CigarsLover MAGAZINE

ISSUE 3 - 2026



Jonathan Drew

- SWEET TIP - CREATING THE CORE: ROLLING METHODS - GENERATIONAL TOBACCO BAN - PAIRINGS: CIGARS & SPIRITS
- PAIRING WHISKEY & SALMON - THE SCIENCE AND CRAFT BEHIND THE ICE SPHERE - THE PENICILLIN COCKTAIL
- THE MUSELET AND THE SUPERSONIC CHAMPAGNE "POP" - THE ART OF LEES STIRRING IN THE BÂTONNAGE

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BY DREW ESTATE

9 T52 H99

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the Rebirth of Cigars

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:
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CigarsLover
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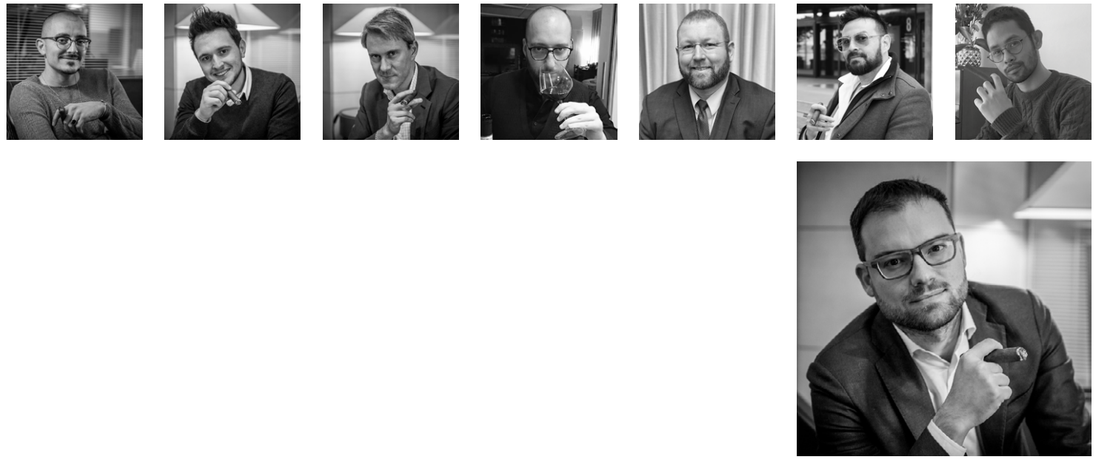

Editor's thoughts

Reinvention, ritual, and the quiet craft behind every pleasure.

There is a particular pleasure in lighting a cigar you have never smoked before. You know the ritual, the clip, the toast, the first slow draw, and yet you have no idea where it will take you. That mix of the familiar and the unknown is, more or less, the mood of this issue. We built it around a conversation with Jonathan Drew. Few people have done more to pull the cigar world forward while insisting it never forget where it came from. The man who helped stage what his company called the rebirth of cigars has never been content to sit inside a single idea, and in The Next Chapter he talks about craft, reinvention, and what he believes still lies ahead.

Alongside it, we trace the sweet tip from the convenience-store shelf to the premium humidor, and go inside the cigar itself in a study of the filler and the hands that arrange it. This edition also confronts a harder subject, a reflection on the generational tobacco ban and what it means for liberty, tradition, and a pastime built for adults rather than children, before setting a fine cigar beside an equally fine glass. Our spirits section begins with the ice sphere, a small lesson in how geometry keeps a drink cold without washing it out, before widening to a new chapter in our whisky and salmon pairings and a look at the Penicillin, that modern classic of honey, ginger, and peat.

Beyond smoke and spirits, this issue explores the quieter craft behind the pleasure. We celebrate the muselet, the wire cage that tames a bottle's pressure, descend into the cellar where the stirring of the lees turns spent yeast into texture and depth, and close with a blind tasting of some forty cigars and twenty-four spirits, each judged with the labels turned away.
That, in the end, is the thread. Everything here is about paying attention. Knowing your palate, your ritual, your reasons. Jonathan Drew built a career on exactly that, and so did every maker, blender, and bartender in these pages. Whether the next chapter is written by tradition or by change, it will belong to the people who keep tasting closely and refuse to smoke, or sip, on autopilot.

Pour something worth your while. Find a comfortable chair. The next chapter starts now.

#refineyourtaste

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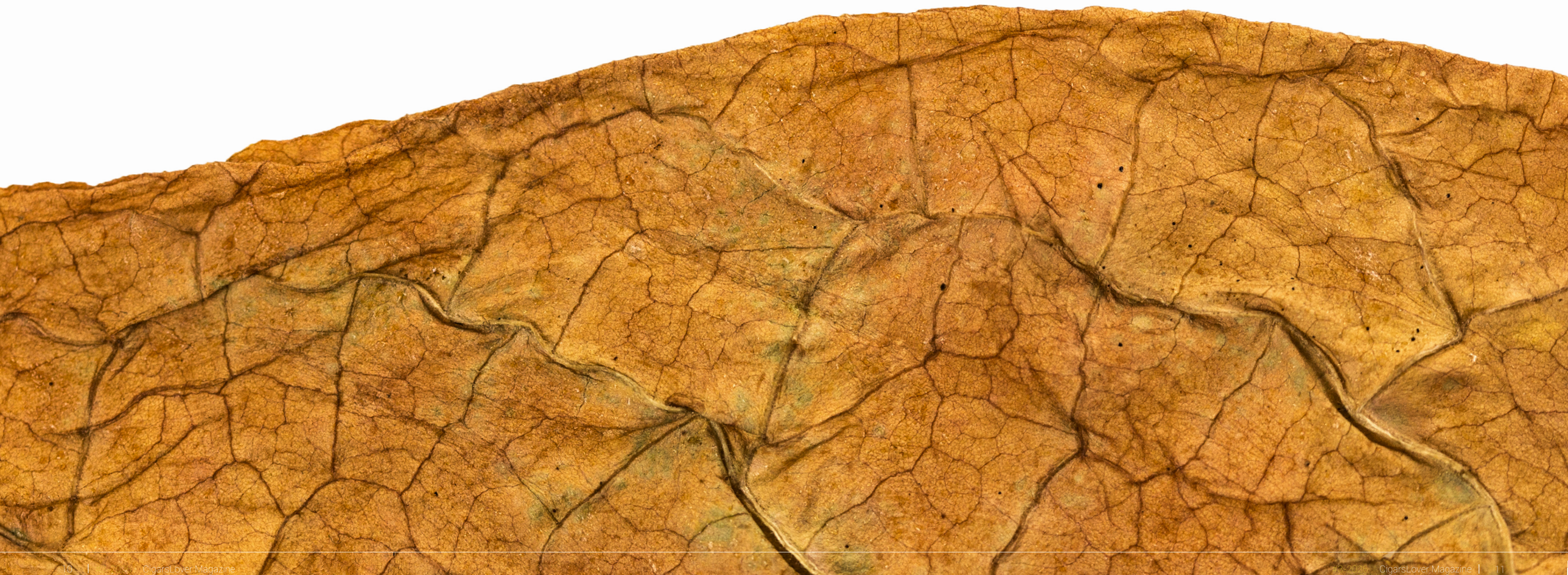
CIGARS

“'A cigar,' said the altruist, 'a cigar, my good man, I cannot give you.
But any time you need a light, just come around; mine is always lit.”
Karl Kraus



TIME BEAUTIFULLY FILLED

PURO DOMINICANO

A GEM RAISED FROM THE GROUND

BURN BRIGHTER

AVO EXPRESIVO



The Next Chapter

Jonathan Drew Sann on legacy, reinvention, and building something that carries his name.

