars, and it is inspired by the birth town of the legendary Nicaraguan poet Rubén Dario. It is a tribute to the poetic soul of Nicaragua. This line comes in two versions, Claro and Maduro. The cigar is a powerhouse both in terms of flavor and strength, yet it remains well-balanced throughout the smoke.

A combination of citrus, cream, and white pepper gives way to the smoke, followed by nuances of herbs and cinnamon. Hazelnut, leather, and earth aromas are added in the second half, and the smoke becomes balsamic and spicier towards the end.

93

4

Mi Querida  
Black  
PapaSaka

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	48x143mm (5½")	15.95 \$ - N/A €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	U.S.A.	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP., HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



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

The PapaSaka is the second and newest cigar belonging to the Mi Querida Black line. It is sold in 10-count boxes, and the cigars are made at NACSA (Nicaragua America Cigar S.A.) in Estelí. A well-balanced cigar, boasting a great evolution and with a smooth flavor profile.

It delivers dark chocolate, earth, and rich white pepper. Advancing in the smoke, the spices become protagonists, with white pepper, cinnamon, and piquant peaks. There is a rich balsamic vein that goes very well with the rest of the flavor profile. In the final part, earth, incense, and roasted coffee alternate.

93

5

Rocky Patel  
Disciple  
Sixty

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	60x152mm (6")	14.35 \$ - 18.5 €	1h 30min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



*BALANCED & INTENSE.  
COCOA, COFFEE,  
AND SPICES.*

Sold in 20-count boxes, the cigars are wrapped up in large bands. Under them, a well-made cigar, dressed up in a chocolaty Maduro leaf. They are made at the company's Tabacalera Villa Cuba S.A. (TAVICUSA) in Estelí. A rich and bold cigar, with a marked evolution.

The first few puffs delivers earth, hay and leather, enriched by a rich spicy vein, made of black pepper and piquant peaks. The aftertaste is earthy and the smoke is almost meaty. Advancing, it delivers roasted coffee beans, and a touch of cocoa, followed by vegetal and balsamic herbs, the latter refreshing the flavor profile.

92



# REST OF THE WORLD

1

## Silencio

### Serie M

### Prominentes

*CREAMY AND SMOOTH.  
MILK CHOCOLATE, COFFEE  
AND LEATHER.*

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	50x178mm (7")	N/A \$ - 29.5 €	1h 40min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
U.S.A.	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA

Silencio Cigars quietly introduced the latest addition to their growing international portfolio, the Serie M Prominentes, a limited edition release. The Serie M is a unique project for the brand, since, compared to their other lines, it is made in the USA. The M in the brand name stands for Miami. To be more specific, they are produced at the renowned El Titan de Bronze factory located on the Calle 8 street in Little Havana, Miami. The cigars come in with a closed foot and a flag tail finish on the head. They are packaged in detailed ten count boxes with an inlay that safely houses each cigar. The boxes also feature the blend details inside.

The Prominentes delivers a creamy and smooth smoke. The cigar is elegant and boasts a nice evolution. The flavor profile is harmonious.

The opening brings notes of milk chocolate, wood, and a hint of leather to the palate. Advancing in the smoke, a vegetal touch is added, together with some light spices in the background, recalling sumac. The second third turns to roasted coffee beans aromas enriched by leather and walnut. In the last third, a rich vegetal and balsamic vein in the background, together with piquant peaks, completes the flavor profile.



93



2

Great Wall  
GL No. 3

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	54x156mm (6 ⅞")	32 \$ - 30 €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CHINA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	CHINA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*COMPLEX & ROUND.  
LEATHER, SPICES, AND  
COFFEE BEANS.*

The GL No.3 is finished with a fuse cap. In the filler of this cigars, there is a new variety of tobacco grown in China, the “Dexue”, which is cultivated in Daquankeng. Before reaching the market, the cigars undergo an aging process of three years. It delivers a complex smoke, well-balanced for the whole length. The flavor profile is deep, and the puffs are creamy and round.

The cigar opens with rich roasted coffee beans notes, enriched by a mix of hazelnut and cedarwood. In the middle part, it exhibits leather, cream, and pepper, while the ending third is herbal and with a spicy finish to it.

