CigarsLover MAGAZINE

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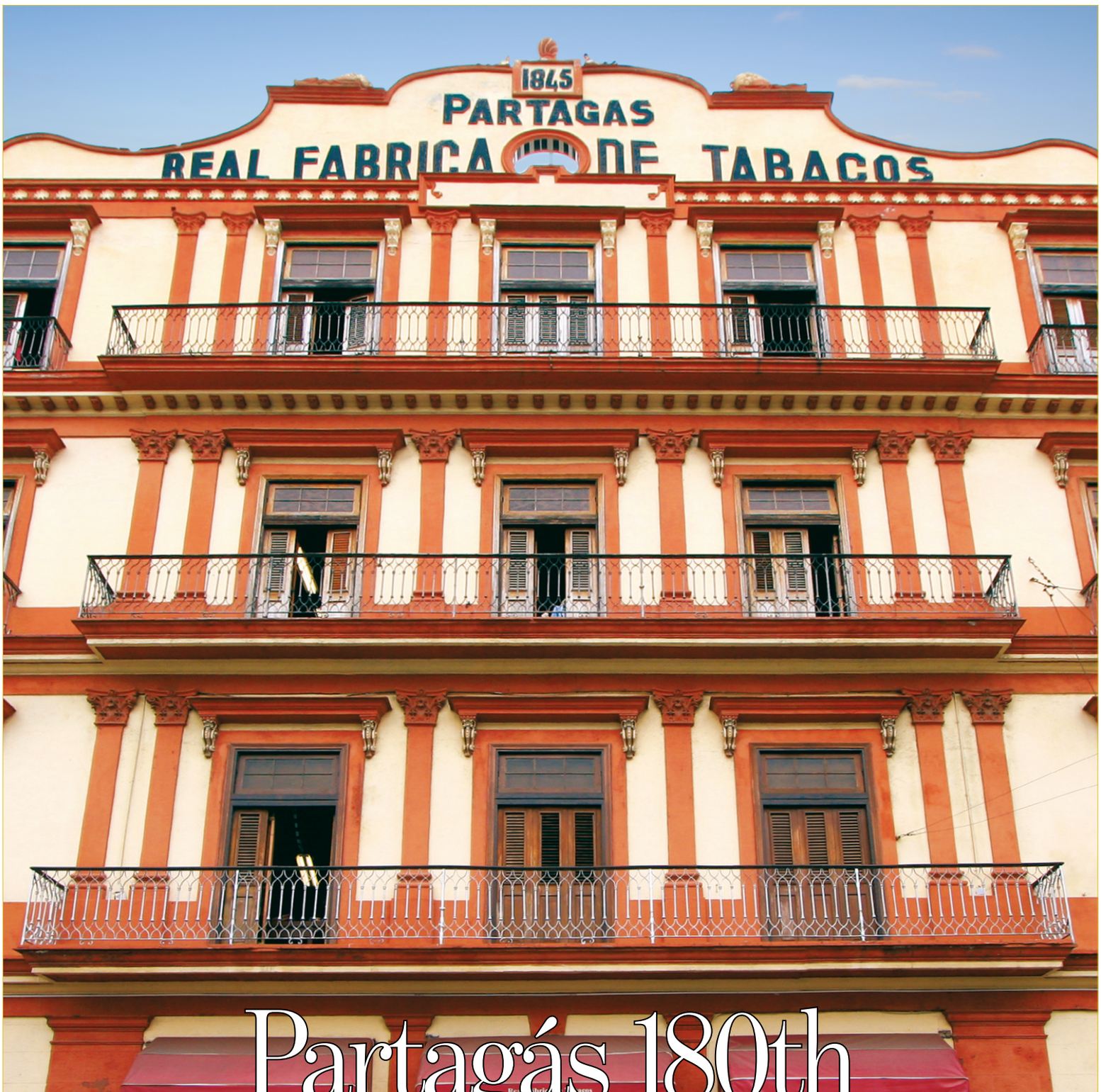

Partagás 180th

- AWARDS '25: THE BEST CIGARS, RUM & WHISKY - AIR-CURED OR SUN-CURED? - DUNBARTON TOB. & TRUST'S MISTRESS
- HOW TO READ LEGS IN SPIRITS - ABV OR PROOF IN SPIRITS: BY VOLUME OR BY FIRE - COCKTAILS: TRINIDAD SOUR
- PERLAGE & CIGARS: PAIRINGS WITH BUBBLES - THE MIRACLE OF GREY MOLD: FROM SAUTERNES TO MUFFATO DELLA SALA

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BY DREW ESTATE

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the Rebirth of Cigars

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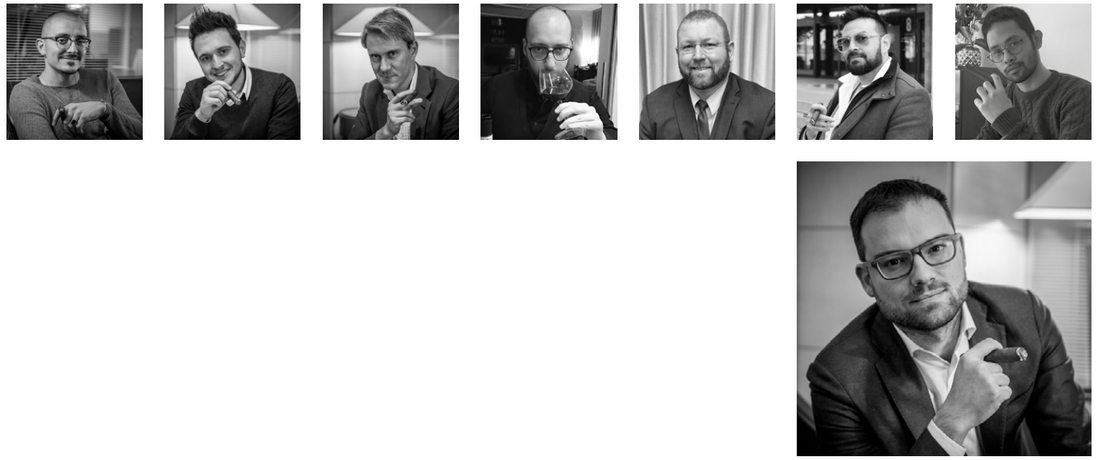

Editor's thoughts

A Journey Through the Year's Most Exceptional Cigars, Spirits, and Stories

As another year draws to a close, we once again find ourselves reflecting on the craftsmanship and traditions that continue to elevate the world of cigars and fine spirits. At the heart of this edition, you are going to find our Awards, curated through months of tastings, blind evaluations, travels, and conversations with producers. Within these pages, you'll find the very best: for cigars, The Best Cigars by Country, The Best 50 Cigars, The Best Cigar Brands, The Best Boutique Cigars, and The Best Boutique Brand. For spirits, The Best 10 Rums, The Best 10 Whiskies, and, new this year ,The Best Independent Bottlings, recognizing their growing impact on today's market.

Beyond the awards, this issue explores the deeper stories behind the smoke and the glass.We return to Cuba's legendary soul with a journey into one of its most revered brands, then shift to Steve Saka's passion for the Connecticut Broadleaf. For the technically curious, we also unravel the subtle variables in tobacco curing that quietly shape flavor. The spirits section offers equal depth: we reconsider an often-misunderstood visual cue, decode the meaning of ABV and proof, and examine a modern classic cocktail that boldly embraces bitters. We then explore The Miracle of the Grey Mold in winemaking and the pairing of five Champagnes with five cigars.

This issue is more than a collection of rankings and articles, it is a celebration of the craft behind every sip and every puff. Whether you are discovering new makers or revisiting familiar favorites, may these pages inspire you to savor more deeply, explore more broadly, and appreciate the extraordinary world that continues to unfold at the crossroads of tradition and innovation.

Thank you for joining us for another year of discovery.

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MADURO

#2
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AWARDS 2024
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Long live the Queen
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CIGARS

"I promised myself that if I ever had some money that I would savor a cigar each day after lunch and after dinner.
This is the only resolution of my youth that I have kept, and the only realized ambition which has not brought dissolution."
W. Somerset Maugham, Summing Up




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The House of Partagás

A look into the history and enduring legacy of one of Cuba's oldest and most celebrated cigar brands.

by **Michel Arlia**

Tall stands a neoclassical building at Calle Industria 520, where, for nearly two centuries, the Partagás factory has served as a temple to Cuban tobacco artistry. Here, a Spanish entrepreneur named Don Jaime Partagás Ravelo recognized that Cuba produced something no other land could replicate.

"La Flor de Tabacos de Partagás" is the full name of the Partagás brand, founded in Cuba in 1845 by Don Jaime. Jaime Partagás wasn't just a businessman; he was an innovator. He understood that to achieve greatness, you need to have control over every part of production. While many of his peers relied on buying tobacco from independent farmers, Partagás took a different approach, starting his own plantations in the Vuelta Abajo region. The rich soil, the microclimate, the morning mists that blanket the vegas, these natural elements, combined with generations of farming wisdom, produced some of the best tobacco in the world.



When the Real Fábrica de Tabacos Partagás rose in Havana, it stood as Don Jaime's crowning achievement. The entrepreneur realized that to make exceptional cigars, he needed to manage every part of the process, from growing the tobacco to the final product. The industrial building, with its maroon-and-cream exterior, clearly signaled that something special was happening inside.

Tobacco leaves from his Vuelta Abajo estates went through a careful fermentation process before they arrived at the factory. There, workers sorted and graded them for quality. In the main rolling rooms, workers sat in long rows at wooden desks, their hands transforming piles of loose tobacco leaves into traditional Cuban cigars of various sizes. One custom that distinguished Partagás was the "lector", a professional reader hired to read from books and newspapers to the rollers as they worked. This tradition not only educated generations of tobacco workers but also inspired the literary names that would later become popular among various cigar brands. By 1886, the factory had an estimated 400+ workers. Some of the top rollers could supposedly turn out 120 cigars a day.

Don Jaime's life ended tragically and mysteriously in 1868 when he was murdered on his farm in Vuelta Abajo. The details of his death are still unclear. Regardless of the reason, his death only added to his legend, and the brand that bears his name has continued to grow under new ownership.

After Don Jaime's mysterious death, his son, José Partagás, inherited the enterprise. José quickly recognized new challenges. On May 6, 1871, he publicly announced a patented design and trademark for their cigar boxes in response to counterfeit cigars being manufactured in the United States. The factory later passed to banker José A. Bances, who in 1899 partnered with Ramón Cifuentes. Cifuentes eventually took over ownership in 1900, and under his stewardship, the company experienced significant growth and flourished. After Ramón's death, the Cifuentes



family acquired the remaining rights to the brand and renamed it Cifuentes y Cía. The Cifuentes family took control and expertly managed Partagás through the first half of the twentieth century. By 1958, Partagás had become Cuba's second-largest cigar exporter after H. Upmann.

The revolution in 1959 changed everything. By 1960, Castro's administration had nationalized the factory, leading the Cifuentes family to leave Cuba. The factory was renamed the Francisco Pérez Germán Factory, severing its ties to the Cifuentes family, but it continued to operate for many years afterward.

Eventually, time caught up with the iconic building. Cigar production ceased at the original facility nearly a decade ago, and operations were relocated to a modern factory located at the corner of Calle San Carlos and Peñalver Street in Central Havana. The historic building closed for renovations in 2011, and many assumed it would reopen in restored glory. That hope dimmed in 2013 when a roof collapse forced a complete closure, including the popular La Casa del Habano cigar shop at its entrance.

The building behind Havana's Capitol still stands today, a testament to the rich history of tobacco artistry that spans nearly two centuries. Although it no longer produces cigars, the building remains essential to the Partagás legend, embodying Don Jaime's vision and the many skilled hands that have contributed to the story of Cuban cigars.

Why do people choose Partagás? For many, it is reliability. In a category where inconsistency can plague even prestigious brands, Partagás delivers. Box after box, year after year, fans attest that the cigars smoke true to their profile. There is also versatility. The portfolio includes staples in the Cuban cigar history. The Serie D No. 4 was once the most popular Cuban cigar in the world. From the Serie P No. 2, the 8-9-8, to the Lusitanias. Not forgetting the Presidentes, Salomones, and Culebras, which demonstrate the roller's skill in shaping tobacco into elegant, unconventional sizes. The brand's appreciation has even led to the creation of the so-called "Encuentro Amigos de Partagás," an annual event held in Cuba every November for nearly 40 years. No other brand in the Cuban portfolio has such a dedicated event.

This consumer loyalty is no accident. In a conversation with Alejandro Fernández-Blanco Barrero, Global Operational Marketing Deputy Director, he explained that Partagás continues to be one of the best-selling Habanos brands, consistently ranking among the top three brands in terms of volume over the past few decades and remaining one of the most significant in terms of value. Consumer studies conducted by the brand reveal that Partagás is highly appreciated for the complexity and distinctive character of its blend, as well as for its wide variety of formats, making it the brand of choice for many consumption moments, whether social or individual. Its strong recognition stems from the brand's long history and heritage, the great reputation of its tobacco, and the consistent guarantee of an intense and complex experience.

As Partagás celebrates its 180th anniversary in 2025, Fernández-Blanco Barrero emphasized the brand's enduring significance within the world of Habanos. Partagás reaffirms its status as one of the oldest and most prestigious brands in the portfolio. Renowned for its unique character and unmistakably intense flavor, Partagás offers a range that reflects both diversity and excellence, with formats designed to preserve the richness and intensity of its blend. Over the years, the brand has evolved significantly, including the modernization of its packaging with a new range for the tubes and tins of the Serie P No.2 and D No.4.

As a global Habanos brand, Partagás is among the most recognizable and best-selling, with distribution in more than 130 territories worldwide. Its relevance is further highlighted by numerous special releases, including 11 Limited Editions, from the first, Partagás Pirámides in 2000, to the most recent, Partagás Legado in 2020, alongside other specialties such as Reserva, Gran Reserva, Chinese Lunar Year editions, Travel Retail exclusives, and special humidors like Partagás Tropicales. Partagás also maintains a prominent presence at the Festival del Habano, where it is invariably included in the charity auction.

Partagás continues to enjoy strong global demand, reflecting the enduring strength of one of the most historic brands in the Habanos portfolio. Its ability to innovate across formats, specialties, aged tobaccos, and presentation styles has been a key factor in its long-term success. Today, Partagás is not only a brand that has adapted seamlessly to emerging trends but also one that helps define them.

The anniversary celebrations include two significant releases: Partagás Cedros and Partagás Royales. As Fernández-Blanco Barrero explained, there could be no better time



for these launches than 2025, a milestone year marking the 180th anniversary of Partagás, a symbol of character and exclusivity worldwide.

Habanos S.A.'s special editions dedicated to the Chinese Lunar Year began in 2020, and these limited, individually numbered productions have quickly become some of the most eagerly anticipated releases among premium cigar connoisseurs in Asia. The 2025 edition, Partagás Cedros, pays tribute to the fine cedar wood that has long played a fundamental role in preserving Habanos and symbolizes one of the five elements associated with the Chinese Lunar Year. This limited edition celebrates the Spring Festival of the Chinese New Year and is presented in an elegant special case containing 18 Habanos. With this release, Partagás not only honors the Chinese New Year but also celebrates its rich history and legacy, established over 180 years as one of the most iconic brands in the Habanos portfolio.

Similarly, Partagás Royales, created for Travel Retail and Duty Free, showcases both the global appeal of Partagás and its potential in these channels. The Duty Free and Travel Retail space is where travelers seek unique experiences and exclusive gifts, and this cigar combines the strength of tradition with a format designed for the most discerning connoisseurs. Although the Royales name has a historic presence in the Partagás catalogue, with an earlier version discontinued in the 1980s, this latest iteration, Dichosos, unveiled at the 2025 TFWA exhibition, signals the brand's commitment to honoring its heritage while offering new, exclusive formats for aficionados.

The romance of Partagás extends beyond the product itself. It connects the smoker to history, to Don Jaime's vision, to the rollers' hands, to the farmer tending his tobacco plants in Pinar del Río. It links the present to a storied past.

Today, Partagás remains one of Cuba's most revered cigar brands, celebrated for its bold, full-bodied character that has captivated aficionados for generations. When asked about the future, Fernández-Blanco Barrero affirmed that Habanos S.A.'s commitment to the brand is absolute, ensuring the maintenance of its reputation, quality, and its well-recognized flavor and character. This is complemented by ongoing innovation in formats and new releases for Habanos enthusiasts. While specific upcoming releases remain confidential, he assured that Partagás will continue to be developed as one of the world's premier premium cigar brands.

In the end, Partagás represents something larger than rolled-up tobacco. The next time you see that distinctive red-and-gold band, remember that you are holding nearly 180 years of history. Respect it. Savor it. Let it transport you across time and distance to a factory in Old Havana, where tradition lives in every carefully rolled leaf.