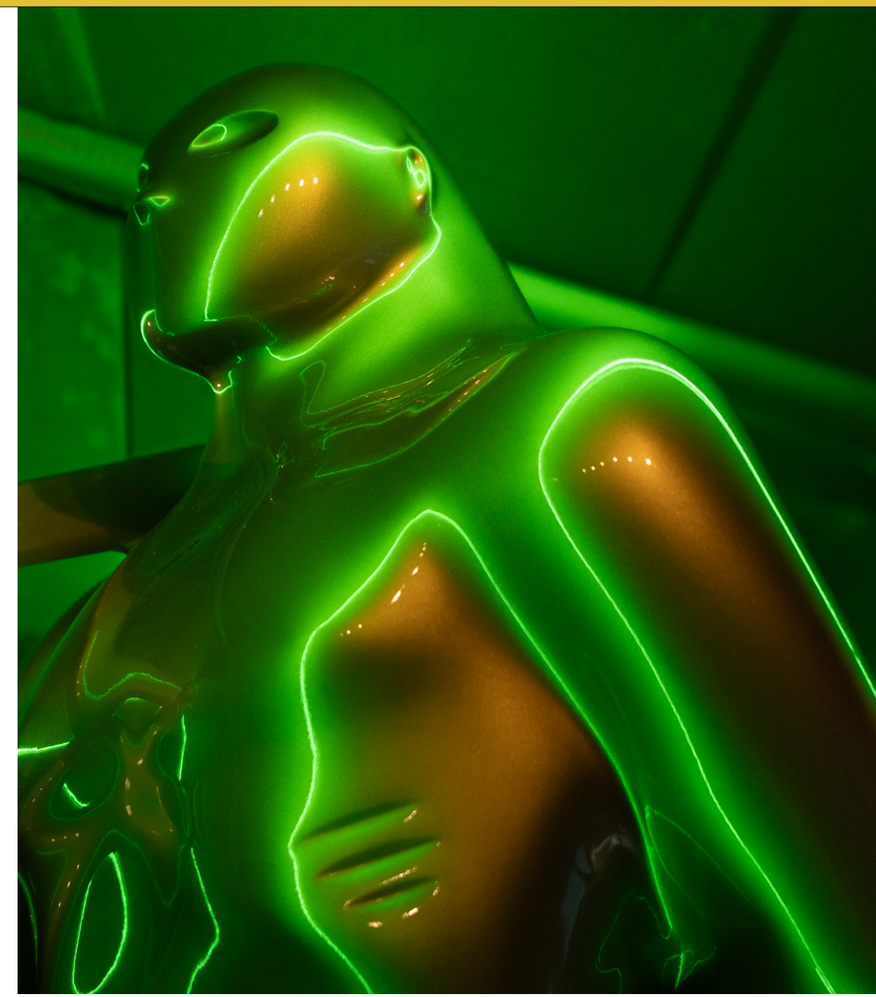
by **Michel Arlia**

Jonathan Drew has left a clear mark on the cigar world. As Drew Estate's co-founder, he brought new energy to the industry and built a brand that became part of his identity. Now, he's starting something new with J.SANN & SON, a project shaped by his own experiences and lessons. It's a family story, and it's personal. We talked with Jonathan about how he's moving forward, what it means to put his name and his son's name on the same label, and how his past shapes what comes next.

After the sale of Drew Estate closed, there must have been a period of stillness that you hadn't experienced in decades. What did it feel like, and what did it reveal to you about who you are outside of Drew Estate?

Wow, deep question. Immediately following the sale of Drew Estate in 2014, I felt a sense of personal accomplishment, like I had achieved a professional milestone. I felt like I joined the community of business entrepreneurs who "built a company worthy of a serious transaction." However, about a year following the sale, I personally, quietly, deeply felt very alone and regretful. For a period of time, I was in a dark place. Fortunately, my love for Drew Estate and its culture and people still shone through as my North Star, so I remained highly attached and continued to work extremely hard, deeply committed. Additionally, the family that bought Drew Estate is super solid, very human, and committed to the company and the cigar industry. They have become family to me on a





personal level, and this was fundamental to where we have landed today - in a beautiful place. When I look back at it now, the biggest thing this revealed to me about who I am outside of Drew Estate is that without a son to pass the heritage of Drew Estate down to, I'm nothing more than the son of Gary and Esther Sann, my parents, and I'm comfortable with that. But now that I have my son, I am Jonathan Drew Sann, father to JD2. That's who I am, and now I feel reincarnated here on earth to become J.SANN & SON. I guess that I'm the human bridge between Drew Estate and J.SANN & SON. I'm a living tall tale in a very long and winding book.

The new title of Chief Innovation Officer at Drew Estate carries a very different kind of directive than the day-to-day work of running an operation. Has that change in role given you more creative freedom, or does the founder's instinct to control everything make letting go harder than it sounds?

I'm an expert in giving up control, so it's not a challenging issue for me in the least, and I will give you two reasons why. The first is that control and creativity are not the same! Control is the professional or personal desire and ability to make final decisions. Creativity is the ability to breathe life into something that currently does not exist or change something that does exist. I don't give two shits about control. It's far too stressful. My life is about creativity and art. This is the most important value that I wish to pass down to my son, JD2. Creativity and loyalty, these two overarching values. The second reason is that the founder's instinct is not to "control everything." The founder's instinct is to control his own destiny, remain relentless in upholding the massively transformational purpose (MTP) of his brand or biz, and, most importantly, to live a life of purpose. Being a founder is a blessing, a gift of love and guidance from your parents. The fog of war allows control to seep in and make you fucking crazy.

With your new position at Drew Estate, you are at the same time building J.SANN & SON from the ground up. How do you mentally and creatively separate the two when you sit down at a desk or walk into a room, and does one ever bleed into the other in ways you didn't anticipate?

Virgil Abloh was the Founder of Off-White and simultaneously the artistic director of Louis Vuitton Men's. One of his clearest statements on this came during a lecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design: "You have no room if you work linearly. Do opposites - it just feels better. That in-between space gives you a new experience that you can use to problem-solve. That's why I work on so many things at one time. I couldn't just do one project day in, day out. That's not healthy." Virgil intentionally kept multiple projects active at the same time, with six projects as the ideal rhythm. "I always have six projects going on at one time. If I get stuck on one, I move to another. When I come back, I see the first one differently." "Virgil is never not Virgil, and that constant is what allows him to seamlessly navigate the abrupt terrain between different territories," says Oana Stanescu, architect and design critic at Harvard GSD. Jonathan Drew Sann is never not Jonathan Drew. I am the Founder, Prez, and Chief Innovation Officer at Drew Estate while simultaneously the Founder of J.SANN & SON, Tobacconist & Manufacturer. Will things bleed from one biz to the other? THERE WILL BE BLOOD. But there will also be professionalism in acknowledging the core values of both companies and various lines of distinction.

Was the concept of a separate venture something you had contemplated for years, or did JD2's arrival ignite a new inspiration?

Both, actually. I had considered a new venture for years, but not necessarily stuck on the ownership side of it. The new venture was more about Drew Estate creating a new adjacency by entering the retail space. Remember that I began

my career in premium cigars as a tobacconist in Manhattan. Our slogan was "Tobacconist of the World Trade Center." I loved and treasure those early days, even before we were called Drew Estate. At that time, 1996, we were Jonathan Drew Inc. Later, Drew Estate became our DBA (doing business as) after I moved to Nicaragua and opened our first factory, 10 years before La Gran Fabrica, Drew Estate. My son, JD2, entered my life even before he was born, as the doctor told me that I would have a son. This is when my grand vision for Drew Estate to move into the retail business got very real, but now with the realities of legacy and heritage biting at my soul. It was at this very moment, these words from the doctor, "you are going to have a son," that J.SANN & SON, Tobacconist and Manufacturer, was born. It was my true Rebirth of Cigars moment. Thankfully, my Drew Estate family was as excited about the new venture from the drop. I'm blessed and feel the love.