92

3

Atabey  
Dioses  
10-Year Extra Aged

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x203mm (8")	36 \$ - N/A €	2h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
COSTA RICA	ECUADOR	N/A	PERU, N/A



*RICH & SMOOTH.  
WHITE PEPPER, HONEY,  
AND FLORAL.*

As the name states, compared to the regular line, the only difference with this Dioses is that it has been aged ten years in humidity-controlled cedar-lined and French oak-lined rooms. This hefty cigar reveals an unparalleled smoothness from start to finish, paired with a balanced, flavorful profile and impeccable burn throughout.

The first draw reveals floral aromas, followed by notes of wood, honey, hazelnut, and cream. Progressing further into the cigar, a white pepper note develops with a sweet base. Towards the end, a pleasant bitter nuance comes through together with herbs.

92

4

Lampert  
Oro Line  
Don Patron

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	15 \$ - 8.95 €	1h
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
COSTARICA	ECUADOR	ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, PERU



*EVOLVING & UNIQUE.  
CAPPUCCINO, WHITE  
PEPPER, HAZELNUT.*

The Oro line by Lampert Cigars is produced in Costa Rica, along with the Ocean Breeze, and the blend contains a Peruvian Pelo de Oro tobacco. The Don Patron is a Toro-sized cigar that delivers a well-balanced smoke with a complex and intriguing flavor profile.

At the start, the cigar gives off a noticeable aroma of cappuccino and cream, which is later accompanied by hints of hazelnut, white pepper, and vegetal notes. The profile becomes more herbal in the second half, and the white pepper transforms into black pepper. A fresh balsamic scent emerges during the finale, and the smoke becomes spicier.

91

5

Bongani  
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x127mm (5")	11.9 \$ - 13 €	45min
COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MOZAMBIQUE	CAMEROON	MOZAMBIQUE	MOZAMBIQUE, ZIMBABWE



*BOLD & INTENSE.  
WOOD, NUTS, AND  
BLACK PEPPER.*

Bongani, which translates to "be grateful" in English, is the first African cigar produced in Mozambique. Its blend consists solely of tobacco grown on the African continent, and is highlighted by a Cameroon wrapper. The smoke produced by this African puro is both intense and flavorful yet also harmonious and round. It is an interesting smoking experience.

It begins with black pepper and wood notes, followed by a nutty aroma. A subtle sweetness underlies the background, and in the second half, bitter chocolate, zest, and balsamic herbs are introduced. The finale is spicy.

90



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INTERACTIVE
















BEST



















































50

CIGARS

of the

YEAR

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
96	1. Olmec Claro Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$
	<div><div><div>RATING ON A 100 POINTS SCALE</div></div><div><div>POSITION, BRAND, LINE AND CIGAR NAME</div></div><div><div>PLACE WHERE THE CIGAR IS MADE</div><div><div> BAHAMAS</div><div> CHINA</div><div> DOMINICAN REP.</div><div> ITALY</div><div> NICARAGUA</div><div> CANARY I.</div><div> CUBA</div><div> HONDURAS</div><div> MEXICO</div><div> U.S.A.</div></div><div><div>RING GAUGE AND LENGTH</div><div><div>• LIGHT</div><div>•• LIGHT TO MEDIUM</div><div>••• MEDIUM</div><div>•••• MEDIUM TO FULL</div><div>••••• FULL</div></div><div><div>\$ BELOW 7</div><div>\$\$ FROM 7 TO 11</div><div>\$\$\$ FROM 11 TO 15</div><div>\$\$\$\$ FROM 15 TO 20</div><div>\$\$\$\$\$ ABOVE 20</div></div></div></div></div>				