Rauchen ist tödlich – hören Sie jetzt auf. Fumer tue – arrêtez maintenant. Il fumo uccide – smetti subito.



Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust's mistress

A chat with DTT founder Steve Saka about his favorite tobacco..

by **Mark Trumpet**

Dark tobacco, used for cigars, is cultivated worldwide. Many different seed varietals are grown in each terroir, but some growing regions have made certain tobacco varietals famous. Said varietals are synonymous with their respective countries and, in most cases, are even named after the specific region. Brazil has Mata Fina. Mexico has San Andrés. Indonesia has Sumatra. And the US has Connecticut. Not just one, but two: the Connecticut Shade and its older brother, the Broadleaf (which was the only varietal grown up to the late 19th century). The bold, earthy, and yet sweet Connecticut Broadleaf is the favorite tobacco used for wrapper by yours truly, and many share the same appreciation for this storied leaf. Among the more famous appreciators in the cigar world is Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust's very own founder and master blender, Steve Saka.

Steve's love for the Connecticut Broadleaf goes way back to his early years as a cigar smoker, and it is reflected in the extensive use of this leaf in his blend, so we decided to dig deeper and ask him a couple of questions regarding his querida (beloved in Spanish), the Connecticut Broadleaf.

Can you recall the first time you worked with Connecticut Broadleaf? What was that experience like, and how has your relationship with the leaf evolved since?

My first time touching Connecticut Broadleaf in a pilon was in the late 90's with Sr. Frank Llaneza, who was universally considered the "Godfather of Broadleaf". His factory was the crafter of many of my favorite Broadleaf cigars in the 80s and 90s, like Punch, Hoyo de Monterrey, and El Rey del Mundo. I sponged as much info as I could from him and his factory's General Manager, Estello Padron. In fact, at one point, he actually told me to "ask less and do more", that the only way to learn is to start ruining some tobacco. So that is exactly what we did when we began the Liga Privada project at Drew Estate in 2006. We took what we were told, but quickly learned to adjust and adapt, and ultimately developed our own methodology for working with Broadleaf. With my working relationship with Gustavo Cura of Oliva Tobacco Company, we have since improved further. The quality of the Broadleaf we utilize today is far superior.

Has, tastewise, something changed over the decades you have been smoking Connecticut Broadleaf cigars for you?

At its core, Broadleaf is a sweet, earthy tobacco with pronounced notes of chocolate and coffee. This taste profile is my personal favorite and a repeating theme in almost all the liga I currently create. What has changed is that Broadleaf itself used to be "rougher", not as well worked. In fact,

cigars crafted with it were often considered “working man's cigars" because they were typically ugly, somewhat splotchy, and could be harsh on the palate. But if afforded the time and a much gentler touch in the pilones like we do today, it can become quite smooth, almost velvety.

Connecticut Broadleaf can be notoriously tricky to ferment and work with. What are some of the biggest challenges you've encountered with it, and how do you overcome them?

Broadleaf is often regarded as the most difficult material to work with. It is thick, fleshy, oily, can almost spontaneously combust in a pilon, requires much more frequent turns, and takes far longer to work. In fact, most Broadleaf today is box-sweated rather than undergoing a traditional first fermentation because of the immense challenges and costs it entails. However, we do not do this. Yes, the other way is easier, and yes, the leaf often ends up prettier as the sweat helps to set the color, but it robs it of flavor, so we do it the “old way”, but with far more care than they used to. Other challenges include stem rot, mold in the pilons, and unexpected temperature spikes, which can result in tender leaves. In fact, it is also challenging to store after it is fully fermented, as it is prone to mold in bales, so you must store it differently. To overcome these challenges, you must be extremely attentive, way more than with any other tobacco, and you must resist the urge to “push” it. You need to be patient, gentle, almost like a caring, loving parent.

You use Connecticut Broadleaf in the Mi Querida trio, Red Meat Lovers, Umbagog, and more. How did you approach all these blends to create distinctively different experiences?

Yes and no: all of my Broadleaf ligas stem from a core liga, but each is a distinct variation to highlight another flavor expression and a different smoking experience. The original Mi Querida liga, the ones with the blue rings, is a medium-full liga that focuses on a smoother, chocolately Broadleaf experience. In contrast, the Triqui Traca variation, banded with red rings, ups the strength with bolder pepper notes, takes the coffee notes, and makes them more like espresso. Black incorporates some unique Honduran tobaccos to add even more diversity and an almost dirty, extra-robust quality. And so on, odds are likely that if you like one of our Broadleaf ligas, you are going to like them all. The question is, which is perfect for you? For me, it depends on my mood.

Some claim Broadleaf is becoming harder to get in high quality due to increasing demand. Have you noticed changes in supply, and how has that impacted your production or blending decisions?

It is arguably the most difficult leaf to source, and a big part of the problem is how it is often grown and brokered, as well as being one of the most volatile tobacco varieties to plant and harvest. Very tiny ideal growing region with a short seedling to harvest season that has notoriously inconsistent weather, and it is susceptible to Blue Mold, a very destructive fungal disease. Securing Broadleaf is one of our primary focuses. That being said, we are arguably the only small company that makes as many and invests as heavily in Broadleaf ligas. As for blending decisions. Never,if we can't make it exactly how I want it to be, we simply wait until we can.

Have you experimented with using Connecticut Broadleaf in ways other than as a wrapper, such as a binder or filler? What results did you find?

Of course, we experiment with everything. Broadleaf is commonly used and makes for an excellent filler ingredient, but only the broken leaf, as it is far too costly to use as filler. Anything intact that doesn't meet the premium cigar wrapper grade is often better sold off to



be cooked for bundle grade cigars, sold to machine-made manufacturers, or even the blunt wrap makers, as it affords you a far better return than using it as filler. As for binder, it makes functionally and flavor-wise a great binder, but you have the same cost challenges, and another problem is the texture. It often presents very thick veins, which makes whatever wrapper you pass over it look extra rough, lumpy, and bumpy, so I choose not to use it as a binder.

How does Connecticut Broadleaf compare to other dark, rich wrapper alternatives like San Andrés or Brazilian Mata Fina?

The lineage between the three is unmistakable, as all three, at their core, have traits of earth, chocolate, coffee, and that inherent sweetness. Of the three, the San Andrés Negro is the most refined and balanced. It tends to add some smoky notes and minerality to the mix, can exhibit more pronounced pepper notes, and is not nearly as sweet as Broadleaf. Mata Fina tends to kick up the earth notes and the sugars, almost adding a twinge of molasses flavor to its sweetness. It can be somewhat creamy when allowed to age. Connecticut Broadleaf is just "bigger" in all ways, physically in leaf size, but also in core earth, chocolate, and coffee notes, combined with significantly more sweetness to the palate. However, it is this bolder profile that makes it the least refined of these three Maduro wrapper options.

Do you see a future where hybrid or Broadleaf-grown-outside-of-Connecticut options can replace the traditional leaf, or is there something uniquely irreplaceable about authentic Connecticut Broadleaf?

Volume-wise, absolutely, as there is never enough Broadleaf in any given year, and the costs to grow, work, and use are easily threefold. This is why so many growers are already growing Broadleaf seed in Central America and why we see so many factories adopting its use. However, personally, I have yet to find any of this leaf as a viable replacement. I am not saying it is not good, but rather it lacks the richness, depth, and sweetness of when this seed is cultivated in the cooler northern climates in glacier-enriched soils. So, there is a commercial future, and maybe it will become the norm given the shrinking farmlands and the rising costs of traditional Broadleaf, but it is hard for me to believe it will ever taste the same.

Lastly, where will your love for Connecticut Broadleaf take us in the future?

For me, the next stop is a special tobacco hybrid that is a cross between Connecticut Broadleaf and a traditional sun-grown Cuban seed wrapper variety that I promised our growing partner I would not disclose. I have unofficially named it "Capa Camaleón" because it looks like Broadleaf but creates a wrapper whose smoking experience is a cross between River Valley Broadleaf and Nicaraguan Sun-Grown Criollo. It will begin to make its debut exclusively on some of our new releases in 2026.

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DISCOVER MORE

Air-cured or sun-cured?

"Climatic Causes of Differences in Cigar Tobacco Leaf Curing Methods."

by **Bai Yuanliang, China Cigar Museum**



Tobacco culture reached Guangzhou in 1514, spreading rapidly inland and becoming localized. In curing, farmers capitalized on local sunlight, ambient temperatures, and wind resources, with sun-curing gradually becoming dominant, supported by a comprehensive system of methods and theoretical treatments, and spawning numerous Chinese sun-cured varieties. After the 1894 Sino-Japanese War, amid deepening cultural and national crises, reformers promoted democracy and science, translating and introducing Western knowledge to spur social progress. Agriculture, as a pillar of the economy, drew interest from practically minded intellectuals who translated foreign agricultural texts, including on tobacco planting and curing theory and practice. While these introduced foreign air-curing methods and theory, due to high costs and inferior quality, air-curing was ultimately abandoned by most farmers. According to Yu Xuexi's *Tobacco* (1955, Science Press), aside from Wuming, Guangxi, most regions had largely ceased air-curing by that time. Meanwhile, sun-curing regions, such as Shifang, launched innovations in sun-cured tobacco, that garnered numerous domestic and international honors and the favor of consumers, and began building a robust discourse and assurance system for Chinese sun-cured tobacco materials.

Shifang, China, and Pinar del Río, Cuba, are the top cigar tobacco leaf-producing regions in their respective countries. Based on meteorological data collected during the tobacco curing seasons from 2018 to the recent days, we are going to explore the climatic causes underlying the differences in tobacco leaf curing methods between the two regions.

The process in which freshly harvested tobacco leaves undergo wilting, color change, and color fixation to achieve ideal dryness is called leaf curing. Its primary purpose is to produce high-quality leaves suitable for long-term storage. The type of tobacco leaf used to roll cigars is usually cured naturally through sun-curing or air-curing.



Traditionally, Chinese cigars primarily use sun-cured tobacco. By utilizing solar radiation during sunny and cloudy days, the process increases both the leaf temperature and that of its surrounding environment to achieve the optimal high-temperature and temperature-difference conditions needed for curing, promoting internal biochemical transformations. On cloudy or rainy days, natural wind drying is used (optimal natural wind speed being between 0.3–3.3 m/s). The resulting leaves have a higher sugar content, lower nitrogen and nicotine levels, and produce cigars with a unique mellow, sweet taste, free of bitterness. Sun-cured tobacco offers rich and fine aromas. In contrast, Cuban-style cigars traditionally use air-curing. Freshly harvested leaves are first hung for initial wilting and then moved indoors to barns for shade drying. The curing process mainly occurs inside barns, utilizing high ambient temperatures, and suitable humidity to promote internal chemical changes, color fixation, and drying. The final product exhibits low sugar, high nitrogen and nicotine content, a darker color, and a richer, fuller flavor.

Over the years, air-curing got more and more popular, while sun-cured tobacco has declined. Current domestic and international studies on air-curing and sun-curing largely focus on physicochemical properties and industrial curing techniques, with limited attention paid to the climatic adaptability of agricultural curing methods.

Let's now compare meteorological data analysis to explore the climatic causes behind the differing tobacco curing methods in China and Cuba. The Cuban data used in this study are from Pinar del Río, while the Chinese data come from Shifang.

Shifang, located in Sichuan Province in southwestern China, occupies a spot at 31° north altitude and is shaped by a humid subtropical monsoon climate. The tobacco fields are situated on gently sloping sunny plains facing southeast, nestled at moderate altitudes along the Longmen Mountains. This region experiences a seasonal pattern influenced

Wind direction distribution during tobacco leaf curing seasons

Wind direction	E	NE	SE	S	N	W	SW	NW
Shifang (day)	46	109	26	47	30	30	57	21
Pinar del Río (day)	30	92	171	22	16	2	17	16

Distribution of MDT (Max Daily Temp.) & DTD (Daily Temp. Difference) in tobacco leaf curing seasons

>MDT (°C)	35 & above	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24 & below
Shifang (day)	19	16	28	38	47	47	46	37	29	27	11	21
Pinar del Río (day)	10	17	50	75	80	60	25	22	13	10	2	2
>DTD (°C)	15 & above	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	34 & below
Shifang (day)	2	1	13	15	23	36	53	43	52	48	37	43
Pinar del Río (day)	15	27	65	65	89	48	37	14	4	1	1	0

Weather and wind velocity distribution during tobacco leaf curing seasons

Weather	Sunny	Rainy	Overcast
Shifang (day)	50	72	244
Pinar del Río (day)	194	69	102

Wind velocity (force)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Shifang (day)	0	105	244	17	0	0
Pinar del Río (day)	10	11	150	177	17	1

Data sources: historical weather in Shifang [oL] & historical weather in Pinar del Río [oL]


Air curing tobacco

first by Indian Ocean monsoons in spring, followed by Pacific influences in summer. For generations, local farmers have followed a time-honored agricultural calendar: transplanting begins in early March, followed by careful inspection and adjustment of seedlings in early April. Harvesting is staged, beginning at the end of May and concluding in June, setting the stage for the curing season in early summer.

Meanwhile, in the heart of the Caribbean, Cuba's Pinar del Río lies closer to the equator and experiences a distinctly tropical rainforest climate. Here, the year is divided into well-defined wet and dry periods. Tobacco cultivation begins as the rainy season winds down, with seedlings sown in late October and transplanted by the end of November. By February, harvesting is underway, with the air-curing process typically unfolding in March and April—right within the dry season window.

Data collected over a six-year period offers a window into the curing conditions of both regions. While specific numbers vary year to year, clear patterns emerge. Shifang's early summer is characterized by warm days with moderate temperature swings from day to night, complemented by persistent cloud cover and occasional rain. The wind tends to be gentle, coming predominantly from the east, with low overall speeds that favor slow, even drying. These conditions create an optimal environment for outdoor sun-curing of tobacco, which relies less on direct sunlight and more on a combination of steady warmth, humidity, and air movement.

By contrast, Pinar del Río's curing season benefits from clearer skies and more stable weather. The temperature is generally a bit higher during the day, and the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures is more pronounced. Winds are more active than in Shifang, yet remain within a range that supports controlled indoor air-curing. The consistent flow from the eastern sector enhances ventilation inside the curing barns, allowing leaves to dry gradually without risk of overheating or mold.

Taken together, the two regions offer distinct yet equally effective natural conditions for curing tobacco, each suited to a particular method. Shifang's climate is ideal for sun-curing in covered yards or sheds, where humidity and gentle air flow are critical. Pinar del Río, on the other hand, thrives under clearer skies and steady winds, supporting the long-practiced tradition of air-curing in ventilated barns. These environmental profiles help explain why each region has developed its own signature curing approach—and why both continue to be leaders in the production of premium cigar tobacco.

Synthesizing the climatic conditions in Shifang and Pinar del Río during their respective curing seasons, and not considering humidity, to obtain high-quality finished tobacco, the proportion of days in which the curing environment must simultaneously meet all three of the following conditions exceeds 70% of the total number of days:

- Maximum daily temperature of 30–33 °C (86–91.5 °F);
- Daily temperature difference of 10–13 °C (34–55.5 °F);
- The combined share of Level 1–2 wind.

Compared with the climatic standards required to produce high-quality air-cured tobacco in Pinar del Río, Shifang in June–July is significantly lower in the critical climatic indicators (maximum daily temperature, daily temperature difference, single prevailing wind direction). This indicates that Shifang's natural conditions are not optimal for air-curing. However, Shifang's ample yet gentle sunlight, low-and-stable wind speeds, and predominantly cloudy weather make it a premier region for sun-curing. Additionally, because open-yard sun-curing only requires good ventilation, it places minimal demands on wind-direction stability, effectively overcoming Shifang's weakness in wind-direction consistency. Curing sheds built over the yards are mainly used for nighttime and rainy-day indoor wind-drying, reducing excessive nighttime dew rehydration and mitigating rainfall impacts on leaf quality.

Relative to the natural climatic conditions needed for high-quality sun-curing in Shifang, Pinar del Río in March–April is significantly lower in the critical indicators (cloudy and rainy days, level 1–2 wind, daily temperature difference). These natural conditions are not optimal for sun-curing. Farmers therefore construct air-curing barns that shield wind, sun, and rain, cleverly leveraging the region's high ambient temperatures, large diurnal temperature range, stable wind-direction patterns, and strong winds to make Pinar del Río a air-curing region. By adopting indoor air-curing, Pinar del Río avoids the disadvantages that excessively sunny conditions and high wind speeds would pose for sun-curing, while converting them into advantages for shade air-drying. It follows that the different curing methods in Shifang and Pinar del Río stem from distinct climatic endowments, each region seeks the best quality at the lowest cost by leveraging its comparative climatic advantages. Compared with traditional sun-curing and the traditional air-curing barns used in Cuba and elsewhere, converting Shifang's outdoor sun/wind-curing to indoor air-curing would require fixed buildings as barns. This would lower land-use efficiency and add costs.