The cigar world has a long and storied tradition of father-and-son partnerships, from the Fuentes and Plasencias to Padrons, where the handoff is typically rooted in production. J.SANN & SON seems to be built on something altogether different, something more philosophical and experiential. What does that distinction mean to you, and do you think the industry is ready for a father-and-son story that isn't about tobacco production at its core?

J.SANN & SON, at its core, is the same as any other father-and-son business, inside or outside of the tobacco biz. To me, it's about the love of a father toward his son and the passing of the torch of hope. The hope element resides with the idea that the son will reach a new level of excellence and channel that energy and passion into the business. Whether it's growing the business through creativity or process discipline, that's not important. What is important is core values, honor, and tradition. I want JD2 to be better than me and be loyal to Drew Estate and J.SANN & SON. The first distinction between J.SANN & SON and some of the companies you mention is simply that our core identity is retail. We are cigar merchants at both brick & mortar and E-commerce, but with the heart of a cigar manufacturer. J.SANN & SON understands the art and science of producing cigars at the boutique and mass levels. We will not abandon this knowledge. In fact, J.SANN will build on it - beginning with our 500 cigars per day Family Factory here at 359 NW 28th Street, Miami, Florida 33127. The second difference is that we market and sell a highly curated selection of Collaboration Brands, meaning NEW brands that are joint ventures between Jonathan Drew and various colleagues who own factories and brands themselves. Many of these Collabs are going to freak people out. We're talking some really hard-hitting, household heavyweights, but also up-and-comers who I've had my eye on and fascinate me in their brand philosophies and product execution. The final element of differentiation is the surprising twist of hospitality that's baked into each of our J.SANN flagship locations. The stage, the full restaurant, the bar, and, of course, the commitment to deep brand immersion. J.SANN & SON goes well beyond J.SANN and Drew Estate products. I call it "Beyond Drew." We have a lot of stories to tell, and we must respect the identity of each brand family.



With so much being autobiographical, how do you balance the personal aspects of your story with the need for it to succeed as a commercial venture? Does that juxtaposition ever change the narrative you're trying to convey?

The autobiographical aspect resides in what I call a "founder-forward" story. It feels natural and earnest because J.SANN is all about home and belonging. It's about coming home. I think everyone can relate to that. I truly believe that we don't need to compromise on anything to discover success financially or spiritually. We just need to keep to our purpose and passion and remain in our bespoke lane. Over time, people will understand that our narrative is fairly simple - MORE IS MORE. More of everything intriguing, and conversely, less of anything generic.

You're focusing on experience and place with J.SANN & SON, not just the brand. Is that a lesson you learned along the way? How are you doing things differently?

The Wynwood venue and experience of J.SANN are part of the brand, and the J.SANN brand is part of the experience. They're one and the same, like the famous Vulcan Spock salute from Star Trek: "live long and prosper." It's all biblical, really, and an adaptation of understanding our blessings from the divine presence. I think we just want to give our guests MORE than what they expect and delight them in a setting that's divine. We are doing things differently by working them our way and doing them right. The bar, the stage, the restaurant, the manufactory, and most of all, the finished products.

The first four cigar lines/brands released by J.SANN & SON are a statement in themselves, and producing them under your own house factory adds another layer of intention to the whole project. Can you walk us through what those lines mean to you individually, and what it means to have the production under your own roof rather than entrusting it to someone else?

THIRTEEN YEARS by J.SANN & SON - This brand represents the pain between the time of selling Drew Estate and establishing J.SANN & SON. Having it produced under our own roof is symbolic because it demonstrates commitment and begs for redemption while also illustrating loyalty to our parent company, Drew Estate. MADRUGADA by J.SANN & SON - This is the brand and blend that I dedicate to my son, JD2, and subject him to the burden and beauty of becoming a solid, honest man of high moral character. He must become a beacon of light during his lifetime and a creator of good. Help bring folks into the light, like the small hours, the madrugada. WEST END CIGARS - This is the brand that illuminates the power and joy of loyalty. My friend Swade is the owner of West End Gin, and his motto is that every city has a West End. Where things are harder, battling adversity, overcoming against all odds. The important aspect



is to remember where you come from and never turn your back on your true friends. Loyalty is a blessing. J.SANN & SON, Our Trademark - This is my family's thesis on style over branding. The J.SANN identity over trends and fads. Our Trademark represents our commitment to our founder-forward story, from Long Island, NY, to Brooklyn, Nicaragua, Wynwood, and the Dominican Republic. Wherever we call home, we will leave our mark of distinction and tag our style.

There is an intimacy to what you're building that a larger operation can rarely sustain. How do you protect that as the brand grows, and at what point does scale become the enemy of everything you're trying to say?

Well, I love brand and consumer intimacy, but I'm also a natural student of scale and volume. I don't know how to protect anything other than through staying authentic and loyal. Drew Estate has sustained intimacy, and it's the largest production house of premium cigars in the world. Fuente is another example of a large company that feels intimate, feels tapped into our hearts, and that's because they don't bend on their principles. I'm not certain as to what the future holds for J.SANN, but my instinct is for us to make decisions with purpose and passion and let our curiosity guide us. Just be brave and humble at the same time.

If JD2 walks into J.SANN & SON, twenty years from now, what do you want him to feel, and what do you hope he knows about the man who built it?

I wish for JD2 to feel genuine love for his father with all of his heart so he can one day understand how to love his son, hopefully the third Drew of Drew Estate. I wish for him to accept the values and joy of hard work. And finally, I want him to understand that two is greater than one. In the words of the honorable writer, Phase 2: "One is the beginning, and two is forever." JD1 is the bridge, and JD2 is the windmill, classic New York energy.

INTERACTIVE

PAGE

SILENCIO



LUXURY

IS IN THE DETAILS

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MADURO



The Generational Tobacco Ban

From Prohibition to the present day, governments continue to justify sweeping restrictions in the name of public health, raising questions about personal liberty, tradition, and the future of legal tobacco.

by **Nelson Campos**



First they came for your guns, and I did not speak out because I never used one. Then they came for your scotch, and I did not speak out because I was not a drinker. Then they came for my cigars, and there was no one left to protest.

It seems there is always some form of prohibition putting its nose into the lives of hobbyists who simply want to enjoy a moment of pleasure for the senses or a fragment of a second of relaxation. The argument is often public health and safety: fewer smokers mean less pulmonary and cardiovascular disease when discussing tobacco, and fewer cases of liver disease or road accidents when the topic is alcohol.

These types of bans have been tried on many occasions, such as the National Prohibition Act (also known as the Volstead Act) of 1919, which took effect on January 16, 1920. This ban covered the production, sale, and transportation of alcohol. While the ban initially did lead to a decline in alcohol consumption, it also contributed to the rise of organized crime, corruption, and alcohol bootlegging. Then came the Great Depression, and the government was in need of the tax revenue that alcohol sales had previously provided… and so, in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt supported its repeal.

At the time, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Canada, and the Soviet Union had similar bans. A 100-year jump into the present day, and for this cycle, the culprit of all the illnesses of mankind is tobacco. Just as before, a select number of countries are joining the wave of tobacco restrictions.

The United Kingdom's Tobacco and Vapes Act permanently prohibits the sale of tobacco, nicotine products, and vapes to anyone born after January 1, 2009. It was formally introduced by Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in 2023, then adopted and passed by Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer in April 2026. The planned fines currently target retailers, with penalties potentially reaching USD 3,200 (GBP 2,500).

The Maldives, in November 2025, became the first country to successfully implement a nationwide generational tobacco ban, where anybody born on or after January 1, 2007, cannot legally buy, sell, or use tobacco products. Possession of a vape can be fined USD 130 (MVR 2,000), and selling tobacco to someone who is prohibited from purchasing it could result in fines of up to USD 3,240 (MVR 50,000).

On the other side of the pond, New York's Assembly Bill A11509, or the Generational Tobacco Ban proposal, would, if passed, prevent the sale of to-

bacco and vapes to those born after December 31, 2007. The bill is sponsored by Assemblywoman Amy Paulin.