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
96	1. Caldwell Long Live the Queen Queen's Court		52 x 127 mm (5")	•••	\$\$\$
	2. Plasencia Alma Fuerte Eduardo I		54 x 159mm mm (6½")	••••	\$\$\$\$\$
95	3. Gran Habano Connecticut #1 Gran Robusto		54 x 152 mm (6")	••	\$\$
	4. Drew Estate Liga Privada 10 Seleccion de Mercado		52 x 152mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$\$
94	5. Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Presidente		50 x 165mm (6½")	•••	\$\$\$
	6. Silencio Serie M Prominentes		50 x 178 mm (7")	••••	\$\$\$\$\$
93	7. Metapa Maduro Toro		52 x 152mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	8. Mi Querida Black PapaSaka		48 x 143mm (5⅝")	••••	\$\$\$\$\$
92	9. Bolivar New Gold Medal		48 x 165mm (6½")	•••	\$\$\$\$\$
	10. Davidoff Millenium Lancero Limited Edition 2023		40 x 178mm (7")	•••	\$\$\$
91	11. Leaf by Oscar 10th Criollo Sixty		60 x 152mm (6")		
	12. Quai d'Orsay Sélection Royale ER Suiza		50 x 184mm (7¼")	•••	\$\$\$\$\$
90	13. Rocky Patel Disciple Sixty		60 x 152mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	14. Joya de Nicaragua Cinco de Cinco Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$\$
90	15. La Aurora 120th Anniversary Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5")	••••	\$\$\$
	16. Flor de Selva Maduro Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$
90	17. Great Wall GL No.3		54 x 156mm (6⅙")	••••	\$\$\$\$\$
	18. Atabey Dioses 10-Year Extra Aged		50 x 203mm (8")	•••	\$\$\$\$\$
90	19. West Tampa White Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$
	20. Nat Cicco Aniversario 1965 Liga No.4 Robusto		52 x 127 mm (5")	••••	\$\$
90	21. La Gloria Cubana Serie S Maduro Robusto Gordo		56 x 140mm (5¼")	••••	\$\$
	22. Aladino Sumatra		52 x 152mm (6")	••••	\$\$
90	23. Blackened M81 Cigars by Drew Estate Toro		52 x 152mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$
	24. Hiram & Solomon Unity		52 x 152mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$\$
90	25. ADVentura La Llorona Robusto		52 x 127mm (5")	••••	\$\$\$
	26. Lampert Oro Line Don Patron		52 x 152mm (6")	•••	\$\$\$\$
90	27. Davidoff Aniversario No.1 Limited Edition 2023		48 x 220mm (8⅔")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	28. Room101 14th Anniversary Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••••	\$\$\$
90	29. H. Upmann Magnum 50		50 x 159mm (6¼")	••••	\$\$\$\$
	30. HVC Hot Cake Golden Line Laguito No.5		54 x 152mm (6")	•••	\$
90	31. CAO Amazon Basin Extra Anejo		52 x 152 mm (6")	••••	\$\$\$
	32. Valentino Siesto Box Pressed Maduro Toro		52 x 140mm (5½")	•••	\$\$\$\$
90	33. Alec Bradley Magic Toast 5th Anniversary		54 x 178mm (7")	•••	\$\$\$
	34. Camacho Broadleaf Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$
90	35. Don Lino Africa Duma		50 x 127 mm (5")	••••	\$
	36. AJ Fernandex New World Dorado Corona		48 x 143 mm (5⅝")	•••	\$
90	37. Crux Limitada The Show		52 x 127mm (5")	•••	\$
	38. Aliados Original Blend Robusto		50 x 127mm (5")	•••	\$
90	39. Tatuaje 7th Tuxtla		46 x 143mm (5⅝")	••••	\$
	40. EPC Pledge Lonsdale Limitada		43 x 165mm (6½")	•••	\$\$\$
90	41. Vegafina Fortaleza 2 Reposado 10 Años		54 x 140mm (5½")	•••	\$
	42. Laura Chavin La Ligue Des Divins Toro		52 x 149mm (5⅞")	•••	\$\$\$\$
90	43. Ramon Allones Allones No.3		52 x 138mm (5⅜")	•••	\$\$\$\$
	44. Chateau Diadem Conviction Belicoso		55 x 140mm (5½")	••	\$\$\$
90	45. Matilde Limited Exposure No. 2 Toro		52 x 152 mm (6")	•••	\$
	46. Macanudo Inspirado Orange Lancero		38 x 190mm (7½")	•••	\$
90	47. Rafael Gonzales Lonsdale		48 x 127 mm (5")	••••	\$\$\$
	48. Quai d'Orsay No.54		54 x 133mm (5¼")	•••	\$\$\$
90	49. Bongani Robusto		50 x 127 mm (5")	•••	\$\$\$
	50. Partagas Serie D No.4		50 x 124mm (4⅞")	••••	\$\$\$\$