The divergence between Shifang's sun-curing and Pinar del Río's air-curing is not accidental but climatically determined. Each represents the optimal use of local temperature, wind, and humidity to achieve high-quality cigar tobacco at minimal cost. Altering these traditions without regard for climatic suitability would risk quality loss, cost escalation, and supply instability. The sustainable path for China's cigar industry lies in respecting regional climatic advantages, advancing scientific sun-curing, and leveraging distinctive Chinese-style cigar identity to compete globally.


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SPIRITS

"I have taken more out of alcohol
than alcohol has taken out of me."
Winston Churchill

How to read Legs in Spirits

How the Marangoni Effect helps you estimate ABV in the glass.

by **Norman Bliss**



Part of the pleasure of enjoying a fine spirit is the sound of the cork opening, the melody the liquid makes when it's poured, the color that captivates the eyes, and finally the swirling of the glass.

When we swirl the spirit, we achieve a couple of things. We help the volatile components in the liquid evaporate, which brings more aromas to our nose when we begin to taste it. This action can also reveal other information; though not everyone pays much attention to it.

After swirling the liquid in the glass, you will notice thin lines, often called “legs” or “tears”, forming on the inside of the glass. They’re the result of a fascinating piece of physics called the Marangoni effect, and if you know what to look for, those legs can provide surprisingly useful information about how strong the spirit is.

Liquids have something called surface tension, a property that arises from the attractive forces between molecules and causes the surface of the liquid to behave like a strong, elastic “film.” Water has a high surface tension, while alcohol has a much lower one. Alcohol also evaporates faster than water, and once you swirl the glass, the thin film coating the upper part begins to lose alcohol first. As this happens, that part of the film becomes more water-like which means its surface tension increases. Meanwhile, the liquid lower down still contains more alcohol and therefore has a lower surface tension. This difference creates a pull: the liquid is drawn upward toward the area of higher surface tension. As it climbs, it gathers and thickens until small droplets form. Eventually, gravity wins, and those droplets slide back down the glass, this is when the familiar “legs” appear.

These “legs” can be observed and used to estimate the ABV of the spirit. They can be evaluated by looking at their speed, quantity, thickness, and the way they fall:
- The faster they appear, the higher the ABV.
- The more numerous they are, the higher the ABV.
- The thinner they are, the higher the ABV.
- The faster they fall, the higher the ABV.

Of these, the most reliable indicator, without needing comparisons, is the time it takes for the legs to appear. A simple way to take advantage of it is by counting:
- A spirit at around 50% ABV (100 proof) or higher usual ly forms legs in less than two seconds.
- A spirit that needs more than five seconds is generally below 40% ABV (80 proof).
- Times in between correspond to spirits between 40% and 50%.

One important note: if you’re drinking spirits that contain sugar, the results can be misleading. Sugar increases viscosity and slows leg formation, making the liquid appear lower in ABV than it actually is.

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By Volume or By Fire

The unexpected history behind alcohol proof and ABV.

by **Mark Trumpet**

We all know that to see how much alcohol is present in a bottle, we just need to inspect its label. Most of the connoisseurs know that in the US, this is expressed in proof, while in the other part of the world, we find the term "ABV."

They look like they should mean the same thing, but they don't, and the story of why they differ reaches back centuries, to a time when chemistry was less precise and taxation was far more creative. ABV stands for "Alcohol By Volume," and it gives the information on how much pure ethanol is present in a beverage. The number is literal: if a spirit is labeled 48% ABV, then forty-eight percent of the liquid inside is ethanol. This measurement only became widespread once science offered reliable ways to quantify alcohol content. As governments sought more consistent taxation of spirits, a clear, reproducible method was needed, and ABV, with its laboratory precision, became the universal solution.

Long before ABV took over, however, the world relied on a far more dramatic method of determining alcohol strength: the origin of the word "proof." In the 16th to 18th centuries, when accurate measuring tools did not exist, officials needed a way to determine whether a spirit was strong enough to justify higher taxes. At the same time, buyers needed a way to make sure the liquid was not too diluted. The solution was simple and a bit theatrical. Gunpowder was soaked in the spirit and then set alight; if the gunpowder ignited, the spirit was deemed strong enough, and it had, quite literally, been "proved." If it fizzled instead, the alcohol had too much water in it. This ignition threshold happened to occur at roughly 57% alcohol by volume, and this level became known in Britain as "100 degrees proof." From there, a whole scale was built, with typical drinking spirits falling somewhere below that mark. Over time, as the British system became known for its complexity, and as better measuring tools emerged, proof as a tax measure faded away. By the late 20th century, the United Kingdom abandoned the old proof system entirely in favor of the much simpler and clearer ABV percentage.

The United States, meanwhile, took a different path. When early American regulators set out to build their own system, they opted for a definition of proof that was wonderfully straightforward: simply double the ABV. A 40% alcohol spirit is 80 proof; a 50% spirit is 100 proof. This system had advantages beyond simplicity. It was easy to calculate, harder to confuse, and more dramatic on a label. "80 proof" looks and sounds stronger than "40% ABV," and that marketing weight has helped the American proof system endure even as ABV has become the global norm.

Today, proof and ABV coexist on many bottles, especially in the United States, where spirits are often labeled with both numbers. ABV offers scientific accuracy, required by international standards and understood by regulators everywhere. Proof remains as a cultural echo, a holdover from the days of gunpowder and open flames, carrying with it a sense of tradition and identity in the world of distilling. The two numbers ultimately point to the same thing, the strength of the alcohol, but they do so from different worlds: one born of chemistry, the other of combustible experiments meant to ensure buyers weren't being cheated. That these two measurements still appear side by side is part of the charm of spirits: a blend of science, history, and storytelling, all captured on a small rectangle of paper wrapped around a glass bottle.

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Trinidad Sour

From its unexpected beginnings to its worldwide recognition, the remarkable story behind a unique cocktaily.

by **Mark Trumpet**

When the Trinidad Sour first appeared in 2008, it quickly garnered attention, not because it was based on long-established recipes, but because it marked a turning point in cocktail history. Created by bartender Giuseppe González while working at Clover Club in Brooklyn, the drink emerged at a time when bartenders were exploring forgotten ingredients, reexamining techniques, and redefining what a "modern classic" could be. The Trinidad Sour stood out for its bold use of Angostura bitters, transforming what had long been a supporting ingredient into the star of the drink. Although its history is relatively short compared to the iconic cocktails of the early 20th century, its impact has been swift and lasting.

González, who had ties to both New York's cocktail scene and Puerto Rican culture, held a deep appreciation for Angostura bitters, an ingredient produced in Trinidad and Tobago that is woven into the Caribbean's culinary identity. By centering the drink on Angostura, he paid homage to the region's heritage while challenging assumptions about how bitters were meant to be used. Traditionally applied in drops or dashes, Angostura had never before been used in such large quantities. González's decision to make it the base of the cocktail was both an improvisation and an instinct, reflecting the experimental spirit of bartenders during that era.

The formula itself remains simple, yet its creation marked a change in the understanding of bitters. An ounce of Angostura forms the aromatic core, with its blend of spices and botanicals providing extraordinary depth. To balance this intensity, González added orgeat, the almond syrup known for its smooth sweetness; lemon juice for a crisp, bright contrast; and a small amount of rye whiskey to add structure without overpowering the profile. The resulting cocktail is rich in color and character, with each ingredient playing a purposeful role.

Following the drink's debut, a wave of curiosity among bartenders and enthusiasts ensued. The Trinidad Sour quickly circulated through cocktail bars. It appeared on menus not as a novelty but as a demonstration of how contemporary recipes could be inventive while remaining grounded in craft. As its popularity grew, the Trinidad Sour began to influence discussions around bitters and their potential. It encouraged bartenders to reconsider longstanding assumptions and explore bolder applications of familiar ingredients. This shift helped expand the modern cocktail repertoire, proving that innovation could arise from reimagining even the most traditional elements.

Today, the Trinidad Sour holds a respected place in the canon of modern cocktails. Though relatively young, it has earned a reputation built not on nostalgia but on originality and craftsmanship. Its story reflects the creative momentum that defined the cocktail resurgence of the late 2000s, and its continued presence on menus around the world stands as a testament to its distinctive identity. For many enthusiasts, mixing a Trinidad Sour is a way to connect with a moment in contemporary cocktail history when boundaries were tested and new ideas flourished, one bold pour of Angostura at a time.

PREPARATION

Chill a coupe glass. Fill a shaker with ice, add the Angostura bitters, rye whiskey, orgeat, and freshly squeezed lemon juice. Shake vigorously until well chilled, then strain into the chilled glass. No garnish is traditional, but a thin lemon twist can be added if desired.

ADVICE

Because this cocktail uses an unusually large dose of bitters, the orgeat plays a big role in balancing bitterness with sweetness. If you want a rounder, softer drink, increase the orgeat slightly. For a drier, more bracing version, keep the recipe as is and use a spicier rye.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 oz (45 ml) Angostura bitters
- 1 oz (30 ml) orgeat
- 3/4 oz (22 ml) rye whiskey
- 1 oz (30 ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Optional: lemon twist

GLASS

Coupe glass.

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PAGE

The Miracle of the Grey Mold

The Marvels of Noble Rot Wines from Sauternes to Muffato della Sala.

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

There are few miracles in wine as paradoxical, or as exquisitely precarious, as noble rot. To watch a vineyard succumb to Botrytis cinerea is to witness both ruin and resurrection: a fungal invasion that pierces grape skins, drains water, and leaves behind shriveled berries—ugly, gray, and dusted with spores. And yet, when this contagion occurs under the right alchemy of humidity, sunlight, and human patience, the transformation yields wines of staggering beauty—liquid architecture that transcends sweetness.

Among these, three traditions stand as distinct dialects of the same miraculous language: the hedonistic grandeur of Sauternes, the crystalline tension of German and Austrian Trockenbeerenauslese, and the Mediterranean grace of Italy's botrytized rarities: Picolit, Albana Passito, and Muffato della Sala. Each represents not merely a style, but a philosophy of time, risk, and terroir. Botrytis cinerea, in its noble form, thrives in a tightrope climate: morning mists to feed its growth, dry afternoons to arrest its spread. The fungus punctures the grape's cuticle, allowing moisture to evaporate while concentrating sugars, acids, and aromatic precursors. At the same time, it metabolizes some of these compounds into new aromatic families—glycerol lending unctuous texture, phenylacetaldehyde suggesting honey and hawthorn, and sotolon evoking curry leaf and nuts. It is a contagion tamed by terroir, not technology. The vintner does not make a botrytized wine so much as court its arrival—waiting, watching, harvesting berry by berry in the ritual of successive tries. The noblest expressions are less acts of production than they are of permission.

In Sauternes, south of Bordeaux, noble rot finds its most famous and voluptuous form. Here the Ciron River, cold and shaded, meets the warmer Garonne, producing autumn mists that roll through vineyards before being burned off by the afternoon sun. The rhythm is perfect: moisture to foster Botrytis, warmth to halt its excess. The topography, too, conspires—gravelly, well-drained soils over limestone in estates like Château d'Yquem and Suduiraut; sandy-clay in Rieussec and Guiraud; each contour adding nuance to the fungus's progress. Sémillon reigns supreme here. Its thin skin and waxy cuticle make it exquisitely susceptible to Botrytis while preserving acidity. Sauvignon Blanc con-

tributes aromatic lift—citrus zest, green spice, and a filament of freshness—and a trace of Muscadelle adds floral grace. Yields are painfully low: a hectare might produce a single barrel in some years, each drop born of berries handpicked over multiple passes. In the cellar, patience continues to reign. The thick, nectar-like musts—often over 350 g/L residual sugar—fermented slowly in small oak barrels, sometimes for months, before the yeasts yield to osmotic pressure and alcohol. The young wines are racked, clarified, and aged in barrique for up to three years, often with a high proportion of new oak. The controlled oxidative evolution imparts layers of caramel, toast, and exotic spice that enfold Sauternes' natural fruit richness. A mature Sauternes is a tapestry of textures. The first impression is weight—a velvet density that clings to the tongue—but beneath it lies a surprising energy. Notes of apricot, orange peel, and saffron rise in sequence; then honeycomb, roasted pineapple, crème brûlée. The best examples finish with a saline flicker, a whisper of noble bitterness that keeps sweetness from collapse. Château d'Yquem, of course, is the archetype: still youthful several decades on, this wine displays such tension between glycerol opulence and citric precision that it seems to pulse in the glass. But even humbler châteaux—Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Raymond-Lafon—offers astonishing complexity and value, revealing how this microclimate elevates even modest terroir. The grandeur of Sauternes is not only its concentration, but its gravitas—a sense of timelessness earned through peril. For every perfect vintage, there are years when Botrytis fails to arrive, or comes too early and destroys the crop. These wines exist at the mercy of chance, and their prices, often modest compared to their labor, conceal a viticulture of heroic risk.

Where Sauternes is sensuality made liquid, German Trockenbeerenauslese—TBA—is its crystalline opposite: purity sculpted from cold light and acid. Here, Botrytis operates not as a lushening agent but as a lens, refracting Riesling's piercing acidity into prismatic sweetness. The conditions in regions like the Mosel, Rheingau, and Burgenland (in Austria) are harsher and more marginal than Bordeaux's maritime softness. Morning fogs rise from rivers, but daytime warmth is fleeting; the infection proceeds slowly and unevenly, often berry by berry. The small, desiccated grapes yield mere drops of must—so concentrated that fermentation can last months or even a year. In the hands of masters such as Egon Müller, Willi Schaefer, or Kracher across the border in Illmitz, the resulting wines achieve an uncanny equilibrium between syrupy sweetness and electric acidity. Unlike Sauternes, TBA rarely



sees new oak. The emphasis is transparency—fermentation in stainless steel or inert old wood, minimal intervention, and preservation of varietal clarity. The must weights—often beyond 150° Oechsle—yield residual sugar levels upward of 250 g/L, yet the total acidity, sometimes above 12 g/L, makes these wines shimmer rather than sprawl. On the nose, a great TBA feels like the architecture of a Gothic cathedral. Honey and quince intertwine with orange blossom and lime zest, underpinned by botrytic saffron and a faint petrol whisper of maturity. In the palate, sweetness and acidity duel endlessly: an initial surge of viscous nectar, immediately countered by a blade of citrus and minerality. The finish lingers for minutes, perhaps hours in memory. The 2005 Egon Müller Scharzhofberger TBA, for example, is less a wine than a phenomenon—weightless yet indelible, as though Riesling's essence had been condensed to its luminous core. With age, TBAs gain amber depth and aromas of beeswax, lanolin, and tea leaf, evolving from heavenly brightness to contemplative dusk. Their longevity defies reason: half a century is nothing. In a sense, they are eternal wines, preserved by their own imbalance—sweetness and acid in suspended opposition, neither yielding.

If France and Germany offer noble rot under predictable, if fragile, rhythms, Italy's relationship with Botrytis is altogether more capricious. The peninsula's warmth and sunlight discourage the delicate alternation of damp and dry necessary for noble infection, yet in certain enclaves—northeastern Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the Apennine folds of Emilia-Romagna, and the volcanic hills of Umbria—microclimates conspire to create their own interpretation of the rot. The result is not imitation but reinvention: botrytized wines that speak in Mediterranean accents of honey, nuts, and light.
Among these, Picolit of Friuli-Venezia Giulia stands as an emblem of fragility. The variety is genetically prone to floral abortion, leading to minuscule yields and loose bunches—conditions that paradoxically favor the spread of noble rot. In the Colli Orientali, on marl and sandstone soils swept by Adriatic and Alpine breezes, botrytized Picolit can attain extraordinary aromatic finesse. The wines are typically golden, with scents of candied citrus, acacia, and apricot kernel. Their sweetness is gentle rather than overwhelming—more like honeyed light than syrup—and acidity remains soft but persistent. Producers such as Livio Felluga and Ronchi di Cialla coax from Picolit an almost spiritual delicacy, a whisper rather than a proclamation. It is Italy's answer to Tokaji more than to Sauternes: ethereal, amber, and rare.







Farther south, in Romagna, Albana di Romagna Passito—Italy's first white DOCG—offers a bolder, more rustic interpretation of noble rot. The variety's natural tannic structure, unusual in white grapes, lends textural grip even in sweet wines. When Botrytis visits these hillside vineyards around Bertinoro, the results can be mesmerizing: dried fig, caramelized pear, saffron, and almond skin, all carried on a framework of firm, almost tea-like tannin. While some producers favor air-drying (appassimento), the truly noble expressions—like those of Fattoria Zerbina's "Scaccomatto"—rely on Botrytis. Their sweetness is ample but dignified, supported by acidity that reflects the chalky-clay soils of the region. Albana Passito is a wine that bridges sweetness and structure, indulgence and restraint—proof that noble rot, in Italy, need not abandon texture for charm.