Won't somebody please think of the children... Our governing bodies often use this fallacy, pleading us to think of the children, those whose innocence and purity we are depriving, those we claim we are willing to go to any lengths to protect. Insert any subject matter, talk of the children and how they need to be shielded from the danger of said subject, then ban anything and everything orbiting that subject for anyone and everyone, because we must protect the children.

That one middle-schooler smoking his Ramon Allones Specially Selected during recess just before his next class of English and Language Arts will be the first annoyed by the Generational Tobacco Ban. Or maybe it's that little Billy down the road breaking in his new P-Lip Peterson pipe. Yes, surely him, that's the one. The large brush strokes aren't because busybodies are trying to dictate what you today or tomorrow, as a free-willed adult, can do in your spare time. It's for the children, don't you know?

Traditions, craftsmanship and savoir vivre are for those lost souls of yesteryear, when as children we walked the park with our grandfather, hand in hand, under the allée of conker trees. The sun casting its spell, shadows painting shades of grey on the bitumen and grass. A burgundy beret atop a balding hairline, a hirsute moustache still peppered here and there with a few black hairs, a wool sweater that would almost put an ugly Christmas sweater to shame, and in the other hand his favorite Diplomatico No. 2 burning unevenly, as they sometimes do. The scent of damp wood and spice could have been coming from him or from the tree that had just been cut down, for all we knew, but the smell of salted peanuts in the air was definitely following us, it stinks. Fond memories of the conversations we had, questioning why the sky was blue.

The conker allée is here, my son beside me and a Bishop Blend Novemdiales in my hand. Light from the sun enters our atmosphere, that's the sky, and when it hits the air all the colors in the light start to scatter. The color blue has a shorter wavelength, like this, so our eyes see the sky blue. And now I ask myself if I too will leave a trail behind me.

Let's be clear, it's purposely an amalgamation of every product falling under the umbrella of tobacco from a nanny state which knows better than you what you should be doing. If the UK and the Maldives seem like a lost cause, it is never too late to contact your local representatives to express your concerns and make your voice heard. The target audience of cigars has never been and will never be children. It's you, it's me. We are responsible for our actions and decisions. We are functioning beings. We have agency. So take that fragment of a second to contact them… your hobby depends on it.

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The Sweet Tip

The sweet tip from convenience store to higher end cigars.

by **Michel Arlia**



For a long time, sweet tip cigars were mostly found in convenience stores, with brands like Swisher Sweets and Cafe Creme. Many cigar fans saw them as something for beginners who preferred sweetness over real tobacco flavor. But now, as the premium cigar market changes, sweet tips are starting to appear in higher-end cigars too.

Sweet tip cigars started showing up in the mid-90s. Manufacturers wanted to get more people interested in cigars, so they added artificial sweet flavors like vanilla, rum, honey, or cherry to the tip. This made it easier for new smokers to try cigars. The idea caught on, and sweetened cigars became part of the market for casual smokers, but were always regarded as "cheap" (mainly because most products were machine-made).

How that sweetness gets onto the cigar matters considerably. Traditional sweet tips were made with a sweetened gum to seal the cap at the head of the cigar, which adds a sugary character to the smoking experience. The sweetener can range from pure cane sugar to alternatives such as saccharin or sucralose. Some makers brush a flavored extract directly onto the finished head of the cigar, then let it dry before boxing it. Others dip the head briefly in a diluted solution and let the humidity in the aging room do the rest. The difference between a good sweet cap and a bad one often comes down to concentration. Too much and the sweetness becomes excessive and overstays its welcome. Too little and it disappears before the first inch is finished.

When done well, the sweetness is strongest on the first few puffs and gradually giving way to the natural tobacco notes underneath. The criticism, of course, is that the sweetness can overpower. Cheap additives with synthetic flavoring rarely fade, leaving a smoke that tastes the same from first puff to last, which deadens the complexity that premium cigar lovers actively seek.

The clearest examples of a more considered approach are now coming from makers with serious reputations to protect. Drew Estate's new Deadwood Dominicana line, Dunbarton Tobacco and Trust revamped StillWell Star, and Quesada's new Suspiro, to name a couple of the most recent releases.

The purist argument is that a cigar should speak for itself. The tobacco, the terroir, the blender's craft, these are what justify the premium tag. Adding a sweet tip signals to the purist that the cigar cannot hold attention on its own. But that argument assumes a single definition of what quality means. If a skilled blender deliberately incorporates a natural additive as part of a cohesive flavor concept, it is hard to say that the choice is less intentional than selecting a specific wrapper, for example. Craft, after all, is about deliberate decisions, not adherence to convention.

Sweet-tipped cigars remain a small slice of the market, but the conversation around them is growing, driven in part by their role as a natural entry point for new smokers. A gentler introduction to tobacco's complexity tends to keep people coming back, and that sustained curiosity is good for the category as a whole.

Whether you reach for one or not, the sweet tip is no longer just for convenience stores. It has earned its place, even if some still prefer their tobacco natural.

CREATE EXCELLENCE, DAMN THE RULES

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN

When you assemble a bourbon by hand, using the richest and rarest straight bourbons, but do it in Brooklyn of all places, you're bound to draw some attention. We don't mind. That's why we overruled the rule book. Then tossed it. We decided to grow our own corn. Heirloom style. We revived the art of blending. We proof our bourbons using mineral water from the Rosendale Mines of New York. It might not be how it's normally done; it might even raise a few eyebrows. But sometimes if you want to create the extraordinary, you can't be afraid to disturb the peace.



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Creating the core

The different rolling techniques in rolling premium cigars.

by **Michel Arlia**

People have been rolling cigars by hand for hundreds of years, turning tobacco leaves into the cigars we know today. The cigar, as a construct, is crafted of three components: wrapper, binder, and filler. While all parts are crucial to the final product, everything starts from the core, the filler.

Before any bunching technique comes into play, a roller must first understand the leaves themselves. The filler of a premium cigar is typically a blend of three leaf types, classified by where they grow on the tobacco plant. In most growing regions, they are classified from the bottom up as Seco, Viso, and Ligero (in Cuba, as Volado, Seco, and Ligero). Seco comes from the lower part of the plant and receives less direct sunlight, making it thin and with excellent combustion properties. Viso grows just above it, offering slightly thicker leaves with decent burning qualities. Lastly, Ligero comes from the top of the plant, where the leaves soak up the most sun, making them thick, oily, and packed with nicotine, but notoriously slow and difficult to burn. Because of these differences, placement within the bunch is not arbitrary. Ligero must be positioned in the very center of the filler, running the full length of the cigar, surrounded by Viso and then Seco. This arrangement lets the faster-burning outer leaves keep the ember alive and drive



an even burn, while the slow-burning ligero in the core smolders steadily. Not placed correctly, and the cigar will burn unevenly, canoe, or go out entirely. The ratios of these leaves are not fixed either; they vary with the cigar's ring gauge. A thick ring gauge offers room for more filler leaves, allowing blenders to work with more Ligero while still surrounding it with enough Seco and Viso to sustain combustion, whereas a slimmer vitola like a Lancero holds far fewer leaves, forcing the blender to scale back the Ligero and lean more on the better-burning leaves to keep the cigar lit. Only once the blend is assembled in this way does the question of how to bunch it come into play. There are many different ways to create this core. Here are the main methods used to build the filler.

The Entubado Method

Entubado is often called the most sophisticated and time-consuming way to bunch filler. It started in Seville, Spain, back in the 1600s. Each filler leaf is rolled into a tight, straw-shaped tube, then bundled together. This method creates vertical air channels, which help the cigar draw smoothly and burn evenly. Even a tightly packed cigar rolled this way still has good airflow. It takes a lot of skill and time. Rollers might make only 100 to 150 cigars a day, but many consider entubado the gold standard for construction.