# BEST BRANDS



# Best Brand Cuba

The Quai d'Orsay is the only Cuban cigar brand that was created at the request of an importer. In 1970, the French government invited SEITA, which requested Cubatabaco's top management to produce a cigar for the French market. The importer asked for explicit guarantees from Cuban producers: including making a brand that was to be distributed exclusively in the French market; handmade products with Vuelta Abajo tobacco; a Corajo wrapper of a Claro hue; and moderate in strength.

After years of work, five sizes were presented in 1974, first to the press and then to selected French tobacconists. Corona Claro (42 x 142 mm - 5 1/2", vitola de galera Corona), Corona Claro Claro (42 x 142 mm - 5 1/2"), Panetela (33 x 178 mm - 7", Ninfa), Gran Corona (42 x 155 mm - 6 1/10", Corona Grande) and the Imperiale (47 x 178 mm - 7", Julieta no. 2). The new brand, in addition to receiving positive feedback from French smokers, also attracted the attention

of aficionados the world over. However, Quai d'Orsay started losing its luster between 1990 and the early 2000s. Despite a relaunch in 2005, the brand's history seemed destined for decline, but new life was given to the brand thanks to the Regional Editions. In 2011 the brand's first Regional Edition release, intended for the French market, was launched. By 2023, even though the economic partnership between Cuba and the French importer had been lost for decades, six out of eleven references in the Regional Edition have been released for France, underlining the brand's undeniable history between the two countries. Although only the Coronas Claro remains alive of the five formats launched in 1974, Quai d'Orsay can count on the reliability of its three new products: No. 50 and 54 (released in 2017) and No. 52 (2023). All three are offered in boxes of 10 and 25 cigars and enjoy high production consistency. Additionally, the release of ERs, such as the Selection Royale ER for Switzerland, provides a noteworthy smoke and underlines the great year Quai d'Orsay has had.



# Best Brand Dominican Rep.

Arturo Fuente, one of the most prestigious cigar brands, had humble beginnings in 1912 in West Tampa, Florida. In 1924, a fire destroyed the factory, but 22 years later, Arturo Fuente restarted the brand and began producing cigars made from Cuban tobacco for the local market on his back porch. In 1958, the company was sold to his younger son, Carlos Fuente Sr., for one dollar. Carlos expanded the company to New York, but after the embargo, he had to look for tobacco from new regions. The family tried to move production to other countries, but the quality of these factories was insufficient. In 1970, they built their factory in Estelí, Nicaragua, but it was burned down during the Nicaraguan Revolution only nine years later. Carlos and his son Carlito invested everything they had left and built their factory in Santiago, Dominican Republic, in 1980.

Despite many disasters, the family always stood back up. In the 1980s, they scored their first success with the intro-

duction of the Hemingway line. They also grew their own wrapper in the Dominican Republic, which is used for the luxurious Opus X line. The Opus X line recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Last year, they announced a collaboration with Padrón and released the Fuente y Padron Legends, which is dedicated to both the late Carlos Fuente Sr. and Jose O. Padrón.

This year, Arturo Fuente presented several new releases, including the Don Carlos Eye of the Bull and the Impossible Collection. They also launched the Arturo Fuente Dream to Dynasty project, in collaboration with Assouline Books. The project features a book and two cigar boxes that look like a book. Despite its long history, Arturo Fuente remains relevant in the modern world, thanks to the consistency of its products, underlined by the placement of the classic Don Carlos Presidente in our Awards. All of these factors combined make it another fantastic year for the brand.