Finally, there is Muffato della Sala, perhaps Italy's most deliberate pursuit of botrytized perfection. Conceived by the Antinori family at Castello della Sala in Umbria, it marries the lessons of Sauternes with Italian sensibility. The vineyards, perched on volcanic and sedimentary soils near Orvieto, benefit from autumn mists and crisp diurnal shifts. The blend—Sauvignon Blanc, Grechetto, Traminer, Riesling, and Sémillon—captures the aromatic spectrum of Europe's great white traditions. After Botrytis weaves its golden spell, the grapes are hand-selected and fermented slowly in French oak, then aged for roughly six months in barrique. The result is a luminous, amber wine of remarkable poise: notes of tropical fruit, honey, and candied ginger, balanced by volcanic minerality and a thread of acidity that recalls the Umbrian hills at dawn. It is, in essence, a dialogue between Bordeaux and Orvieto—French structure translated into Italian light. Muffato della Sala stands as evidence that noble rot, though elusive, can be cultivated in spirit even where it cannot be depended upon by climate.

Food pairing requires imagination beyond the cliché of foie gras. True harmony emerges when the wine's sweetness and acidity interact dynamically with umami and salt. Sauternes finds a sublime partner in aged Comté or blue cheeses like Roquefort, whose salty pungency amplifies the wine's honeyed depth. TBA, with its razor acidity, can dance

with dishes of spice and citrus—think Thai green curry or even lemon tart. Muffato della Sala and Picolit shine with more contemplative matches: chestnut desserts, ricotta pastries, or seared scallops glazed with orange and saffron. These wines also reward meditative solitude. A single glass after dinner, as light fades, can serve as an entire sensory narrative—sweetness, bitterness, acidity, and aroma intertwining like memory and dream.

In the modern market, noble rot wines struggle for attention. The global palate has shifted toward more distinct flavors: either dry or sweet, everything in-between is now viewed with suspicion. Yet within fine-wine circles, the pendulum is slowly returning. Connoisseurs rediscover in these wines a sense of craftsmanship and authenticity lost in more fashionable categories. They remind us that true quality is not opulence alone—it is precision under risk. Sauternes remains undervalued relative to its labor; a first-growth Yquem costs less, adjusted for rarity, than many grand cru reds made with far less risk. German TBAs command higher prices, but only because their quantities are microscopic and their aging potential legendary. Italian muffati, meanwhile, hover at the edges of cult status—treasured by insiders, ignored by markets. Yet in each, value lies not in scarcity alone, but in the testimony they offer to nature's unpredictable generosity.

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Perlage & Cigars

Five great champagnes paired to five great cigars

by **Luca Cominelli**

It has become a tradition to treat our readers, in the final issue of the year, to special pages dedicated to pairing suggestions for cigars and champagne. Preparing this feature each year requires great care, as we know we are bringing together two worlds that are far apart, yet united in their celebration of excellence and bon vivre.

The CigarsLover Magazine team has selected a number of champagnes that have particularly impressed. From this selection, we created a shortlist of cigars that could add a touch of novelty when enjoyed alongside these five outstanding bubbles. After numerous tastings, we identified the perfect pairing, one where each tells its own story without overshadowing the other. Cheers!

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JACQUESSON
Cuvée 744

GRAPES
35% Pinot Noir, 45% Chardonnay, 20% Meunier

DOSAGE
0.75 g/l

AGING
6 years on the lees

PRICE
$ 85 - € 75

The Cuvée 744 belongs to the famous numbered series and is based primarily on the 2016 vintage, enriched with a proportion of reserve wines that add depth and continuity. The cuvée brings together Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Meunier from carefully selected crus. The bouquet opens gently, revealing notes of orchard fruit, citrus peel, and white flowers, followed over time by hints of brioche and herbs. On the palate, the fruit is pure and finely etched, supported by a chalky texture and vibrant acidity, culminating in excellent balance and length. A Champagne of controlled elegance, complexity, and persistence.

The Davidoff Maduro Robusto is defined by its sweetness, dark chocolate accents, and an overarching creaminess. Notes of nuts, dried fruits, and honey are complemented by touches of black pepper and oak. Roasted nuts, earth, and chili pepper round out the profile, resulting in a well-balanced pairing that fully captivates the senses.









LANCELOT PIENNE
Table Ronde Grand Cru

GRAPES
100% Chardonnay

DOSAGE
2..5 g/l

AGING
4 years on the yeasts

PRICE
$ 60 - € 50

The Table Ronde Blanc de Blancs originates from Grand Cru parcels, where the chalk-rich soils shape the cuvée's distinctive finesse. Crafted exclusively from Chardonnay, it benefits from a proportion of reserve wines that lend maturity and harmony. The nose is initially subtle, offering floral tones and touches of citrus before unfolding into aromas of white peach and pastry. On the palate, the Champagne shows both freshness and roundness, with the fruit supported by a graceful minerality. The finish is long and refined, marked by a delicate yet captivating complexity.

The Hiram & Solomon Heart and Soul presents aromas of nuts and wood on the palate, underscored by subtle vegetal nuances. Notes of white pepper emerge as a gentle sweetness develops at the core. Toward the finish, the profile shifts to earth, black pepper, and coffee bean. Cigar and wine intertwine seamlessly, creating a truly memorable experience.

DE SOUSA
3A

GRAPES
50% Pinot Noir, 50% Chardonnay

DOSAGE
3 g/l

AGING
2 years on the yeasts

PRICE
$ 100 - € 75

The De Sousa family, established in Avize, is known for its biodynamic approach and for highlighting the elegance of Chardonnay from the Côte des Blancs. The cuvée 3A takes its name from three prestigious villages—Avize, Aÿ, and Ambonnay—bringing together Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from these celebrated terroirs. The blend benefits from a portion of reserve wines, adding breadth and harmony. On the nose, the wine opens with refined notes of citrus, pear, and almond, followed by hints of floral and toasty nuances. The palate confirms the fruit's precision, enriched by a supple texture and a fine, persistent minerality. Of great balance and charming intensity, this cuvée offers both depth and elegance.

The Gran Habano Corojo No. 7 Toro offers notes of earth, leather, black pepper, and hazelnut, enriched by hints of cocoa and coffee. Balsamic aromas surface toward the finish, leading to a spicy finale. The contrast between cigar and wine beautifully enhances the experience, resulting in a remarkable pairing.





LE BRUN DE NEUVILLE
La Croisée des Chemins

GRAPES
35% Pinot Noir, 65% Chardonnay

DOSAGE
4 g/l

AGING
4 years on the lees

PRICE
$ 100 - € 60

The Cuvée La Croisée des Chemins reflects the Maison's philosophy of meticulous selection and long maturation. Composed predominantly of Chardonnay with a touch of Pinot Noir, it incorporates reserve wines that contribute complexity and structure. The bouquet is delicately expressive, revealing aromas of citrus, white flowers, and stone fruits, with hints of pastry emerging with time. On the palate, the Champagne displays a harmonious interplay between freshness, fruit, and gentle creaminess, resulting in notable balance and persistence. An elegant and refined cuvée with subtle yet enchanting depth.

The Undercrown 10 Robusto delivers a blast of peppery notes accented by a rich balsamic nuance. Piquant peaks rise throughout the smoke, enriched by layers of seasoned wood, leather, and cocoa that complete its bold flavor profile. When paired with La Croisée des Chemins, the contrasting expressions of each elevate the other, creating a dynamic and mutually enhancing tasting experience.





LECLERC BRIANT
Rosé de Saignée

GRAPES
40% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir (of which 15% still red wine), 25% Meunier

DOSAGE
3.3 g/l

AGING
6 years on the yeasts

PRICE
$ 90 - € 75





The Rosé de Saignée is produced using the traditional maceration method, allowing Pinot Noir to release both color and aromatic intensity. With time in the glass, the bouquet reveals vibrant red fruits, raspberry, strawberry, and pomegranate, alongside subtle floral hints. On the palate, the fruit is vivid yet elegant, accompanied by gentle spice and a soft touch of brioche. The balance between freshness and structure creates a Champagne that is expressive, charming, and impressively persistent. A rosé of depth, purity, and seductive complexity.

The Macanudo Emissary España Churchill opens with salted nuts, cocoa and cinnamon. An underlying earthy nuance gradually emerges, intertwining with leather, earth, and cream. The finale builds into a satisfying spice, rounding out the smoke with complexity and character. Paired with wine, the cigar reveals an even richer dimension, each enhancing the other to create a deep and remarkably complementary experience.



AWARDS 2025

As the year draws to a close, it is once again time to present our comprehensive rankings—an annual celebration of the finest products we have evaluated over the past twelve months. Since 2015, CigarsLover Magazine has categorized cigars into five terroirs, showcasing the most remarkable products each country has to offer. In 2018, the TOP 50 list was introduced as an inclusive ranking, transcending territorial boundaries to honor the very best cigars overall. Complementing these distinctions are the Best Brands and Boutique Brands of the Year, each recognizing excellence in its own field. Our coverage of fine spirits is equally discerning. Two dedicated lists—featuring the ten best whiskies and the ten best rums—highlight the most outstanding expressions discovered throughout the year. This year, we are also introducing a new category: the Top Five Independent Bottlers, shining a spotlight on another remarkable segment of the industry. The following pages bring together the pinnacle of quality and craftsmanship—the products that have most impressed our panel and that we proudly recommend as truly exceptional.

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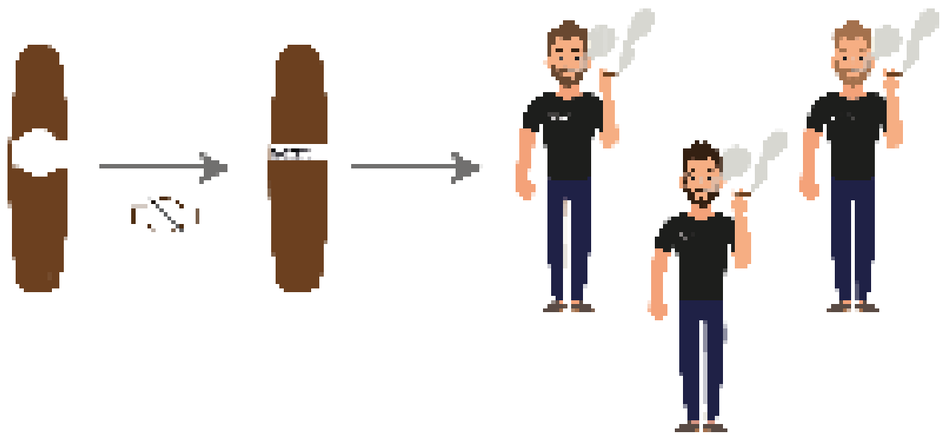
INTERACTIVE



HOW ARE THE AWARDS MADE?



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

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





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

BEST 50 CIGARS of the YEAR

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

BEST RUM & WHISKY of the YEAR

TOP TEN RUMS OF THE YEAR



1

Planteray
Terravera Collection
Trinidad 2003



NUANCED & SOPHISTICATED.
SANDALWOOD, SPICES,
AND LAYERED OAK.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Trinidad	47.8% - 95.6	$ 105 - € 90

The Planteray Terravera Collection celebrates the rich diversity of rum terroirs through carefully selected vintage casks sourced from iconic distilleries across the tropics. Each release focuses on authenticity of origin, long maturation, and minimal intervention, allowing the character of climate, soil, and local distilling traditions to shine. Crafted for enthusiasts seeking purity, provenance, and mature elegance, the series culminates with this 22-year-old Trinidadian release, completing a lineup that includes Fiji 2004, Panama 2010, Barbados 2007, Belize 2008, and Mauritius 2013. As the oldest vintage in the series, the Trinidad 2003 bottling—40 casks in total—represents the peak of this journey, showcasing mastery and long-term dedication across 19 years of tropical and 3 years of continental maturation.

The nose opens with orange marmalade, light tobacco, sandalwood, and dried tropical fruit, supported by soft mineral warmth. On the palate it's smooth and nuanced, blending stewed fruits, vanilla pod, nutmeg, and a touch of leather with a deeply layered oak structure. The finish is long, graceful, and slightly dry, offering citrus peel, baking spice, and lingering woody depth. Measured, mature, and quietly sophisticated, it's a truly refined vintage expressing long tropical aging with elegance and gentle complexity.

98

2



Depaz
Single Cask 2011 (13 Y. Old)

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	45% - 90	$ 174 - € 150

ELEGANT & MATURE.

This AOC Martinique rhum is a choice of masterfully aged single casks that showcases the volcanic freshness of Mount Pelée wrapped in deep, structured oak.Bottled at cask strength, it has been aged for over thirteen years.

The nose opens with baked pineapple, candied citrus, toasted oak, and warm spice, lifted by grassy elegance. On the palate it's rich yet balanced, offering dried apricot, honeyed nuts, cocoa, and polished wood with fine, silky tannins. The finish is long, warm, and integrated, echoing spice, citrus peel, and a refined earthy minerality. Elegant, mature, and beautifully composed, this 13yo instance of the 2011 vintage captures the full finesse of Depaz's craftiness.

97

3



Clairin
Vieux Sajous 2020

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Haiti	59.52% - 119.04	$ 116 - € 100

CHARACTERFUL & INTENSE.

Aged Haitian clairin from rare Cristalline cane variety that retains the full terroir character while adding unexpected depth from 5 years in an eclectic choice of 19 different casks, among which Hampden, Mount Gay, Bielle, Caroni rums, Benriach whisky, and bourbon.

The nose opens with fermented cane juice, guava paste, olive brine, and smoky citrus, softened by mellow oak spice. On the palate it's round, blending green mango and peppered honey, with herbal and resinous wood notes. The finish is long and savory, offering mineral edges, dried herbs, and a gentle warmth that highlights the spirit's wild identity. Vivid and harmonious, it delivers a beautifully matured expression.

96

4



Longueteau
Terroir Unique Coll. Aniver.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
La Reunion	55% - 110	$ 58 - € 50

PURE & FOCUSED.

A celebratory white rhum from red cane variety that captures the precision and intensity of Longueteau's single-parcel philosophy in a limited edition of 7680 bottles, distilled in small batches using column stills.

The nose opens with crystalline sugarcane, pomelo zest, white flowers, and a subtle chalky minerality. On the palate it's vibrant and structured, delivering crisp herbs, green mango, and peppery citrus wrapped in a firm, earthy backbone. The finish is long, tense, and deeply rooted in terroir, with lingering cane fiber and mineral salinity. Pure, focused, and terroir-driven, this rum truly showcases the uniqueness of Guadeloupe's terroir.

95

5



Bielle
Canne Grise

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Marie Galante	59% - 118	$ 48 - € 30

BRIGHT & TEXTURAL.

A pure expression of Marie Galante's terroir, this white rum from rare canne grise variety showcases Bielle's powerful and highly aromatic style. It highlights the estate's commitment to preserving traditional agriculture.

The nose opens with wild cane juice, crushed herbs, lime leaf, and a touch of saline minerality. On the palate it's vivid and textural, delivering fresh cut grass, white florals, and peppered citrus with licorice and anisette. The finish is long, clean, and slightly briny, highlighting the distinctive character of Canne Grise. Bright, vegetal, and beautifully expressive, this is a benchmark white agricole of exceptional clarity and terroir focus.

94

6



Karukera
L'Empyrhum #1

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Guadaloupe	46.7% - 128.4	$ 99 - € 85

SMOKY & ELEGANT.

Empyrhum #1 champions the art of fire and wood in Karukera's portfolio with an experimental agricole rum from blue sugarcane, aged for more than three years in triple toasted French oak, highlighting the distillery's bold commitment to innovation and artisanal craftsmanship.

The nose opens with delicate peat smoke, medicinal hints, and dried grass, evoking a campfire. On the palate it feels rich and full-bodied, layered with smoky undertones and a gentle warmth from the oak. The finish is long, lingering on peaty and cindery. Smoky, refined, and intriguingly introspective, this is a rare agricole rum that brims with elegant embers.

94

7



Hampden
Pagos Batch 3

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Jamaica	52% -104	$ 100 - € 80

BALSAMIC & SMOKY.

Distilled from a blend of 16 cask marks HLCF, aged in ex-Sherry barrels from Bodegas Fundador, the last batch of the Jamaican distillery is a luscious triumph of funkiness and sherryiness. Honouring Hampden's heritage, it showcases the brand's dedication to authentic rum production.

It delivers a bold yet polished profile: the nose bursts with overripe pineapple, dark berries, and raisin syrup wrapped in oxidative sherry warmth; the palate is dense and expressive, merging tropical funk with fig, cocoa, and spiced oak; the finish is long, warming, and slightly dry, layering dried fruit, tannin, and Hampden's unmistakable estery lift for a deeply characterful sherry-matured Jamaican rum.