The Accordion Method

In the accordion technique, each filler leaf is folded in a wavy, Z-shaped pattern resembling an accordion's bellows, then the folded leaves are stacked and rolled within the binder leaf. The air channels created by this method can introduce a bit more resistance in the draw. Skilled rollers can produce 200-250 cigars per day using this method, nearly double the output of entubado, while still maintaining premium quality.

The Book Method

In the book method, the filler leaves are stacked flat on top of each other like pages in a book, then folded once over to create the bunch. This straightforward approach allows rollers to produce significantly more cigars per day than other manual methods. While it may be highly efficient, the denser structure results in a tighter draw or less consistent airflow than with entubado or accordion methods. It is also a method we have rarely seen in person at any of the cigar factories I have visited over the years.

The Lieberman Method

The Lieberman method, named after the machine of the same name, is a semi-mechanical technique that uses a simple device. A steel frame with a rubber mat and a hand lever, to assist the roller in bunching the filler and binder. The roller places the leaves by hand into a groove, then uses the lever to roll them into a tight, consistent bunch. This method lets rollers, especially those in training, make more cigars while still keeping them consistent. Cigars made this way are still called handmade because a person does most of the work. Some manufacturers like the Lieberman method for its speed and reliability, but others consider it inferior to rolling everything by hand.

Each of these techniques represents a different approach to the same challenge. How to arrange the tobacco to deliver consistent flavor, proper airflow, and





enjoyable smoking experience. Every method has earned its place in cigar-making tradition. The choice of a bunching technique often reflects a manufacturer's philosophy. Whether they prioritize traditional craftsmanship, production efficiency, or a balance between the two (it is not uncommon to see a skilled roller or buncher use a hybrid of several techniques). What remains constant across all methods is the skill and experience to execute them well. A poorly made entubado cigar will smoke worse than a perfectly executed book method cigar. In the end, a technique is only as good as the hands that use it.

DISCOVER YOUR WORLD

FROM A TO Zino®

NICARAGUA

HONDURAS

NEW

Lotus Single Stick Melamine Ashtray

Four finishes, one divot, zero maintenance.
Here's who this little tray is really for, and who should look elsewhere.

by **Norman Bliss**



The Lotus Single Stick Melamine Ashtray is a compact, minimalist tray built for one cigar at a time. Measuring roughly 5.6 by 3.2 inches with a depth of just over an inch, and available in black along with black, brown, and white marble finishes, it features a single divot to hold your cigar and a shallow rectangular bowl for the ash. It ships in a gift box, and the melamine construction makes it dishwasher-safe and weather-resistant. At an MSRP of $14.95, it sits firmly in a competitive price range.

The single-divot design is the defining feature here, and it works. The rest is wide and deep enough to cradle everything from a slim panetela up to a hefty gordo without the cigar rolling or tipping, and the compact footprint means it takes up almost no space on a side table, desk, or patio armrest. Melamine is also a genuinely practical material for this purpose. It shrugs off heat marks better than most plastics, wipes clean in seconds, and after weeks of regular use, we found the finish showing no scorching or discoloration where the foot of the cigar rests.

Practicality aside, there are more advantages worth mentioning. Because it is weather-resistant and dishwasher-safe, this is an ashtray you can leave outside, hose down, or toss in with the dishes without a second thought. That is something crystal and ceramic trays simply cannot offer, and it makes the Lotus an easy companion for golf carts, boats, and travel bags.

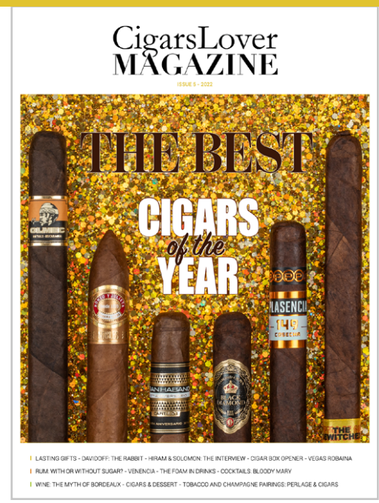
Single-stick ashtrays do have their limits, and this one is no exception. That limitation comes in the form of company. With only one divot, there is nowhere for a second cigar to rest, so if you regularly smoke with friends, this tray will not cover everything you need.

Weight is another consideration. Melamine is light, and we found that on breezy days outdoors, a longer cigar resting in the divot can act as a lever, and a strong gust or a careless bump can send the whole tray sliding. Heavier ceramic or stone alternatives stay planted in conditions where this one moves around.

The Lotus Single Stick Melamine Ashtray is well-made for its price. It is compact, practical, and does its job. Where it falls short is capacity and heft. Those who smoke in groups or primarily outdoors in the wind will likely find a larger, heavier tray a better fit.













CIGARSLOVERS MAGAZINE
DISCOVER ALL ISSUES













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PAIRINGS

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

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

The Rating Scale: 100 points. We have chosen to keep it in the pairings as well, to simplify the comparison of ratings. In this case, however, this scale only evaluates the pairing, and not the individual qualities of cigars and spirits. If you have both excellent products, for example, but an unbalanced and inconsistent pairing, the rating will be low. On the contrary, the excellent marriage of two products of decent quality could give rise to a very positive evaluation.

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

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



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EL ARTISTA CIMARRON ROBUSTO

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STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	$ 9 | € 8.6

DIMENSIONS
50 x 127 mm (5")

COUNTRY
Dominican Republic

Pleasant yet powerful smoke, it opens with earth, roasted notes, and cream. White pepper and baking spices emerge further into the fruition. The finale turns to pleasant bitter notes of dark chocolate. This intense tobacco can be well paired with two very different spirits, an Islay creamy Scotch and an aged, smooth, and flavorful bourbon, for a very intriguing and contrasting experience.



HIRAM & SOLOMON GRAND ARCHITECT

SMOOTH & BALANCED

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●	$13.5 | €16

DIMENSIONS
52 x 152 mm (6")

COUNTRY
Dominican Republic

This Toro delivers a complex and balanced smoke. It opens with nuts, leather, and herbs. Nuts and leather are the primary flavors, with woody notes in the background. A sour cream note is also perceptible, along with some citrus nuances. Cinnamon is added in the second half. The medium-bodied smoke is paired with two nuanced yet light and velvety spirits: a dynamic Japanese single malt and a great-value Irish single grain.



LA AURORA 120TH ANNIVERSARY ROBUSTO

BOLD & FLAVORFUL

STRENGTH	PRICE
●●●●	$ 14 | € 12.4

DIMENSIONS
50 x 127 mm (5")

COUNTRY
Dominican Republic

This Dominican puro is bold, flavorful, and full-bodied, with intense black pepper and espresso aromas. Later on, walnut, leather, and balsamic nuances are added, with a spicy finish. The intensity of the aromas can be paired with two well-aged Scotch of nice fine texture, a port finish one and a full Oloroso aging one, to investigate the layers and subtle tones provided by finish. The slightly different ABV may also play a role.



WILSON & MORGAN
2010-2021 Quercus Alba

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46% - 92	$$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	11 Years Old	Virgin Oak, ex-Bourbon

Simple to appreciate at the open nose, where the intensity is well balanced by defined aromas of fresh oysters and lemon, and a touch of complexity of limoncello cream. A great value dram, respectful of the distillery DNA with a touch of innovation thanks to the virgin oak addition. Noses are very evocative, dissonant and interesting; dark chocolate with sea salt flakes, earthy nuances where limoncello cream has been added on top, grilled lemons. Impossible to predict, dynamic, not perfect yet funny. The palates are a full body clash: dark and powerful spices are well covered into lemon cream, with some exotic extra fruit appearing, such as mango and pineapple. Some rough edges are smoothen thanks to the cream from the virgin oak. Interesting.