# Best Brand Honduras

Oscar Valladares' journey into the cigar industry was almost destined. He started by working for a travel agency, where he would often take Rocky Patel's groups on tours to the factory. Rocky was impressed with his work and soon invited him to join his team. Oscar worked for Rocky for nine years, during which he met Bayron Duarte, who had over twenty years of experience in the industry and had worked for General Cigars and Oliva. A long-lasting friendship was formed between the two. Together with Hector Valladares, they founded the factory in 2012 in Danlí, Honduras, and began operations. The rest, as they say, is history.

Last year, the company celebrated its ten-year anniversary. This year marks the tenth anniversary of arguably Oscar's most successful and recognizable line, the LEAF by Oscar, that started as a private label cigar made for Jim "Island Jim" Robinson's cigar store called Leaf and Bean. The trademark

of the line is the tobacco leaf that is rolled around the finished cigar. Nowadays, the line comes in five wrapper variations, including the new Criollo, specifically created for the aforementioned anniversary. After the successful launch, Oscar's portfolio expanded to sixteen brands over the decade of the company's existence, including 2012 by Oscar, LEAF by Oscar, The Oscar, Ciserón, Altar Q, Super Fly, Heaven and Hell, and more. The company also established a warehouse in Europe to expand its presence. In 2023, Oscar continued to build on this momentum by adding several new releases to his impressive portfolio. These included LEAF by Oscar 10th Anniversary Criollo, which was mentioned earlier. Additionally, the 2012 line, the first commercially available line from the brand, received a new blend variation: the 2012 by Oscar Sumatra. The Oscar line also expanded with a Connecticut blend that uses a Honduran Connecticut wrapper. Lastly, the company introduced Santiago Valladares, an exclusive line for the European market that is dedicated to Oscar's son.



# Best Brand Nicaragua

The relationship between Steve Saka, founder of Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust, and cigars began while he was serving in the Navy in 1984. After over a decade, in 1999, he received his first job in the cigar industry from Lew Rothman, the former owner of JR Cigars, where he worked directly under him as an executive consultant. In 2005, he partnered with a growing company called Drew Estate and became its president and later CEO. After eight years, he decided to leave Drew Estate, the hottest company in the industry, which he had helped bring to that point. Two years later, in 2015, he fulfilled his dream of establishing his own company in Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust.

In the short period of time since then, his company has become one of the most sought-after brands in the industry. Their portfolio includes highly acclaimed lines such as Sobremesa, Sin Compromiso, Mi Querida, Muestra de

Saka, and many more. This year has been a steamroller of a year for the company, as they have launched one successful line after another, like the Mi Querida Black Papa Saka (which made it into our awards), a national release of the Red Meat Lovers line, the Muestra de Saka Krakatoa, the StillWell Star Limited Edition Holiday Y2023, and the Unicorn size in the Mi Querida Black and Sobremesa Brûlée Blue blends. Additionally, they have released a couple of exclusive lines like the U-Boat, the Halligan, and the Sobremesa Brûlée Wagashi. With so much going on, the release of Polpetta, which was planned for this year, had to be pushed back to January of next year. Throughout all this, DTT has managed to do well in numerous blind tastings during the year, underlining its ethos of making cigars without compromise even more.

The sum of all of these achievements makes for a year that is hard to match by anyone's standards.





# Best Brand Rest of the World

Nelson Alfonso Egüed, the founder and creative mind behind Selected Tobacco S.A., is a unique personality in the cigar industry. He was born in Cuba and spent part of his adolescence in Stockholm, Sweden. After returning to Cuba, he graduated from the Higher Institute of Graphic Design and Visual Communication at the University of Havana. His professional career in the fine arts and design sector includes being a plastic artist, painter, designer, ceramist, and photographer. Some of his work has been exhibited in galleries all over the world.

Nelson is also recognized in the premium tobacco field. He has designed famous Cuban brands such as Montecristo, Partagás, Romeo y Julieta, and even the Cohiba “Behike”. In 2010, he launched Selected Tobacco S.A. and created the brands Atabey, Byron, and Bandolero.