93

8



Barbancourt
Cane Blossom Mizunara

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Haiti	43% - 86	$ 115 - € 100

REFINED & EXOTIC.

This rare Mizunara-aged expression from Barbancourt marries Haitian agricole precision with the exotic elegance of Japanese oak in a limited edition of 5000 bottles.

The nose opens with floral spice, cedar shavings, and ripe tropical fruit layered over the signature grassy freshness. On the palate it's supple and refined, blending tamarind, toasted coconut, and sandalwood with a gentle agricole earthiness. The Mizunara aging brings incense-like spice and soft tannins, adding depth without overwhelming the distillate's natural clarity: a match made in heaven.

92

9



Chalong Bay
High Proof

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Thailand	57% - 114	$ 70 - € 60

VIVID & EXPRESSIVE.

Chalong Bay High Proof is a pure cane juice rum from Phuket, Thailand. As the distillery's first overproof white rum, it offers a refined balance of craft and authenticity, produced using sugarcane sourced from local small-scale growers.

The nose opens with a vivid burst of fresh sugarcane, lime zest, and white pepper. On the palate it's bold yet remarkably clean, combining herbal brightness with a warm, lingering tropical sweetness. The elevated alcohol amplifies texture with a precise, vibrant finish that highlights its agricole authenticity. Bright, bold, and crystalline, Chalong Bay High Proof showcases the raw vibrancy of fresh sugarcane in an expressive, high-impact profile.

92

10



New Grove
Inception 2004

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Mauritius	50% - 100	$ 175 - € 150

POLISHED & BOISÉ .

After a prohibition lasting more than a century, legal distillation returned to Mauritius in the early 2000s: New Grove proudly presents their oldest rum to date, aged in a mix of new French oak and ex-cognac casks for a limited edition of 960 bottles.

The nose opens with baked tropical fruit, pink peppercorn, and stewed plums, lifted by subtle floral notes. On the palate it's vibrant, merging dark berries, toffee, and candied citrus with gentle spice and silky tannins. The finish is long, bringing dried fruits, cocoa husk, and a warm elegance. Complex and beautifully integrated, this rum stands out for its fruity precision enriched by layered, expressive maturation.

91



TOP TEN WHISKIES OF THE YEAR



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SCAN ME

Ichiro's Malt
chichibu distillery

Ichiro's Malt
CHICHIBU
THE ARTISAN DISTILLERY ESTD2008
SINGLE MALT
JAPANESE WHISKY
AGED 10 YEARS
秩父
Chichibu Distillery had an artisan spirit steeped in tradition.
700ml Bottle # /4956 50% alc./vol.

CHICHIBU

THE ARTISAN DISTILLERY ESTD 2008

1

Michter's
Bomberger's PFG

BOLD & COMPLEX.
DARK FRUIT, LEATHER,
AND SPICES.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50.1% - 100.2	$ 140 - € 132

Bomberger's PFG™ (Precision Fine Grain) Kentucky Straight Bourbon is a highly technical exploration of controlled maturation and exacting wood selection within the Bomberger's lineage. Designed around precision at every stage, it begins in new toasted and charred American oak barrels, where the bourbon undergoes its full primary aging. Once matured, the whiskey is transferred into a second set of custom French fine-grain oak barrels, engineered to Michter's strict specifications. These proprietary casks—assembled from staves seasoned outdoors for at least 40 months along the Charente River—draw from multiple renowned forests including Tronçais, Allier, Nevers, and Vosges. Each barrel is toasted within a tightly defined temperature range and charred to a controlled degree to achieve the desired structural influence before the whiskey undergoes its finishing period. The final bourbon is batched in small quantities and filtered according to Michter's signature protocol.

The nose brings black cherry, molasses, warm cedar, and a touch of leather. The palate is rich and structured, offering caramelized brown sugar, dark chocholate, dried berries, and deeply toasted oak. The finish is long, dry-sweet, and spice-laced, with hints of cocoa and char. A muscular, nostalgic bourbon with remarkable depth.

97



2



Chichibu
10 Years Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	50.5% - 101	$ 323 - € 279

COMPLEX AND RICH.

Chichibu 10 Year Old is a 2025 release from the Japanese distillery founded by Ichiro Akuto in 2008. Located in Saitama, Chichibu blends Scottish tradition with Japanese innovation, and this edition is limited to just 5,000 bottles.

The nose is highly fruity (peaches, apricots, melons, pineapple, and ripe orange) with a velvety texture, evolving into notes of orange honey and warm spices. The palate delivers exotic fruits and rich custard, with balsamic herbs adding balance and depth. The finish is long, creamy, fruity, and subtly balsamic. A superb release, complex and fruity, with touches of pure magnificent complexity, now at a more accessible price compared to the past.

96

3



15 Stars
Platinum Edition

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	49% - 98	$ 120 - € 21v5

FINE & VELVETY.

A luxury small-batch Straight Bourbon matured in new American oak and blended from 10-, 15-, and 19-year barrels, this prestige Platinum Edition showcases 15 Stars' high-end blending finesse, demonstrating meticulous craftsmanship through carefully selected components and precise maturation oversight and control.

The nose opens with caramel, dark cherry, seasoned oak, toasted pecan, and baking spices; the palate is full and velvety with maple candy, vanilla bean, dried orchard fruit, and a touch of tobacco leaf; the long, warming finish echoes spiced oak, cocoa, and lingering fruit sweetness, resulting in an opulent, polished, and impeccably balanced bourbon.

95

4



Mars
The Y.A. #04

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	50% - 100	$ 210 - € 180

BALANCED & HARMONIOUS.

The Y.A. #04 is a 2025 release combining malts from Komagatake and Tsunuki, all aged in the Yakushima cellar. The "#04" is a vatting centered around a core of Malt Genshu matured in ex-bourbon barrels, its profile shaped by the island's unique environment.

The nose delivers peated scents, with herbal, gentle peat layered over baked apples, peaches, and stone fruits. On the palate, the peat stays restrained, letting velvety stone fruits shine, joined by vanilla and semi-sweet spices; smoke gently returns later. The finish brings back soft peat with a light cigar-like note over yellow fruit compote. A more peated evolution of the series, balancing fruitiness and subtle smoke.

95

5



Widow Jane
Lucky Thirteen

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	46.5% - 93	$ 100 - € 86

RICH & MELLOW.

A well-aged, small-batch straight bourbon drawn from carefully selected barrels resting for a minimum of thirteen years, each shaped by shifting temperatures and humidity throughout their time in the Red Hook rick house. Bottled in Brooklyn without chill-filtration and proofed with limestone mineral water from the historic Rosendale Mines.

The nose opens with butterscotch, vanilla bean, and warm baking spices, followed by seasoned oak. The palate is velvety, showcasing dark caramel, toasted oak, pecan nuts, and a touch of tangerine peel, with a peppery warmth building slowly. The finish lingers with cedarwood, and vanilla. A bold yet balanced mature bourbo.

93

6



Douglas Laing's
Gauldrons Eclipse

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	52.9% - 105.8	$ 82 - € 70

BOLD & MARITIME.

A limited-edition blended malt drawn from select Campbeltown whiskies, this release celebrates the region's dark, coastal intensity. It is matured in a mix of ex-bourbon and sherry casks before receiving a finishing period in Orange Wine Casks sourced from the cellars of Jerez de la Frontera in southern Spain.

It opens with aromas of coastal smoke scents, together with black treacle, damp oak, and pepper. The palate is oily and gently smoky, bringing brown sugar, sea-salt toffee, cracked pepper, and toasted malt. The finish is lingering and shadowy, with charcoal sweetness, maritime spice, and dried fruit.

93

7



AnCnoc
16 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	43% - 86	$ 88 - € 75

ELEGANT & SMOOTH.

Founded in 1894, Knockddu Distillery crafts anCnoc whisky using time-honored techniques that emphasize purity and tradition. This 16 Year Old expression is a Highland single malt matured exclusively in a combination of ex-bourbon and refill American oak, allowing its natural fruit profile to shine with clarity and understated elegance.

The nose is bright with apricot, toasted notes and a touch of citrus. On the palate, it's smooth and balanced, delivering cereal biscuits, walnuts, a hint of honey, and stone fruits. The finish is clean, with white pepper, lingering citrus, and oak. A refined, smooth and quietly expressive malt with classic Highland charm.

92

8

Glendalough
Pot Still Peated

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	46% - 92	$ 64 - € 56

ROUND & DYNAMIC.

Glendalough Pot Still Peated is a 2025 release from the Irish distillery, using both malted and unmalted barley. It is distilled in traditional copper pot stills and aged for over seven years, initially in ex-bourbon casks, followed by an additional four years in sustainably sourced Virgin Irish Oak from Greenan Forest.

The nose presents a creamy, sweet malt profile with custard, honey, and apples, complemented by light earthy peat and toasted oak. The palate is creamy with baked apple, warming spices, almonds, and subtle smokiness. The medium finish features semi-sweet spices, almond, and earthiness. A dynamic, layered whiskey worth exploring.

91

9



Hard Truth
Wheated Bourbon B.i.B.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	50% - 100	$ 56 - € 48

WARM & ROUNDED.

A Bottled-in-Bond Wheated Bourbon aged a minimum of four years in new American oak. Bottled at 100 proof in accordance with historic Bonded standards, this distillery-crafted mash bill offers a soft yet robust profile.

The nose opens with warm cornbread, vanilla cream, honeyed grain, and cinnamon-dusted apple; the palate is rounded and silky, revealing caramel, wheat bread, baked pear, and mellow spice with well-integrated oak; the finish is clean, comforting, and gently warming with lingering vanilla, toasted grain, and light baking spice, resulting in a welcoming, smooth, and quietly refined bourbon full of character, balance, and warmth.

90

10



Ardara
Single Malt Irish

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	46% - 92	$ 105 - € 90

BRIGHT & COASTAL.

Atlantic coast. Crafted from 100% malted barley and distilled in traditional copper pot stills, it is matured primarily in ex-bourbon casks before a final rest in hand-selected sherry wood.

The nose opens with fresh lemon peel, vanilla cream, and soft stone fruits, layered with a gentle sea breeze and light toasted oak. On the palate, it's silky and vibrant, offering honeyed malt, pear, salted caramel, and a hint of spices, together with peat. The finish is clean yet lingering, marked by sweet malt, subtle salinity, and warming oak. A refined, coastal-influenced whiskey that balances freshness with structure.

90





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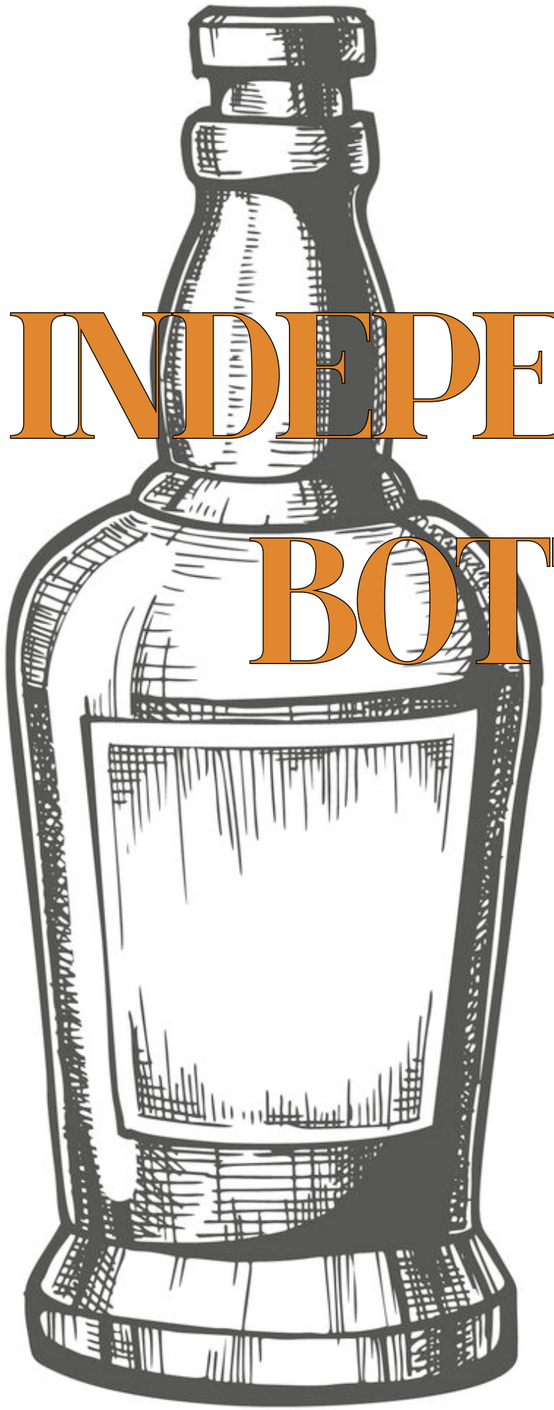

BEST INDEPENDENT BOTTLINGS

Most whisky drinkers are familiar with Official Bottlings — whiskies produced, matured, and bottled by the distilleries themselves, crafted to express a consistent house style. Beyond these lies the vibrant universe of Independent Bottlers: companies that purchase individual casks and release them under their own labels, offering fresh perspectives, experimental finishes, and refreshingly transparent information. If official bottlings represent control, independent bottlings embody freedom.

In CigarsLover Magazine Awards, we have traditionally focused on official bottlings, as they are more widely available and broadly recognized by enthusiasts. Yet today, independent bottlers play an increasingly important role, especially in light of the steep price hikes seen across the market. For 2025, we selected only the very best releases priced at a maximum of 180 euros and launched in 2024 or 2025. One clear recommendation: if you find yourself intrigued by any of these whiskies, hurry to secure a bottle — most are single-cask releases with extremely limited availability.

1

Wilson & Morgan
Glen Moray 18 Years Old

SUMPTUOUS AND ROUND. TANGERINE, HERBS AND LICORICE.

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	54.8% - 109.6	$ 173 - € 148

It represents a meeting point between the Speyside distillery known for its gentle, approachable spirit, and the independent bottler celebrated for its careful cask selection and maturation expertise. Glen Moray, with a history stretching back to 1897, expresses the softer side of Speyside whisky. Wilson & Morgan, founded in Italy in the early 1990s, has earned a reputation for releasing distinctive single malts that highlight character through thoughtful aging and finishing. Distilled in 2006 and released in 2024 with 540 bottles, it is aged in a first-fill Oloroso butt, and it is presented with the purity expected from an independent release. It stands as a compelling example of how tradition, patience, and expert stewardship can come together in a single malt crafted for discerning enthusiasts and collectors alike.

It offers a rich, intense nose, blending the caramel smoothness of an 18-year-old Speysider with the complexity of Oloroso sherry. The 48-month finish adds tamarind, dark dried plums, nutmeg, macis, and a touch of raisins, without losing the nutty hazelnut core. The palate is velvety yet intense, providing a meditative experience. The medium-long finish carries sweet rhubarb and tamarind notes. A superb release, showcasing a perfect balance between Speyside whisky and Oloroso sherry.

92



2



Chorlton Whisky
Ledaig 18 Years Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	56.3% - 112.6	$ 198 - € 170

RICH AND LINGERING.

Chorlton Whisky's Ledaig 18-year-old, a 2024 release of 239 bottles, delivers an intense and refined take on the distillery's famously smoky style.

The nose combines burnt aromatic herbs with a polished custard core, enriched by pineapple, sweet lemon, and a gingery rose-grapefruit note. The palate is even more powerful, driven by savory, herbal smokiness and a marked salinity, while the creamy character lingers quietly in the background. The finish is peaty, salty, and marine, with a final reappearance of ripe yellow fruit and faint balsamic hints. Overall, it's a rich, intense, and elegant bottling that harmonizes Ledaig's DNA with a classy bourbon-cask profile.

92

3



Gordon & Macphail
Glendullan 2007

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	59.2% - 118.4	$ 214 - € 183

VIBRANT AND DEEP.

Gordon & MacPhail's Glendullan 2007 1st Fill Bourbon Barrel, a 2025 release in the long-established Connoisseurs Choice range, showcases the refined style of this lesser-known Speyside distillery.

It opens into elegant notes of lemon cream, orange blossom, high-quality vanilla, and warm apple with soft spices. The palate highlights zesty layers of lemon, tangerine, rose grapefruit, and orange, complemented by orange honey and a hint of light candle smoke. The finish is medium, clean, and graceful, marked by sweet lemon, gentle orange, and vanilla. This release exemplifies how a first-fill bourbon barrel enhances Glendullan's creamy, fruit-forward character.

92

4



Berry Bros. & Rudd
Glen Elgin 2007 Moscatel

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	57.4% - 114.8	$ 198 - € 170

STRUCTURED AND REFINED.