Pairing score	90

FIRST WEST
Extra Aged

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

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Bourbon	8 Years Old	New

Less oak-influenced than one might assume from the age, this bourbon is focused on classic aromas such as light vanilla, caramel, brown sugar, dried apple, cinnamon stick and rye spice, with a rather smooth mouthfeel. Beautiful dark oak on the noses, dense and chewy. Dark chocolate filled with caramel. Excellent mix of sweet and savory, high intensity tastes. The array of spices is truly impressive in terms of complexity. Same quality is reproduced on the palates, again very intense and excellent. It is amazing the perfect balance between the power of the tobacco and ABV, for a well-integrated experience. One of the best bourbon pairing ever tried.

Pairing score	92





GLENDALOUGH
Double Barrel

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Ireland	42% - 84	$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Grain	NAS	Ex-bourbon, Oloroso

A smooth and warm spirit that offers pleasant, varied aromas. Open and velvety, the grain core adds to the sweet, polished and smooth sensations. Then come the dry Oloroso sensations, toasted oak, chocolate and some nutty cherries, flanked by butterscotch and peanut butter. Incredible value for the price. The pairing on the nose is light, yet nuanced: there is an almond sweet/sour sensation from the cigar, well integrated with the delicate sweetness of the spirit, with a refreshing touch of citrus and herbs. On the palate, the grain provides an excellent velvety structure, on top of which light butterscotch and dry wood is noted, with some cinnamon and a pinch of deeper sweet/savory spices. When the butterscotch is more intense, the cigar's wood takes on a more oaky character. Very coherent and resonating.

Pairing score	91



MARS
Komagatake Single Malt 2025 L.E.di-

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Japan	45% - 90	$$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	NAS	N/A

Intensely fruity, yet mineral and fresh, this single malt lives from the contrast of two different spirits, a more suadent and decadent basket of ripe orchard fruit, and a mineral, fresh and sapid component which is more evident on the sip. Dynamic and engaging. The ripe, fruity notes are very intense on the nose, limiting the tobacco to a dry, woody component with some white pepper; the result is pleasant yet one-dimensional. Palates are better, with the cigar finding some chocolate in the double puff, which suits the fruit very well before the mineral component takes over the scene; here, the balance of the smoke is key, as the “prep” created by the salt can push taste buds to the limits. On the contrary, here the tobacco is enhanced and still woody and nutty. More dynamic than the noses, yet maybe not the best cigar for the spirit.

Pairing score	89





GLENFARCLAS
25 Years Old

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

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	25 Years Old	Oloroso

A true ode to Oloroso-quality casks, this classy malt has deep oakiness and some very pleasant spices atop a juicy, not-too-dry core of ripe red berries and bloody oranges. A classic, a blue chip for every season and every palate. The dark tobaccos used for this puro are deeply peppered and the coffee quality fits well with the bloody orange core of the whiskey, competing for the front stage. The sips are dancing on dark chocolate-covered bloody orange slices, not just the zest, but a juicy slice. The best image is of a spiced, orange-infused coffee, which looks artificial but is very elegant here. The ABV is perfect and allows even some almond background hints to resonate, following the paths indicated by the Oloroso nutty finish.

Pairing score	91



CASA DRAGONES
Anejo Barrel Blend

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	46.3% - 92.6	$$$

TYPE	AGE	CASK
Single Malt	21 Years Old	Ex-Bourbon, Port

Multi-layered and smooth, it develops an intense spicy sweetness. The Portuguese port wine casks add rich, dark chocolate notes and full-bodied elegance. This unique balance of contrasting casks reveals a complex dram. The initial nose of the whiskey is slightly shier than the bold tobacco, with a wet, dark leather hint layered over very dark chocolate, with black pepper playing the protagonist. The palates are, on the contrary, a true surprise; the interplay becomes a real hymn to darkness, to deep, leathery, wet-earth aromas, reminiscent of earthy peat, with a fresh crush of roasted black pepper and several complex spices, as in a Mole Negro. Chocolate with black currant, the darkest possible yet without astringency. Deep, complex, dark, velvety, such as some well-defended secrets. A masterpiece.

Pairing score	94



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then the drink takes a drink,
then the drink takes you."
F. Scott Fitzgerald

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The Ice Sphere

The science and craft behind the ice ball.
The geometry of a perfect drink.

by **Lionel Smith**



Lots of ice, please... Ice is the most important ingredient in the preparation of a good drink, not only because it cools, but because it helps maintain the balance between the ingredients, diluting them and bringing them together. On the market there are many types of ice to draw from, varying in shape, size, and quality.

Why does ice cool? Heat naturally moves from warmer areas toward colder ones. Imagine a container with insulated walls, meaning it exchanges no heat with the outside, holding a liquid and some ice. In this case, heat will flow from the liquid (which has the higher temperature) to the ice. The result is a cooling of the liquid and a warming of the ice, until a new thermal equilibrium is reached. For this reason, there is no cooling without dilution. That is why it is best to use plenty of ice when creating a good drink. This is where the type of ice comes into play, which varies depending on what we want to cool. A cocktail requires a different type of ice than a drink served in a small measure, such as a whisky. When the ice cannot be fully submerged in the drink, it is preferable to use ice of a larger size, so that a smaller surface area is in contact with the liquid. This makes the ice warm up more slowly and therefore melt over a longer time, diluting our drink less.

A perfect example are the ice ball, ice cube, and chunk shapes (irregular pieces of ice) from large blocks, so that their surface in contact with the liquid is reduced to a minimum. The sphere is the one that stands out the most, with its elegant shape, but even more so for the mathematics behind it: compared to a large ice cube, for the same volume of ice, a sphere has roughly 19% less surface area. This is not just a curiosity: the sphere is the shape with the smallest possible surface for a given volume, making it, quite literally, the best shape nature allows for chilling a drink with minimal dilution. Your drink stays cold for a long time while keeping its character and structure intact. This is also why one large sphere is always better than several small ones, since the combined surface area of all those small spheres is far greater than the surface of a single large sphere of equal volume, so pay attention when you're purchasing the tools to make your own ice spheres at home.

The ice sphere finds its natural home in spirits served neat or slightly chilled, such as whisky, rum, or mezcal, and in classic slow-sipping cocktails like the Old Fashioned or the Negroni. These are drinks meant to be enjoyed over time, and the sphere ensures that the last sip is as balanced as the first. Quality matters just as much as shape. The finest spheres are carved or pressed from crystal-clear ice, obtained through directional freezing: the water freezes slowly from one side only, pushing air bubbles and impurities out of the ice. The result is a dense, transparent sphere that melts even more slowly than cloudy ice and looks spectacular in the glass. In high-end bars, spheres are often hand-carved by the bartender from a block of ice using a knife, following the Japanese tradition, or shaped in seconds with a metal ice press, where a warm aluminum mold melts a block of ice into a perfect sphere. At home, silicone sphere molds offer a simple and accessible alternative.



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Whiskey & Salmon

Two products from the far north; are they born to pair?

by **Simone Poggi**



After the varied investigations on the pairings of whiskeys with chocolate and cheeses, the journey continues on the analysis of rich fats content products, enveloping the palate with a subtle and pleasant layer of taste which constitutes the perfect preparation for our high ABV whiskey.

Salmon is one of the highest fats content fish (around 10% of lipids), together with mackerel, herring, sardine and eel. For this reason we truly believe this is one of the first choices for a successful pairing. By far, this is one of the most available fish, present in different cuisine cultures, prepared in several, original ways. For our purposes, we always prefer preparations which are keeping as intact as possible the nature and taste profile of the product itself, without adding too much seasoning or too intense, unfamiliar taste herbs/spices.