Over the years, the company has grown significantly, and all

of Nelson's brands have become some of the most prestigious products in the market. From the immaculate design and packaging to the highest quality of tobaccos for its cigars, they are as premium as it gets. All the cigars are made in the Tabacos de Costa Rica factory in Santiago de Puriscal, Costa Rica.

2023 has been particularly eventful for Selected Tobacco S.A., with the launch of various new releases, which is quite uncommon for the brand. They have followed up the success of the Alfonso Añejo line with the Alfonso Gran Selección, the Atabey Black Ritos (which has turned from NFT to physical cigar), the Atabey Dioses 10-Year Extra Aged (which made it into our awards), the Atabey Limited Edition Humidor, and launched limited edition ashtrays and humidors under the Byron banner. Every release from the company is a sight to behold, and there are definitely more eye-catching pieces coming our way in the future, and we are excited about it.

## Selected Tobacco Totally Handmade Cigars





# BEST BOUTIQUE CIGARS







## WEST TAMPA

### *White Toro*

*BUTTERY AND CREAMY.*

Industry veteran Rick Rodriguez launched West Tampa Tobacco Co. last year, and the White line was one of the two first blends he presented to the world. It delivers an ample flavor profile, made of cinnamon, white pepper, mineral notes, hay, and a touch of coffee. In the second half, nuances of citrus, peanut, and white pepper appear.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	52x152mm (6")	92

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h	10 \$ - 10.5 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA



## HVC HOT CAKE

### *Golden Line Laguito No.5*

*INCREDIBLY SMOOTH AND ROUND.*

Produced at the company's own factory in Esteli, Nicaragua, the Golden Line was introduced in four sizes, including this Laguito No.5. Vegetal notes, cream and white pepper are joined by evident cappuccino notes in the first half. The second half has aromas of nuts, bread, and herbs join the profile.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	54x152mm (6")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	30min	10 \$ - N/A €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



## HIRAM AND SOLOMON

### *Unity*

*RICH AND BALANCED.*

The Unity was moved to having its own packaging this year. Previously, it had only been available in a four-cigar sampler. The cigar delivers aromas of walnut and earth, together with nutty notes and rich black pepper. The second part adds balsamic notes, recalling anise, with nuances of nutmeg.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x152mm (6")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h	N/A \$ - 6.1 N/A

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
N/A	N/A	N/A



## VALENTINO SIESTO

### *Box Pressed Maduro Toro*

*BALANCED AND INTERESTING.*

Valentino Siesto has made quite the impact since stepping into the spotlight at last years Intertabac and this box pressed cigar continues the trend. The cigar opens with wood and cappuccino, with a floral nuance in the background. Aromas of mineral and cream, with a meaty sensation, join in the second half.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	52x140mm (5½")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h	23 \$ - 21 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



## ADVENTURA

### *La Llorona Robusto*

*RICH AND FULL.*

Inspired by Latin American folklore, the Llorona from Adventura Cigars is a single-sized line exclusively created for Elite accounts in the US. The cigars are sold in ten-count boxes. Intense aromas of wood, leather, and spices are present in the first half. They are later joined by dark chocolate and espresso.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	50x127mm (5")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	45min	16 - N/A €

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



## CHATEAU DIADEM

### *Conviction Belicoso*

*HARMONIOUS AND SATISFYING.*

The young company added two new sizes to their core line, Conviction, this year, including the Belicoso. Marked notes of wood, earth and nuts give way to the smoke supported by a subtle sweetness. White pepper is added in the second half and the smoke becomes spicier towards the finale.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	55x140mm (5½")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●	1h 10min	N/A \$ - 12.5 €