Berry Bros. & Rudd's Glen Elgin 2007 Moscatel Finish, part of the 2025 Odyssey range, showcases the impact of a three-year secondary maturation.

It opens with rich aromas of dates, brown sugar, and thick tangy orange marmalade. The palate reveals clear Moscatel influence, offering notes of wet sultanas, caramelized nuts, lightly spiced (mainly nutmeg) stone fruits, and a touch of sweet cherry. It balances dense richness of the nose with a gentle freshness and rounded sweetness on the palate. The finish is medium-long, dominated by dried fruits and semi-sweet spices like nutmeg, leaving a refined, softly sweet impression.

91

5



Signatory Whisky
Edradour No.2 7yo

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	57.1% - 114.2	$ 76 - € 65

DARK AND INTENSE.

Edradour No.2 7yo is the first whisky from the distillery's new site, now owned by Signatory.

The nose delivers a sherry profile, with hints of licorice and dehydrated red fruits that invite repeated tasting. The palate shows a perfect balance of intensity and smoothness, offering round sweetness with strawberries, dark cherries, and prunes, free of astringency. The finish is long, with a light bitterness complementing the sherried notes. Its character shows depth beyond its age, with refined sherry influence, balanced fruit tones, and a structure hinting at impressive maturation to come from the new facility. An excellent debut that suggests strong potential for future releases.

91

CREATE EXCELLENCE, DAMN THE RULES

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN

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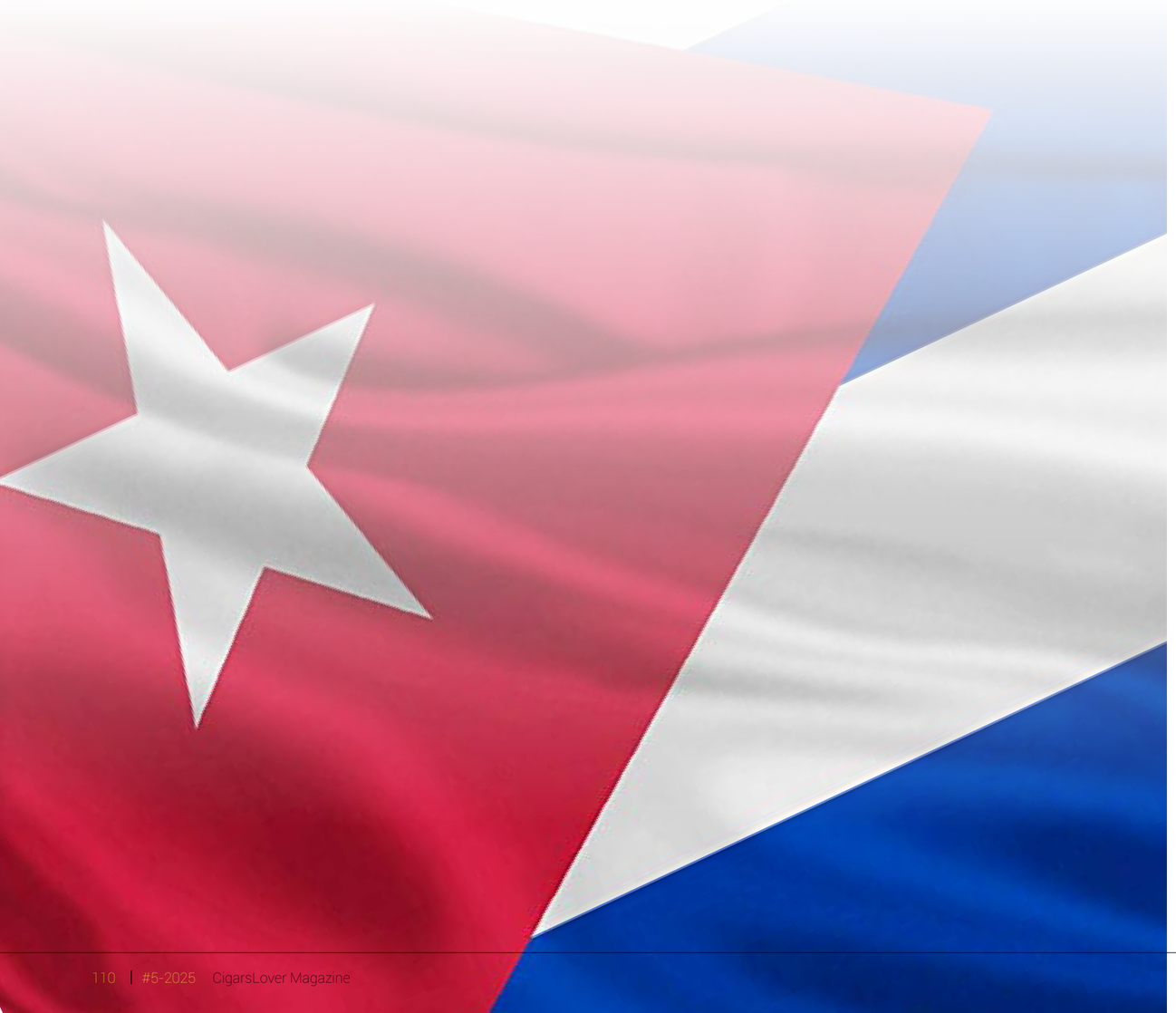
THE BEST 50 CIGARS



CUBA



1 Cohiba
Siglo VI

COMPLEX & EVOLVING.
COCOA, RIPE FRUIT,
SPICES, AND WOOD.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	52×150mm (5⅞")	$ - | € 105	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA

First released in 2002, the Siglo VI was the last and only addition to the Siglo line, under the Cuban flagship brand Cohiba, which launched back in 1994. It comes in the Cañonazo size, which was specifically developed for the brand. Aside from the Montecristo Grand Edmundos Limited Edition, it is a vitola exclusive to Cohiba. It was an immediate success and positioned itself swiftly next to the classics of the brand, such as the Lancero and the Espléndidos. The Siglo VI is also the only size in the Siglo line to be sold also in ten-count boxes.

The cold draw reveals hints of wood and cocoa. The first puffs are sweet, and the cigar releases a mix of vegetal notes and fine spices. The first third delivers rich cocoa aromas, together with fine spices, recalling pink pepper, and seasoned wood, on a sweet base. The spices are brought to the foreground in the second third and culminate in hot spices, enriched by ripe fruit. The wood remains perceptible but takes a backseat, and the base remains sweet. Halfway through, it continues with cocoa, earth, wood, and hazelnut. In the last third, a honeyed sweetness appears. Approaching the finale, hot spices and balsamic herbs alternate. The Cohiba Siglo VI releases an ever-evolving smoke with excellent intensity and pronounced balance.

95



2

Partagás
8-9-8

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	43x170mm (6¾")	$ - | € 23.2	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



INTENSE & SATISFYING.
WOOD, LEATHER,
AND EARTH.

The Partagás 8-9-8 is also referred to as the "varnished" version, marketed in lacquered boxes. Until a few years ago, an "unvarnished" version was also available, which differed not only in the unvarnished box but also in size. The 8-9-8 delivers a cigar with character, intense and satisfying, that lends itself exceptionally well to aging.

Intense vegetal notes in the opening. Spices and vegetal notes alternate, joined by earthy aromas. Rustic wood, earth, and black pepper reach the palate as the vegetal notes are now less pronounced. Rich notes of wood, leather, earth, and black pepper in the second half. Wood becomes the main aroma in the finale.

93

3

Romeo y Julieta
Wide Churchills

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	55x130mm (5⅛")	$ - | € 22.7	55min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



SWEET & CREAMY.
COFFEE, WOOD,
AND SPICES.

Introduced in 2010, the Wide Churchills was the first Cuban cigar produced in the "Montesco" size, boasting a generous ring gauge compared to Cuban production of prior years. It showcases the brand's historic characteristics. The Wide Churchills delivers a perceivable evolution throughout, offering a well-balanced and intense smoking experience.

Sweetness appears from the first puffs, together with vegetal, citrus, and wood notes on the palate. The profile evolves as coffee and spices emerge in the middle section. The finish is dominated by toasted, earthy, and peppery aromas.

92

4

Partagás
Serie E No. 2

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	54x140mm (5½")	$ - | € 25.4	1h

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



BOLD & VIBRANT.
WOOD, EARTH,
AND COCOA.

Launched in 2011, the Partagás Serie E No. 2 marked a transition in Cuban production towards cigars with larger ring gauges. The cigar can now be regarded as a neo-classic of the Cuban portfolio. The Partagás Serie E No. 2 offers a robust smoke with a well-defined aroma profile that remains true to the brand's heritage.

The cigar delivers rich aromas of black pepper, leather, and earth, enriched by an intense woody note. The initial pepper subsides slightly later, with wood and earth becoming equal, as a cocoa nuance emerges. The cocoa is better structured towards the end.

92

5

Punch
Punch

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	46x143mm (5⅝")	$ N/A - € 18	45min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



ELEGANT & REFINED.
WOOD, LEATHER,
AND COCOA.

The Punch Punch is a traditional Corona Gorda from the traditional Punch brand and a classic in the Cuban portfolio. It has been in production since before 1960, but until the mid-1980s, it was known as Punch Punch de Luxe. The recent Punch Punch showcases why it is regarded by many as a classic.

The smoke starts smooth and mellow, with subtle notes of earth, leather, honey, and wood. It then evolves, becoming more pronounced as ripe fruit, cocoa, and roasted notes emerge. Towards the end, a delicate note of pepper, together with clove comes through, completiing the flavor profile.

91

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



1 Davidoff Chefs Edition 2025

COMPLEX & BALANCED.
CINNAMON, COFFEE,
WALNUT, AND LEATHER.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●	52x159mm (6¼")	$ 55 | € 55	1h 15min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Nine years after Davidoff first introduced the Chefs Edition, the 2025 release marks the fifth installment in this collaboration with Michelin-starred chefs from around the world. Following releases in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021, this edition continues the tradition that bridges the worlds of fine tobacco and gastronomy. The first three releases were presented in the same Toro size, while the 2021 release was offered in a Churchill format. The cigars are rolled in Colorado Maduro-colored wrappers that are smooth to the touch, with almost no veins. The construction is flawless and the filling generous.

Once lit, the opening is peppery, with aromas of leather and wood following. Further into the first third, a walnut aroma is added to the pepper, leather, and wood. There is also a faint ripe fruit note present in the retro hale. In the second third, the spice component turns from pepper to cinnamon as a coffee aroma joins the profile. The ripe fruit becomes more perceptible in the retrohale. The cinnamon and leather notes are the dominant flavors in the last third, with the coffee, walnut, and earth moving to the background. A creamy component comes through as well, while the ripe fruit remains present in the retro hale. The finale is spicy. The Davidoff Chefs Edition 2025 delivers a complex and balanced smoke. The flavor profile is well-structured, intense, and broad. The long finish adds to a more than satisfying smoking experience down to the last puff.

94



2

Caldwell

Long Live the King Mad Mofo Habano Super Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	54x152mm (6")	$ 14.2 $ - € N/A	1h10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	N/A	N/A	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA, USA



BOLD & ROUND. PEPPER, EARTH AND COCOA.

The Mad Mofo Habano is an even fuller version of the Mad Mofo Maduro line, which was released in 2021. The cigar features an oily Colorado wrapper with a pigtail head and generous filling. The Mad Mofo Habano offers complex flavors that harmonize beautifully, culminating in a long, satisfying finish.

The cigar opens with notes of cappuccino, hazelnut, and white pepper. A creamy base is added, complemented by herbal nuances. The second half introduces cinnamon spice and wood. The profile intensifies, with spices picking up and herbal notes becoming balsamic.

93

3

Hiram & Solomon

Grand Architect Toro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$ 13.5 | € 16	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, PARAGUAY



COMPLEX & BALANCED. NUTS, LEATHER, AND WOOD.

In Freemasonry, the Grand Architect of the Universe is a neutral term for a Supreme Being or divine creator, used to be inclusive of all members who hold different faiths. The term draws from symbolic connections to the idea of a divine artisan who created the universe. This Toro delivers a complex and balanced smoke throughout.

The cigar opens with nuts, leather, and herbs. Nuts and leather are the primary flavors, with wood notes in the background. A sour cream note is also perceptible, along with some citrus nuances. A cinnamon spice is added in the second half.

92

4

La Galera

Imperial Jade Piramide

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	$ 12.5 | € 13.5	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	CAMEROON	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



STRUCTURED & COMPLEX. VEGETAL, BALSAMIC, AND PEPPER.

Jose "Jochy" Blanco's first venture into the difficult-to-source and highly sought-after African-grown Cameroon for La Galera resulted in the birth of the Imperial Jade line. They are made at his Tabacalera Palma factory, in Tamboril. This Piramide highlights the wrapper's unique character, with a harmonious evolution from start to finish.

The Piramide opens with vegetal and balsamic notes that evolve gradually and are joined by pepper and hot spices. As the smoke progresses, it becomes broader and more layered, with earth joining to add depth and complexity.

92

5

VegaFina

Year of the Snake 2025

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	46x159mm (6¼")	$ - | € 11.5	1h 10min

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



DEEP & BOLD. CHOCOLATE, COFFEE, AND SPICES.

The cigar celebrates the Chinese New Year 2025. In Chinese culture, the snake symbolizes wisdom, intuition, and renewal. A distinctive feature is the double pigtail, which mimics a snake's tongue, giving the cigar a unique appearance. The cigar delivers a deep and structured smoke, capable of improving puff after puff.

The opening is earthy. Dark chocolate, roasted coffee, and hints of spices and nuts are added. A rich dark chocolate and roasted coffee notes appear as well. The spices intensify, delivering a blend of black pepper and hot spices.

91

HONDURAS



1 Leaf by Oscar
10th Anniversary Criollo Toro

EVOLVING & RUSTIC. PEPPER, RIPE FRUIT, COFFEE, AND EARTH.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$ 13.5 | € 13.9	1h10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS

The Leaf by Oscar 10th Anniversary Criollo celebrates a decade of one of the brand's most successful cigar lines. Created in 2013 by "Island" Jim Robinson and Oscar Valladares as a house blend for Robinson's Leaf & Bean stores in Pittsburgh, the line quickly gained national following for its unique rustic presentation and quality Honduran tobacco. This Honduran puro features a criollo-seed wrapper grown on Oscar Valladares' La Florida Jamastran farm.

The opening delivers spicy notes recalling white pepper and wood on the palate. The first third alternates between white pepper, earth, roasted coffee, and vegetal nuances, the latter of which are mainly perceivable in the background. Ripe fruit notes are also present, adding sweetness to the profile. The middle third confirms ripe fruit, white pepper, and earth while introducing undergrowth to the flavor profile. The combination creates layers of complexity as the cigar progresses. The final third maintains the established profile with the rustic character becoming more pronounced. The Leaf by Oscar 10th Anniversary Criollo Toro delivers an evolving smoke with a deep and rustic flavor profile. The intensity remains consistent throughout, while the flavors persist on the palate. This cigar showcases the quality of Honduran tobacco and the craftsmanship that has made the Leaf by Oscar line a success over the past decade.

94



2

Gran Habano
Corojo No. 7
Robusto

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

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



BOLD & RICH. COFFEE, LEATHER, AND PEPPER.

The Gran Habano Corojo No. 7 line debuted with a single vitola, and after its huge success, it expanded earlier in the year with the addition of the Robusto size. The packaging was also updated to five-count cardboard boxes. The cigar delivers an intense and bold smoke with a broad, complex, and deep flavor profile.

Rich flavors of roasted coffee, leather, wood, and black pepper emerge in the opening. Then a balsamic nuance is introduced alongside cocoa. Earth enters later on as the coffee leans towards espresso, completing a broad flavor profile. The finale is spicy.

93

3

Raíces Cubanas
C5 Black
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	52x127mm (5")	$ 10.5 - € 10.5	50min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA	HONDURAS



INTENSE & CAPTIVATING. COCOA, LEATHER, AND SPICES.

C5 Black is inspired by "el Corte Cinco," the Fifth Priming, when the uppermost leaves known for their rich, full-bodied character are harvested. This wrapper gives the cigar its deep complexity and bold flavor. This Robusto offers an intense smoking experience with bold flavors from start to finish.

The opening delivers earth, cocoa, and leather on the palate. Cinnamon spice emerges as the profile develops. Cocoa intensifies as the smoke progresses, becoming richer and more pronounced. Walnut notes are introduced. The spicy character picks up toward the end.

92

4

Flor de Selva
Salomón
30 Años

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	58x178mm (7")	$ - | € 45	1h 45min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



RICH & STRUCTURED. SPICES, WOOD, AND CITRUS.