The most standard way to enjoy salmon is to eat it stir-fried in a pan with no extra fats, just slightly salted, to savor the quality of the meat and the crunchy crust created by cooking style. We decided to have it included in the pairing session, as the baseline of the salmon aroma, though enriched by the Maillard reaction, which adds typical aromas. Regarding the



other preparations, an entire dedicated chapter could be written on smoked salmon, a traditional product mainly enjoyed on toast (white or full grain) and with a thin layer of butter. After a dedicated analysis on the process of creating smoked salmon, which we published in a recent article in the second issue, it is important to include into the tasting both the standard Salmo Salar, the Atlantic salmon, as well as the reddish meat Oncorhynchus, the Pacific Salmon. From an origin standpoint, on the contrary, we freely mix Scottish, Norwegian and Icelandic smoked salmon, as the organoleptic characteristics of the final product is not dependent on the country of origin, rather on the selection of the fishes and on the procedures and techniques used to obtain the final product, as described in the above mentioned article. We decided for 3 high quality products:

- A Scottish smoked salmon by KV Nordics, with light rose color, excellent soft and tender texture, mild and classy aromas with a very light brining. Better enjoyed on white bread with no crust, it delivers very subtle, yet persistent aromas of wood and distant smokiness.
- A Norwegian smoked salmon by La Nef, with a more traditional, slightly firm and drier texture, with characteristic intense aroma of fish as well as with a drier smokiness, remembering of a bonfire on the sea.
- An Alaskan wild smoked salmon of Sockeye variety, with intense red meat, firm and resistant meat, intense meaty taste and a medium-intense smokiness, a product best enjoyed on brown toast with a robust crust.

The notes below are the impressions we put on paper during this third journey into the new adventure of CigarsLover Magazine, pairing food and whiskey.

Kyoto Miyako Snake Edition with KV Nordic Scottish Smoked Salmon

Very appropriate combination, with the soft texture of the Japanese whiskey that suites well the delicate meat of the salmon. The white bread helps the tasting by adding comfort notes of neutral cereals, without adding too much sweetness as in brown toasts, which could unbalance the fruition. The light, unripe fruit melts perfectly with the kind, gentle smokiness. A great similitude pairing of delicacy.

Koval Rye with La Nef Norwegian Smoked Salmon

Surprise successful taste, with the medium intensity balsamic components of the whiskey adding some sort of green/herbal aromas, such as in a gentle dressing of the salmon with aromatic herbs for a more Scandinavian dish. The more intense quality meat of La Nef Norwegian salmon adds on, in order for the final mix not to be too rye-driven. Some minor roughnesses of the whiskey are also balanced by a more robust smokiness and a richer taste meat.

Ardnamurchan Heritage Barley Release with Alaska Sockeye Wild Smoked Salmon

We started from the idea of pairing this ex-bourbon barrels release with Scottish and Norwegian salmons, and ended up by having an unbalanced pairing, due to the intense golden raisin and yellow fruit quality of the whiskey, killing the fish aromas. When paired with the Alaskan salmon, on the contrary, the pairing shines in terms of quality aromas intensity, with the ripe yellow sweet fruit working as a "marinade" for the intense reddish meat, creating an excellent mix, where the smokiness is just an extra layer of complexity.

The Macallan Ruby with Alaska Sockeye Wild Smoked Salmon

Probably the most successful pairing. The luxury of an old, traditional style sherried product no longer available since some time ago, mixed with a high intensity meaty salmon, provides a great pairing, capable of delivering layers and layers of complex, intense and intriguing gourmand tastes. An ode to classical dinners of old times. Michter's Sour Mash with grilled fresh salmon fillet – as planned, the caramelized sweetness of the Maillard reaction, together with the savoury, oily texture of the fresh pan-fried salmon is a great marriage for the bourbon, as the sweetness are resonating and adding to each other. The cherry and glazed apple notes of the whiskey are playing similar role to the fruity sauces on some preparations siding the fish fillet, making the overall fruition more dynamic and explorative.

Wilson & Morgan Caol Ila 2010-2021 Quercus Alba with La Nef Norwegian Smoked Salmon

We felt since the beginning that slightly peated, fresh, zesty Caol Ilas could pair very well with smoked salmon, where the lemon peel and the minor coastal components can integrate perfectly the buttery soft texture of the fish. In this W&M release, the aging in virgin oak provides an extra touch of creaminess and sweet yellow fruit, which is balanced by a little firmer, tastier product such as the La Nef one.

Ardara Single Malt with… something else!

– finally, we have been positively impressed by the earthy, heavy, burnt plastic smoke which is emerging from this new Irish product, rather original; on the contrary, the intensity of the peat seems to level down and erase most of the taste and aromas from the smoked and grilled fish, asking for something much more intense, or rather different in terms of food complement.



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INTERACTIVE

PAGE



Penicillin Cocktail

A smoky tonic of scotch and ginger born from a modern bartender's cure.

by **Mark Trumpet**

The Penicillin cocktail stands as one of the most celebrated modern classics in contemporary mixology, a drink that emerged not from the haze of Prohibition era speakeasies but from the deliberate craft of twenty first century bartending. Its origins trace back to 2005 at Milk and Honey in New York City, where bartender Sasha Petraske and his colleague Sam Ross set out to reinterpret an older formula known as the Gold Rush, itself a whiskey sour variant built on honey syrup. Ross, drawing on his own remedies for cold and flu symptoms, began experimenting with fresh ginger and lemon, eventually layering a smoky float of Islay Scotch atop the finished drink. The name was a playful nod to the medicinal, almost curative quality of the ingredients. What began as an experiment behind a single bar quickly spread through the cocktail world, becoming one of the defining drinks of the craft cocktail revival. Unlike many fruit forward concoctions, the Penicillin draws its character from contrast and tension rather than simple sweetness. At its foundation lies blended Scotch whisky, chosen for its approachable, honeyed profile. Fresh lemon juice supplies the necessary acidity, cutting through the richness of the honey ginger syrup that forms the backbone of the drink's distinctive warmth. This syrup, typically made by steeping fresh ginger in honey and water, delivers a peppery heat that lingers pleasantly on the palate. The defining touch, however, comes from the float of peated Islay Scotch, usually Laphroaig, poured gently over the surface after the drink has been shaken and strained. This layer of smoke slowly integrates with each sip, creating an evolving experience that begins bright and citrus forward before deepening into something earthier and more complex.

The genius of the Penicillin lies in its structural simplicity paired with extraordinary depth of flavor. Few modern cocktails manage to balance so many competing elements, sweetness, smoke, spice, and acidity, while still feeling cohesive. Bartenders often note that the drink rewards patience, since the aroma of the peated float reaches the nose before the liquid even touches the lips. This interplay between scent and taste has made it a favorite not only among whisky enthusiasts but also among drinkers who might otherwise find peated Scotch too intense to enjoy on its own. By tempering the smoke with honey and citrus, the Penicillin makes a polarizing spirit accessible without sacrificing its character.

Presentation, while less theatrical than many tiki style drinks, still plays a meaningful role in the Penicillin's identity. Served typically in a rocks glass over a single large ice cube, the drink is garnished with candied ginger or a twist of lemon peel. The visual layering of the smoky float atop the golden body offers a subtle but striking presentation, hinting at the complexity to come. Beyond its construction, the Penicillin reflects a broader shift in cocktail culture toward balance, craftsmanship, and respect for ingredients over spectacle. It is a drink born not of necessity, as so many historical cocktails were, but of curiosity and refinement. To enjoy a Penicillin today is to experience a small piece of modern cocktail history, a reminder that innovation within the craft continues to evolve through thoughtful experimentation.

PREPARATION

Fill a shaker with ice, add the blended Scotch, fresh lemon juice, and honey ginger syrup, shake well until properly chilled, strain into a rocks glass over a single large ice cube, then carefully float the peated Islay Scotch on top by pouring it gently over the back of a spoon, and garnish with a piece of candied ginger before serving.

ADVICE

For a milder smoke profile, reduce the peated float slightly and let it rest a moment before serving so the aromas settle; if you prefer a spicier, more assertive version, increase the proportion of fresh ginger in the honey syrup for added bite and warmth.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz (60 ml) blended Scotch whisky
- 3/4 oz (22 ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3/4 oz (22 ml) honey ginger syrup
- 1/4 oz (7 ml) peated Islay Scotch (for float)
- Ice
- Optional garnish: candied ginger or lemon twist

GLASS

Rocks glass.