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



# Best Brand Boutique

Before Valentino Siesto got into cigar making, he designed jewelry and owned his own jewelry stores. After moving to the Dominican Republic, his passion for cigars was lit. The idea to create his own cigars was born in 2006, and the journey took him to numerous producing countries. After partnering up with Juan Gómez and building out his factory in the Dominican Republic, eight years later, they presented their first blends, without bands, to friends and smokers. In 2020, they turned to the international market and presented themselves for the first time at the InterTabac trade show in Germany in 2022. They made quite a splash. They have carried over the success of their first trade show into 2023 and showcased a handful of new products with exciting blends, intricate designs, and packaging. First up is a line dedicated to legendary world champion boxer Roberto Durán. This year's limited edition is called "Round 1". Each year, another round is planned to be added until "Round 12". The boxes are inspired by boxing rings, with actual ro-

pe-like features going around the box. Another eye-catcher is the "El Libro, Leyenda", a special wooden box resembling a book that contains 32 cigars (uncommon sizes in Habano and Connecticut versions) that have been aged for more than 15 years. Aside from that, they also presented the Nero Black Robusto Sun Grown, the Crazy Hours Press, and the Gran Toro Sun Grown. The attention to detail on all these new products is remarkable, and the cigars are as good as the packaging looks. Alongside the new releases, Valentino Siesto Cigars expanded its international footprint further and added many new markets to its distribution. They have also scored high ratings throughout the year in numerous blind tastings and even placed in our Awards this year in the Best Boutique Cigar section with the Valentino Siesta 67 Maduro Toro.

Combined, all this makes for one hell of a year for Valentino Siesto Cigars, and the future looks bright. We are looking forward to what they can come up with next.



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# BEST BUY CIGARS

In the past couple of years, we have seen an overall price increase in cigars throughout the boards, affecting the budget segment. With price being the pivotal reason for this list, we decided to confirm the cut-off for the eligibility to under 7 \$/€.







ZINO  
*Nicaragua Short Torpedo*

*BALANCED AND REFINED.*

After years of silence around the brand, Zino was revived last year with a fresh new design. The Short Torpedo is sold in four-count fresh packs or twenty-five-count boxes. It opens up with a touch of black pepper and earth. Then, a hint of wood and vegetal nuances. In the second half, balsamic herbs are added.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	48x102mm (4")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●	30min	6.2 \$ - 6.5 €

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



ALADINO  
*Corajo Santi*

*HARMONIOUS AND ELEGANT.*

The Aladino Corajo Santi is the slimmest cigar out of the core line, made of only Corajo tobacco. It is sold in either fifty-count boxes or handy five-count packs. This elegant Petit Panetela reveals zesty aromas of citrus peel, followed by cedarwood and nuts. Notes of white pepper and sour cream are added in the second half.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
HONDURAS	32x140mm (5½")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	30min	5.6 - N/A €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



VEGAFINA  
*1998 VF44S*

*INTENSE AND ROUND*

The VegaFina 1998 line is a nod to the year of the brand's inception. All tobaccos for this blend have aged for at least three years. This new short size was introduced this year. It exhibits earthy and peppery notes, enriched by a vegetal touch. In the background, there are white pepper and a hint of cinnamon.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	44x102mm (4")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	30min	N/A \$ - 6.1 N/A

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



GAR  
*American Standard Robusto*

*BOLD AND FLAVORFUL.*

The newest line from Gran Habano is specifically geared towards a more price-conscious smoker who doesn't want to sacrifice quality. All sizes, including the Robusto, are sold in fifty-count boxes. A mix of wood, leather, and black pepper is revealed in the first half. Later, notes of coffee and herbs join the flavor profile.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
HONDURAS	50x127mm (5")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	45min	5.5 \$ - N/A €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



VILLA ZAMORANO  
*Reserva Robusto*

*ROUND AND SMOOTH.*

The follow-up to the popular Villa Zamorano line, the Reserva, has been another hit for Maya Selva Cigars. The line is made up of six sizes and sold in boxes, compared to the regular line, which is sold in bundles. Earth, wood, and pepper are perceived in the first half. Notes of sour cream and nuts join in the second half.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
HONDURAS	50x127mm (5")	90

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	45min	6.9 \$ - 5.4 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



CAO  
*Cameroon Perfecto*

*BOLD AND DIRECT.*

The CAO Cigar brand has many lines dedicated to specific countries, six to be exact. Among these is the Cameroon line, which gets its name from the provenance of the wrapper. It develops aromas of earth, wood, black pepper, and roasted coffee notes. There is also a touch of cocoa present in some puffs.

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	48x101mm (4")	89

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	30min	5.8 \$ - 5.7 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



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