The Flor de Selva Salomón 30 Años celebrates the brand's 30th anniversary and the opening of the new Fábrica de Puros MSC in Danlí, Honduras. Created in 2019, the cigars are aged for six years. This celebratory cigar delivers a rich and structured smoke with great complexity and depth.

Once lit, the cigar brings exotic spices, wood, and toasted nuances to the palate. A blast of spices featuring white pepper and nutmeg follows, enriched by ginger and a citrusy note. The spices become increasingly piquant, accompanied by wood and earth.

92

5

Rebellion
Screaming Skull

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	56x152mm (6")	$ 13.8 | € -	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
HONDURAS	MEXICO	INDONESIA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



BROAD & COMPLEX. LEATHER, NUTS, AND SPICES.

Rebellion Cigars celebrates five years with the Screaming Skull limited edition. Founded by Shaun and Mandi Wilkinson, this highlight of the blend is a Mexican San Andrés wrapper aged for five years. It offers a broad, complex flavor profile that evolves throughout the smoking experience.

The smoke opens with a mix of leather, nuts, and baking spices. Sour cream and herbs are added to the flavor profile, creating additional layers of complexity. A citrus nuance is perceptible throughout, adding a subtle brightness to the flavor profile.

91

NICARAGUA



1 Plasencia
Alma del Cielo Boreal

BALANCED & STRUCTURED.
FINE WOOD, EARTH,
HERBS AND SPICES.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	54x156mm (6⅛")	$ 28.5 | € 28.5	1h 15min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

Plasencia Cigars revealed the Alma del Cielo at the 2025 PCA in New Orleans, marking what they defined as the first-ever high-elevation cigar. Alma del Cielo translates to "Soul from the Sky." It captures tobacco grown at Finca San Julian in Condega, situated at an elevation of more than 3,500 feet above sea level. The farm holds deep family significance: it was once owned by Melalina Torres' father and later repurchased by her husband, Don Nestor Plasencia, as an anniversary gift. Today, Finca San Julian stands as a testament to love and family, where high-elevation tobacco thrives in the increased sunlight exposure, cooler climates, and an untouched stream that flows through the farm.

The cold draw delivers scents of wood and hay. The opening confirms the wood, enriched by a touch of white pepper, that becomes more intense towards the smoke, flanked by fine wood and earth. In the middle third, the flavor profile is enriched by vegetal nuances and nutmeg. The spices culminate in piquant peaks, mainly perceptible in the aftertaste. In the last third, the flavors become even more pronounced, and towards the end, vegetal notes and balsamic hints emerge, adding depth to the experience. The finale is well-balanced. The Plasencia Alma del Cielo Boreal delivers a balanced and structured smoke with a complex flavor profile that evolves throughout, showcasing the unique characteristics of high-elevation tobacco from Finca San Julian.

96



2

Blackened
M81
Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	40x178mm (7")	$ 12.75 | € -	1h 20min

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



RICH & BOLD. CHOCOLATE, EARTH, AND PEPPER.

After the success of the Blackened Cigars, a new Lancero size was released for both the Blackened M81 and S84. The sizes are described as a guitar solo in cigar form, long and lean, and delivering rich and heavy notes. The Blackened M81 Lancero delivers a rich and bold smoking experience, hitting all the right notes.

Dark chocolate, earth, and black pepper emerge as the cigar is lit. The profile maintains dark chocolate, earth, leather, and black pepper throughout. Coffee is added as the smoke progresses. The last third introduces walnut, becoming balsamic and spicy towards the

94

3

The Wise Man
Corojo
Lancero

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	40x178mm (7")	$ 15.2 | € -	1h 20min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



FLAVORFUL & COMPLEX. COCOA, EARTH AND SPICES.

Foundation expands the Wise Man series with the Lancero size in both the Corojo and Maduro lines. The Lancero pays tribute to Menelik I, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The cigar features a Nicaraguan Corojo 99 wrapper, with Nicaraguan binder and fillers. This Lancero offers a balanced and nuanced smoking experience throughout.

Cinnamon and wood give way to the smoke. Nuts with subtle creaminess are introduced later. The second half becomes creamier with subtle sweetness as balsamic nuances come through. The profile takes a spicy turn towards the end.

93

4

Sobremesa
Solita
Red

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●●	46x159mm (6¼")	$ 18.7 | € -	1h 10min

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



NUANCED & BALANCED. PEPPER, LEATHER, AND WOOD.

The Sobremesa Solita Red from Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust was blended by Steve Saka to be a touch stronger blend compared to the original. The cigar replaces the discontinued Cervantes Fino. The Solita Red delivers a nuanced and balanced smoke that remains flavorful throughout.

Once the cigar is lit, bold black pepper notes, vegetal aromas, and wood are delivered. Later, leather with walnut undertones is introduced, and a subtle creamy aroma joins in the second half. Black pepper intensifies, with a balsamic note emerging, and the smoke becomes creamier.

92

5

Rocky Patel
Emerald
Robusto

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	50x140mm (5½")	$ 11.8 | € 13.9	1h

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	MEXICO, NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



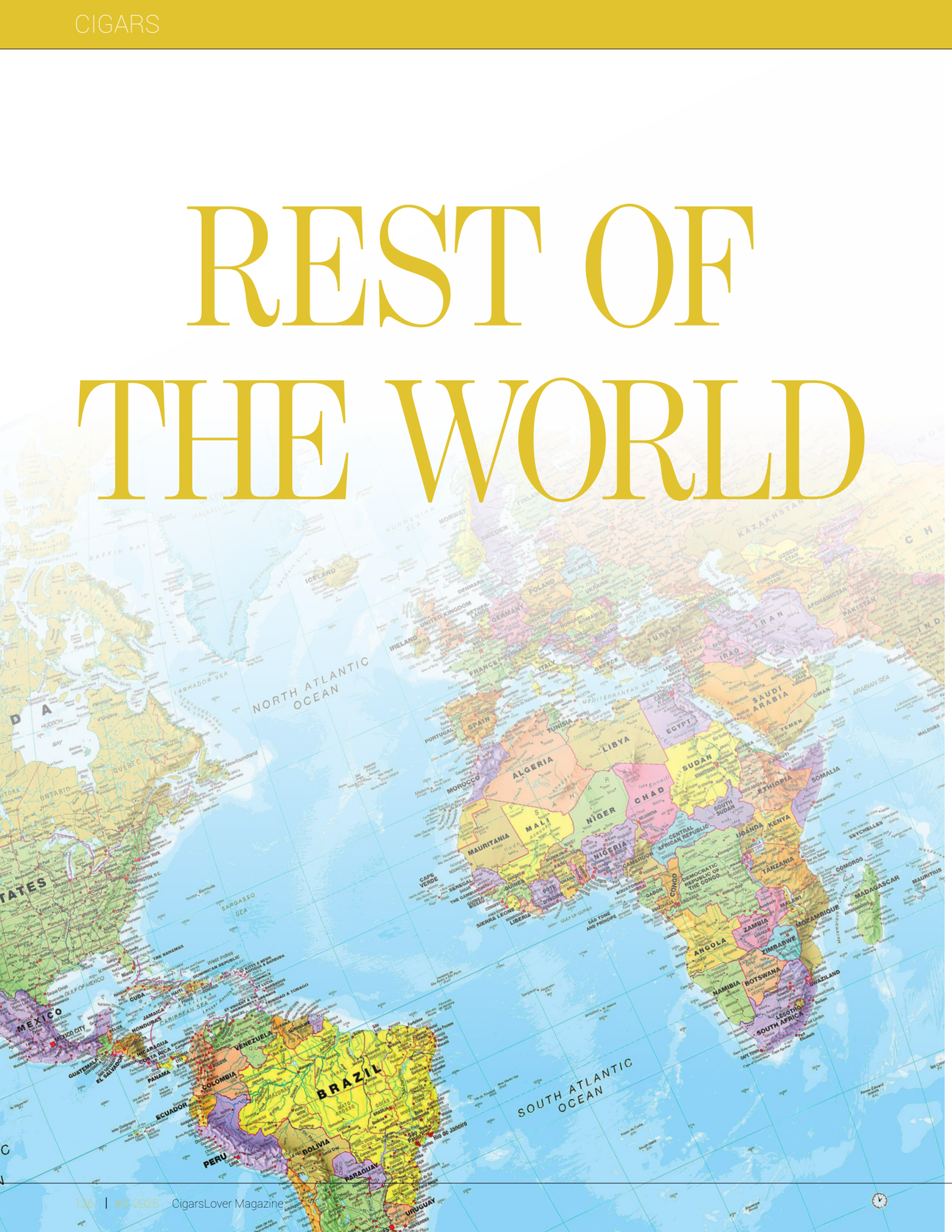
RICH & SWEET. COCOA, LEATHER, AND PEPPER.

The Rocky Patel Emerald is the brand's first box-pressed cigar, reportedly offering a lighter, medium-bodied profile. It features an Ecuadorian Habano wrapper, with dual binders from Nicaragua and Mexico, and filler tobacco from Nicaragua, plus a leaf from the Jamastran Valley in Honduras. It offers a harmonious balance with a touch of sweetness throughout the smoking experience.

The opening of the cigar delivers black pepper, earth, leather, and nuts with intense character. Cocoa emerges as the profile becomes smoother. Balsamic and spicy notes are introduced in the later sections.

92

REST OF THE WORLD



1 Partagas
De Bronce

CREAMY & REFINED.
CINNAMON, WOOD,
EARTH, AND NUTS.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●	46x159mm (6¼")	$ 23 | € -	1h 10min

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

The Partagas de Bronce gets part of its name from the famous brand, and part of it hints at where it is made: none other than the famous factory El Titan de Bronze in Miami. The blend is entirely Nicaraguan tobacco and comes only in this single Corona Gorda size. They are sold in a captivating laquered box containing 10 cigars. A total of 5.000 boxes were made.

The cold draw delivers clean tobacco nuances accompanied by light spice notes. Upon lighting the cigar, flavors of cinnamon, cream, and wood emerge on the palate. A subtle sweetness threads through the profile, without dominating the core elements. The first third delivers a harmonious interplay of these flavors. As the experience progresses, the intensity moderates to a medium body while maintaining the creaminess that defines this blend. The second third increases in intensity and strength, with earthy and nutty aromas joining the flavor profile. Herbal notes are introduced in the last third, accompanied by toasted nut flavors that round out the smoking experience. The Partagas de Bronce offers a study in balance, playing a major role in building the flavor transitions. The complex progression provides engagement, while the underlying creaminess balances the flavor profile, creating a layered smoking experience. This combination results in a well-structured smoke that maintains quality from first light to final puff.

92



2

Great Wall
National Treasure

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	58x178mm (7")	$ - | € 365	1h 45min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CHINA	ECUADOR	ECUADOR	CHINA, NICARAGUA



SMOOTH & BALANCED. CAPPUCCINO, LEATHER, AND HERBS.

The limited-edition Gran Toro pays tribute to cultural heritage and cigar artistry. It features Chinese and Nicaraguan fillers, a Dominican binder, and an Ecuadorian wrapper. It is inspired by the giant panda, a symbol of harmony. Despite its size, the cigar evolves from creamy, coffee-forward notes to a more herbal, spiced profile.

The Great Wall National Treasure is aesthetically a pretty cigar to look at. Once lit, it leads to cappuccino, nuts, and sour cream flavors. Leather and wood add depth as herbal notes and spice emerge in the second half.

92

3

El Loco
La Viuda

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$ - | € 16.6	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO	MEXICO, NICARAGUA



COMPLEX & LAYERED. CARAMEL, LEATHER, AND CAPPUCCINO.

El Loco is blended by Marcel Knobel and Alejandro Turrent and produced at his factory in Mexico. The brand draws inspiration from Día de los Muertos, celebrating cultural traditions through cigar artistry. It offers a progression that creates layers of complexity while maintaining balance throughout the smoking experience.

The smoke starts with caramel, cappuccino, nuts, and leather on the palate. A hint of pepper is present in the background. The second half evolves as buttery cream and mineral notes are added, and the pepper grows in intensity.

91

4

Esperitu
Maestro

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●●	52x178mm (7")	$ 6.6 - € N/A	1h 30min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
INDONESIA	INDONESIA	INDONESIA	INDONESIA



BALANCED & BOLD. EARTH, SPICES, AND WOOD.

Founded by Marc Henon, Esperitu emerged from his encounter of Abdul Kabar Muzakir in Jember, Indonesia. Muzakir brought Cuban tobacco seeds from Vietnam decades ago and planted them in the rich soil of the Jember plains. The cigar delivers a well-balanced smoke with harmonious aromas and long persistence.

The cigar begins with earthy and spicy notes, delivering green pepper, wood, and a subtle vegetal touch in the background. The profile remains consistent throughout, with the spices and green pepper confirmed in the middle and final thirds.

91

5

Bribón
Torpedo

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	TIME
●●	52x152mm (6")	$ N/A - € 11.8	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
COLOMBIA	ECUADOR	COLOMBIA	COLOMBIA



BOLD & BALANCED. EARTH, LEATHER AND PEPPER.

Founded in 2017, Bribón Cigars aims to showcase Colombian tobacco at its finest, working with skilled farmers in the fertile regions of Montes de María and Santander. Handmade in Barichara, the Torpedo embodies the brand's blend of tradition and boldness. This Torpedo offers a smooth smoking experience with a well-balanced progression that showcases the quality of Colombian tobacco at its best.

It opens with nutty and toasted notes. Light pepper nuances are also perceptible, adding subtle complexity. Wood and coffee are added to the flavor profile later. The smoke is creamy.

90

BEST 50 CIGARS *of the* YEAR

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

RATING ON A 100 POINTS SCALE

POSITION, BRAND, LINE AND CIGAR NAME

RING GAUGE AND LENGTH

PLACE WHERE THE CIGAR IS MADE

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

- • *LIGHT*
- •• *LIGHT TO MEDIUM*
- ••• *MEDIUM*
- •••• *MEDIUM TO FULL*
- ••••• *FULL*

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

SCORE	NAME	COUNTRY	SIZE	STRENGTH	PRICE
96	1. Plasencia Alma del Cielo Boreal		54×156mm (6⅛")	•••	$$$$$
95	2. Cohiba Siglo VI		52×150mm (5⅞")	••••	$$$$$
94	3. Leaf by Oscar 10th Anniversary Criollo Toro		52×152 mm (6")	••••	$$$
	4. Blackened Maduro Lancero		40x178mm (7")	••••	$$$
	5. Davidoff Chefs Edition 2025		52x159mm (6¼")	••••	$$$$$
93	6. Caldwell LLtK Mad Mofo Habano Super Toro		54x152mm (6")	••••	$$$
	7. Partagás 898		43x170mm (6¾")	••••	$$$$$
	8. The Wise Man Corojo Lancero		40x178mm (7")	•••	$$$$
	9. Gran Habano Corojo No.7 Robusto		52x127mm (5")	••••	$$$
92	10. Sobremesa Solita Red		46x159mm (6¼")	••••	$$$$
	11. Rocky Patel Emerald Robusto		50x140mm (5½")	•••	$$$
	12. Hiram & Solomon Grand Architect Toro		52x152mm (6")	•••	$$$
	13. HR Black Extra Toro		55x150mm (5⅞")	•••••	$$$$
	14. Tatuaje The Mummy Redux		47x197mm (7¾")	••••	$$$
	15. Romeo y Julieta Wide Churchill		55x130mm (5⅛")	•••	$$$$$
	16. Raíces Cubanas C5 Black Robusto		52x127mm (5")	••••	$$
	17. La Galera Imperial Jade Piramide		52×152 mm (6")	••••	$$$
	18. Flor de Selva Salomón 30 Años		58x178mm (7")	•••	$$$$$
	19. Partagás Serie E No. 2		54x140mm (5½")	••••	$$$$$
	20. El Pulpo The Squid		60x165mm (6½")	••••	$$$$
	21. Partagas de Bronce		46x159mm (6¼")	•••	$$$$
91	22. Valacari Lumineer Robusto		50x127mm (5")	•••	$$$
	23. Great Wall National Treasure		58x178mm (7")	•••	$$$$$
	24. El Loco La Viuda		52x152mm (6")	•••	$$$$
	25. Punch Punch		46x143mm (5⅝")	•••	$$$$
	26. VegaFina Year of the Snake 2025		46x159mm (6¼")	•••	$$$
	27. Don Palomon Mazo del Fuego Churchill		50x178mm (7")	••••	$$
	28. Horacio Pantera 60		60x152mm (6")	•••	$$$
	29. Valentino Siesto Nero Black N2 Toro		50x152mm (6")	••••	$$
	30. Sans Pareil Purple Double Corona		50x190mm (7½")	•••	$$$$$
	31. 1502 Black Gold Robusto		50x127mm (5")	•••	$
	32. Notorious Toro		50x152mm (6")	••••	$$$
	33. Esperitu Maestro		52x178mm (7")	••••	$$$
	34. Rebellion Screaming Skull		56x152mm (6")	•••	$$$
	35. Lure Corojo Oscuro The Lil Tony Robusto		50x127mm (5")	•••	$$
	36. Adventura Barbarroja's Invasion Corona		44x152mm (6")	••••	$$$
	37. Aganorsa La Validacion Corojo Toro		52x159mm (6 ¼")	•••	$$$$$
	38. Adventura The Conqueror Capitan		60x152mm (6")	••••	$$$
90	39. Davidoff Year of the Horse 2026		55×165mm (6½")	•••	$$$$$
	40. EP Carrillo Endure Robusto		50×127mm (5")	••••	$$$$
	41. Dunbarton Tobacco & Trust Overseas No. 1		50×152 mm (6")	•••	$$$$
	42. My Father Blue Robusto		52×127mm (5¼")	••••	$$$
	43. Rocky Patel Thirtieth Anniversary Robusto		50×140mm (5½")	•••••	$$$$
	44. Eladio Diaz Before And After My Family		50×140mm (5½")	•••	$$$
	45. Gurkha Collection Especial Nicaragua Toro		54×152mm (6")	•••	$$$
	46. Crowned Heads La Veradera No.54		54x143mm (5⅝")	•••	$$$$
	47. Bribón Torpedo		52x152mm(6")	•••	$$$
	48. Mayflower Dawn Robusto		50x127mm (5")	••	$$$
	49. EP Carrillo Essence Honduras Toro		52×152mm (6")	••••	$$
	50. H. Upmann Magnum Finite		53 × 130mm (5⅛")	•••	$$$$$

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INTERACTIVE

BEST BRANDS

Best Brand
Cuba

Partagás stands as one of Cuba's oldest and most prestigious cigar brands, established in 1845 by Don Jaime Partagás y Ravelo, a Catalan immigrant who arrived in Cuba in 1831. He built his factory, La Flor de Tabacos de Partagás, behind the Capitol building in central Havana and acquired extensive tobacco plantations in the Vuelta Abajo region of Pinar del Río. He introduced the lector to Cuban cigar culture in the early 1860s. Following his death, the business passed through various hands before the Cifuentes family took control and expertly managed Partagás through the first half of the twentieth century.

Partagás cigars are renowned for their full-bodied strength. The brand has many iconic cigars, among which is the Serie D No. 4, a Robusto that remains one of Cuba's best-selling cigars. Other legendary vitolas include the Lusitanias (Double Corona vitola) and the 8-9-8 (Dalias vitola), named for its unique box arrangement. The famous Alphabet Series includes the Serie D, Serie E, and torpedo-shaped Serie P No. 2. Today, Partagás still ranks high in total sales among Cuban brands. Another strong point of the brand is its production consistency, as reflected in our Awards this year: not one but two of the Top 5 are Partagás cigars.

In 2025, Partagás celebrated its 180th Anniversary, and therefore several notable cigars were released. The Cedros celebrates the Chinese Zodiac Year of the Snake in a new special release size called Dignos, presented in numbered luxury boxes of eighteen cigars, with production limited to 18,888 boxes. The Partagás Royales Travel Humidor features the new Dichosos vitola in humidors containing twenty cigars.

With nearly two centuries of history, Partagás continues to represent Cuban cigar excellence, maintaining its position as one of the most recognizable and respected brands in the global cigar market.

Best Brand
Dominican Rep.

Hiram & Solomon Cigars was founded in 2015 by Fouad Kashouty and George Dakrat, two lifelong Freemasons who recognized a market opportunity for premium cigars. The company initially operated in the Dominican Republic but later relocated to Nicaragua to source high-quality tobacco. In 2020, when Brother Dakrat retired, Fouad Kashouty took over the company alongside his wife Romy, who helped expand the brand's international presence. Today, cigars are crafted at PDR Cigars in the Dominican Republic. The brand's portfolio is distinctive in its Freemasonry-inspired theming.

Each cigar line is named after Masonic degrees. The company contributes a portion of its sales profits to various charitable organizations, both Masonic and non-Masonic, making philanthropy a core principle of its business model. This year, Hiram & Solomon is celebrating a significant milestone: its 10th anniversary. In 2025, the brand introduced several new cigars, showcasing its ongoing growth and innovation. The Ashlar is the company's flagship cigar for this anniversary. The name "Ashlar" represents the transformation from rough to refined. It features a hybrid wrapper made from both Habano and Connecticut seeds, with tobaccos aged for a minimum of five years. The cigar is hand-rolled by a single torcedor with over 20 years of experience. Only 25 individually numbered collector's boxes were made, with an additional 1,000 standard boxes. The High Twelve, part of the Grand Lodge Series, honors M.W. J. Eugene Margroff, the Grand Master of Masons for New Jersey. Lastly, the Patriot Cigar honors George F. Hamilton, the 91st Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts.

Hiram & Solomon remains dedicated to quality craftsmanship while upholding its commitment to Masonic values and charitable contributions, establishing itself as a unique presence in the premium cigar market.

Best Brand
Honduras

Fábrica de Tabacos Raíces Cubanas was established on May 5, 2003, in Danlí, Honduras, by Romay Endemaño, his wife Maria, and their son Hugo Endemaño. With roots in Cuba's tobacco industry, the family carried on their legacy in Miami before establishing their own in Honduras. For years, the factory has been best known for rolling cigars for other companies, including Alec Bradley.

Ralph Montero, a native of Cuba, arrived in the US in 1970 and started working in his uncle's cigar distribution business shortly after graduating high school. Ralph's passion for cigars has spanned decades. The Endemaños and Montero paths intersected in 1998, forming a bond that has only strengthened over the years through their work with Alec Bradley Cigars. In late 2024, the company launched four new cigars bearing its own name, marking its true introduction to the end consumer. Today, Hugo is president of the company, and Montero is executive vice president. The original four lines introduced in 2024 established the brand's core portfolio. Raíces Cubanas Clásico is blended from an all-Honduran blend. The GRD3 blend is also entirely Honduran. Liga de Reyes is made with mostly Honduran tobaccos, but one of the binder leaves is from Nicaragua. Raíces Cubanas C5 Black, the strongest of the new cigars, also has a Nicaraguan leaf in the binder. In 2025, the brand has expanded its portfolio. They released the Liga de Reyes Salomón, their first limited edition cigar. Most recently, Raíces Cubanas announced the 1941 Nuevo Comienzo., that pays homage to the year the factory founders, Romay and Maria Endemaño, were born, while "Nuevo Comienzo" means "new beginning," celebrating the launch of the Raíces Cubanas brand.

With a focused approach to building its own brand identity, Raíces Cubanas continues to demonstrate the quality and craftsmanship that have made its factory a respected name in the industry.



Best Brand
Nicaragua

Rocky Patel Premium Cigars stands as one of the most successful brands in the handmade cigar industry, built on the vision of Rakesh "Rocky" Patel. Born in India in 1961, Patel worked as an entertainment attorney in Los Angeles, where he met celebrity cigar enthusiasts, including Arnold Schwarzenegger and Gene Hackman. After becoming captivated by cigars, he joined the Grand Havana Club and decided to enter the industry during the mid-1990s cigar boom. The rest is well-documented history.

The company operates factories in both Nicaragua and Honduras, with cigars handcrafted at Tabacalera Villa Cuba S.A. (TAVICUSA) in Estelí, Nicaragua, and another facility in Honduras. Notable releases over the years have included Rocky Patel Decade, Fifteenth Anniversary, Twentieth Anniversary, Quarter Century, and many more. Rocky Patel Sixty, blended to celebrate Rocky's 60th birthday. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Rocky Patel's entry into the cigar business, and the brand has introduced several new releases in 2025. The Rocky Patel Thirtieth Anniversary features a Mexican San Andrés wrapper aged for seven years over dual Nicaraguan binders and fillers from Honduras and Nicaragua aged for at least five years. The Rocky Patel Year of the Snake commemorates the Chinese Zodiac. This limited production features a Nicaraguan Habano wrapper over a Nicaraguan Broadleaf binder with fillers from Nicaragua and Honduras. An alternate version with a different wrapper was created specifically for international markets.

The Rocky Patel Emerald, which began shipping in December 2024, features an Ecuadorian Habano wrapper with dual binders from Nicaragua and Mexico, filled predominantly with Nicaraguan tobacco plus a single leaf from Honduras's Jamastran Valley.



Best Brand
Rest of the World

Great Wall Cigars is China's oldest and most prestigious cigar brand, with origins dating back to 1918 when the Yichuan Industry Society was established. The modern company was officially founded in 1958 as part of China Tobacco Sichuan Industrial Co., Ltd., and is located in Shifang, Sichuan Province, where cigar tobacco has been cultivated for over 400 years. The brand gained significant recognition in the 1960s when it began producing cigars for Chairman Mao Zedong. This political endorsement greatly enhanced the company's reputation, as Chairman Mao famously gifted Great Wall cigars to foreign dignitaries, elevating the brand to international prominence. The company operates a state-of-the-art facility, completed in 2007, covering 200,000 square meters.

In 2025, Great Wall has demonstrated its commitment to international expansion with an ambitious portfolio unveiled. The Year of the Snake Limited Edition Culebra marks Great Wall's first Culebra format. The Year of the Horse Limited Edition Perfecto features design elements from imperial jade seals. The GX Lion's Glory Toro represents the first Chinese cigar to feature Cameroon tobacco as its core ingredient. The Great Wall Spectacular No.3 Extra Finos Robusto, upgraded 2025 release, was crafted with aged tobaccos from Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and China. At the same time, the Great Wall Spectacular No.2 Extra Finos Edmundo stands as the elevated expression of the Spectacular family. This release is crafted from aged tobaccos, blending traditional Yichuan fermentation with more than three years of oak-barrel maturation. Lastly, let's not forget the cigar placed in the Awards this year: the Great Wall National Treasure.

With over a century of heritage, diplomatic significance, and an increasingly international focus, Great Wall Cigars continues to position itself as a symbol of Chinese cigar excellence on the global stage.



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CIGARS

The Difference.

A look at the prestigious white-banded classics made by Davidoff.

by **Michel Arlia**

每一个雪茄爱好者，无论是经验丰富的老手还是刚开始吸烟的新手，都知道Davidoff。例如不同的人会得到不同的答案，他们知道对“大卫杜夫”的看法也不尽相同。那些只吸了几年期的人可能知道Black Band系列、Winston Churchill和其他最近发行的品牌。经验更丰富的吸烟者知道是他们的White Band系列造就了如今的Davidoff。Davidoff发起了“the Difference”运动，让人们重新关注他们久负盛名的白带经典产品。我们与Oettinger Davidoff高级副总裁兼全球营销主管爱德华·西蒙（Edward Simon）坐下来，讨论了Davidoff的与众不同之处。

PAGE

1 HR Black Extra Boreal

BOLD & COMPLEX.
PEPPER, COFFEE, LEATHER,
AND CHOCOLATE.

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE	SMOKING TIME
●●●●●	55x150mm (5⅞")	$ - | € 16	1h 10min

COUNTRY	WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

The HR Black marks the return of Hirochi Robaina's brand after a five-year hiatus. Hirochi is the grandson of Alejandro Robaina, Cuba's most famous tobacco grower. After learning at the Partagás and H. Upmann factories, Hirochi inherited the family's Cuchillas de Barbacoa farm in 2010. The Robaina family has grown tobacco in Cuba's Vuelta Abajo region since 1845. In 2014, Hirochi collaborated with Omar González-Alemán to create HR Cigars in Nicaragua. After dormancy, the brand relaunched at InterTabac 2024. The HR Black is the strongest cigar in the portfolio, featuring an Ecuadorian Habano 2000 Maduro wrapper over Nicaraguan binder and fillers, made at La Corona factory in Estelí.

Black pepper, coffee, and dark chocolate emerge with intensity in the opening, joined by ripe fruit and baking spices in the first half. The pepper provides backbone, while coffee and chocolate add depth. As the smoke progresses, leather and charred wood are introduced, adding a rustic dimension to the existing profile. The combination creates an earthy, robust character that complements the foundation. The finale maintains intensity. The HR Black Extra Toro delivers a bold and complex smoking experience. The flavor profile is intense and well-structured, representing both the HR brand revival and the continuation of the Robaina family's nearly 180-year legacy in tobacco.

92





EL PULPO
The Squid

INTENSE & POWERFUL.

The Squid is a box-pressed Double Figurado from Artesano del Tobacco, made by AJ Fernandez. It features a Mexican San Andrés Maduro wrapper with Nicaraguan binder and filler. Woodiness leads with earthy notes, cocoa, and pepper. Nuttiness emerges with black pepper, leather, and ripe fruit notes. Dark chocolate appears alongside roasted coffee.

2

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	60x165mm (6½")	92

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	1h 45min	$ 20 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



VALACARI
Lumineer Robusto

BROAD & LAYERED.

The Lumineer, Valacari Cigars' latest blend introduced this year, features a Habano 2000 wrapper over Nicaraguan binder and filler. The smoke opens with intense hazelnut aromas, accompanied by coffee and leather. Wood and white pepper nuances continue to develop throughout the cigar. The smoke is very creamy. The white pepper morphs to black pepper towards the end.

3

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	50x127mm (5")	92

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	50min	$ 13 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP.



MAZO DEL FUEGO
Churchill

RICH & UNIQUE.

Mazo del Fuego comes from the Don Palomon Cigar house and is a blend made entirely of Nicaraguan tobaccos. The opening delivers backing spices, with cinnanmon and nutmeg, followed by cocoa beans. The spices turn hot as we move further into the smoke. An earthy component is added later on, along with a vegetal nuance.

4

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	50x178mm (7")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	1h 30min	$ - | € 15

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



HORACIO
Pantera 60

COMPLEX & ROUND.

The Horacio Pantera is the latest addition to their portfolio, made from tobaccos from four countries. The cigar alternates aromas of earth, nuts, cinnamon spice, leather, and sweetness in the first half, followed by notes of vanilla or tonka bean. Balsamic herbs join with a mineral nuance in the second half. Spicier towards the finale.

5

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
NICARAGUA	60x152mm (6")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●●	1h 30min	$ - | € 16.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



VALENTINO SIESTO
Nero Black N.2 Toro

EVOLVING & REFINED.

The Nero Black N.2 features an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, a Dominican binder, and Dominican fillers. Wood and vegetal notes are revealed in the opening. Cream, nuts, and white pepper join the profile later on. The white pepper turns to cinnamon spice. A ripe fruit aroma appears as well. A herbal note is introduced, and the finale is spicy.

6

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	50x152mm (6")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 10min	9 $ - 11 €

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



SANS PAREIL
Purple Double Corona

ELEGANT & REFINED.

The Sans Pareil Purple line rests for seven years in the aging room of Tabacalera Palma after the cigars are rolled. Aromas of nuts, cedar, and light spices give way to this large cigar. Cappuccino and earthy notes follow later on. Halfway through the smoke, balsamic herbs are added while the spices become more pronounced.

7

COUNTRY	SIZE	RATING
DOMINICAN REP.	50x190mm (7½")	91

STRENGTH	TIME	PRICE
●●●	1h 40min	$ 47.3 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.

Best Brand **Boutique**

Artesano Del Tobacco is a cigar company founded by brothers Billy and Gus Fakih, who spent over 20 years in premium cigar retail before launching their own brand. The brothers entered the industry in 1992, opening New York Cigar Inn on Manhattan's Upper East Side. In 2008, they expanded with a second location on 54th Street. The company was formally established in 2012. After selling their retail operations to Imperial Tobacco PLC in 2015, the Fakihs shifted focus to manufacturing, where they partnered with A.J. Fernandez. Their relationship with Fernandez had developed over the years. In 2019, Artesano Del Tobacco launched its first signature line, Viva La Vida, produced at A.J. Fernandez. The cigars are entirely Nicaraguan, featuring a Habano Oscuro wrapper grown by Fernandez himself. Viva La Vida quickly gained acclaim for its bold, full-bodied profile, distinctive Jester-themed packaging, and became the company's flagship offering. In 2023, the company unveiled El Pulpo, meaning "The Octopus," as its second major release. This full-strength cigar features a Mexican San Andrés Maduro wrapper. The El Pulpo line has done notably in our blind tastings this year. This year, Artesano Del Tobacco has expanded its portfolio with notable releases. The company unveiled the Viva La Vida Connecticut, responding to customer requests for a Connecticut-wrapped version of their flagship line. The El Pulpo line received a significant addition with The Squid, a box-pressed Perfecto.

Artesano Del Tobacco has also expanded internationally, partnering with The Humidor Project to distribute in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The company's commitment to customer engagement remains central, with both 2025 releases being direct responses to consumer requests.

With a focus on quality craftsmanship, bold flavor profiles, and unique presentation, Artesano Del Tobacco continues to establish itself as a respected name in the cigar market.

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