TASTE

"Age is just a number. It's totally irrelevant unless, of course, you happen to be a bottle of wine."
Joan Collins



The Muselet

A cage of wire born to tame the supersonic "pop".

by **Norman Bliss**

The muselet is one of the most overlooked yet essential inventions in the history of winemaking. It is a small wire cage designed to serve both practical and symbolic purposes, reflecting the drama contained within every bottle of sparkling wine. Its origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century in the Champagne region of France, a time when the production of sparkling wine was advancing rapidly but was still plagued by a dangerous issue: the tendency of corks to be forcefully ejected under pressure before they were meant to be opened. As winemakers refined their methods and bottles began to contain higher and more consistent levels of carbonation, a reliable way to secure the cork became increasingly urgent for both the safety of cellar workers and the integrity of the wine.

The solution emerged through a combination of trial and error, as vintners experimented with different methods to restrain the cork against the immense internal pressure of fermenting wine. The result was a simple yet effective device made from twisted wire, fashioned into a cage that wraps around the cork's head and anchors firmly to the lip of the bottle. The term "muselet" derives from the French word for "muzzle," aptly describing an object whose sole function is to hold something powerful in check.

The credit for this invention goes to Adolphe Jacquesson, a French Champagne producer from Châlons-en-Champagne. He proposed placing a cap between the cork and the binding cord to prevent the cord from cutting into the cork under pressure and causing leaks. He presented his



patent for this device on July 5, 1844, and it was formally filed that November. While Jacquesson patented a design closer to a metal cap or capsule rather than the wire cage itself, nobody knows for certain who specifically invented the wire muselet as we know it today. The first wire cages, produced around 1880, replaced the string that had previously secured the capsule and cork. What began as a rudimentary safeguard against exploding bottles gradually became a standardized component of sparkling wine production, refined over decades to balance strength, consistency, and ease of use.

Over time, the muselet evolved from a purely functional necessity into an object closely tied to the ritual and identity of sparkling wine. At its core, a muselet consists of a single length of wire, typically made of tinned steel, twisted into a shape that includes a top loop, a body of crossed wires forming the cage, and a base plate or plaque that sits beneath the foil capsule and presses against the punt of the bottle. This base plate, often adorned with the maker's emblem or house insignia, has become a small canvas for branding, transforming a purely mechanical component into a collectible detail cherished by enthusiasts. The wire must possess a precise balance of tensile strength and flexibility, strong enough to withstand pressures exceeding 6 atmospheres while pliable enough to be twisted into shape by machines at high speeds during bottling.

What sets the muselet apart from other forms of bottle closure is the precision required in its design and application. Unlike simpler caps or seals used for still wines, the muselet must be engineered to counteract forces capable of propelling a cork at considerable speed. This engineering has led to its association with both celebration and caution. While the exact speed depends heavily on various conditions, German physicist Friedrich Balck measured a typical cork velocity of around 40 kilometers per hour (approximately 24.8 miles per hour) from a vigorously shaken bottle under 2.5 bars of pressure. Under more extreme circumstances, such as a warm bottle left in direct sunlight, corks could theoretically reach speeds of up to 100 km/h (around 62 mph). Even more striking is the behavior of the gas itself at the moment the cork is released. Research by Gérard Liger-Belair has shown that the escaping jet of carbon dioxide can remain supersonic for a brief moment, reaching speeds of up to Mach 2, or roughly 2,400 km/h, in a bottle stored at room temperature. While this refers to the gas and not the cork, it creates the iconic "pop" sound of a sparkling wine bottle, which is actually a miniature sonic boom created by the sudden release and expansion of this supersonic gas. The combination of a rapidly moving cork and an even faster jet of gas underscores the critical role of the muselet. Early versions of the muselet were less standardized, often varying in wire gauge and twist pattern from producer to producer, which sometimes resulted in inconsistent performance. Modern producers have largely converged on a six-loop twist pattern at the base, a configuration that has proven optimal for distributing tension evenly around the cork. These refinements reflect a broader pursuit within the sparkling wine industry to marry tradition with engineering precision, ensuring that the romance of opening a bottle is both safe and celebratory.



The presentation and ritual associated with the muselet play a significant role in its identity. The careful untwisting of the wire cage, typically six half turns to fully loosen it, has become an integral part of the experience of opening sparkling wine. This small yet intentional pause builds anticipation before the cork is released.

Beyond its mechanical function, the muselet embodies the broader characteristics of sparkling winemaking, marrying the joy of celebration with the discipline needed for safe handling. Encountering a muselet today, carefully twisted around the neck of a chilled bottle, invites one to participate in a tradition rooted in nineteenth-century. It serves as a small reminder that even the most celebratory moments often rely on careful, unseen engineering.



INTERACTIVE

PAGE

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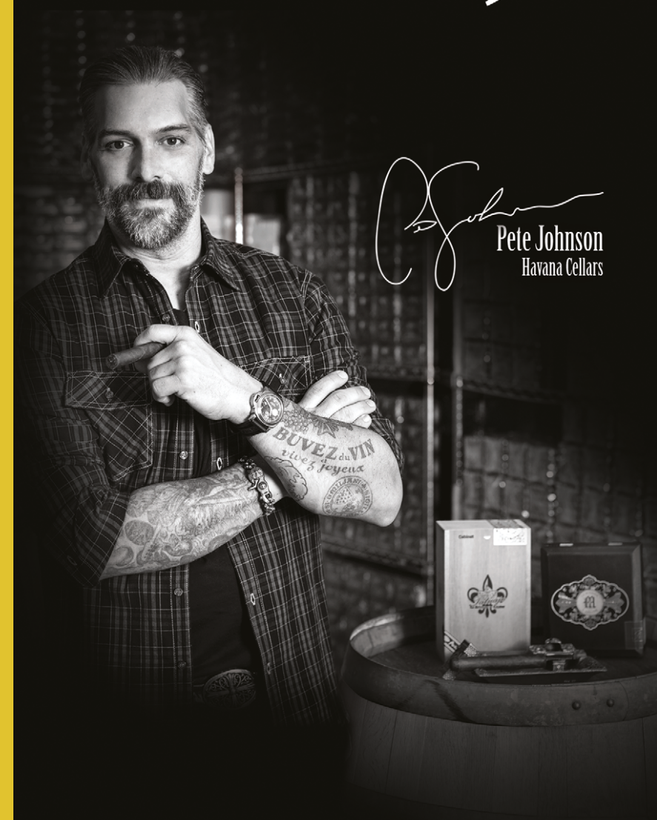

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The Art of Lees Stirring

Bâtonnage and the Architecture of Texture in Fine Wines.

by **Vincenzo Salvatore**

Among the countless gestures that shape the destiny of wine, few are as deceptively simple and as profoundly transformative as bâtonnage. The word itself derives from the traditional rod, in French bâton, once inserted into barrels to stir the sediment resting at the bottom. Yet behind this apparently humble cellar practice lies one of the most sophisticated tools in the vocabulary of fine winemaking: a technique capable of reshaping texture, aromatic complexity, oxidative stability, longevity, and even the philosophical identity of a wine.

To understand bâtonnage is to understand that wine is not merely fermented grape juice but a living work of art in continuous evolution. The lees – the spent yeast cells and microscopic particles left after fermentation – were once viewed primarily as waste. Historically, the refinement of wine often meant separation from sediment as quickly as possible, in pursuit of clarity and purity. Modern enology, however, has radically reinterpreted the role of lees. Under the right conditions, they are not contaminants but reservoirs of texture, flavor precursors, antioxidants, and structural compounds capable of elevating wine to extraordinary levels of depth. To identify bâtonnage in the glass is to recognize one of the most influential signatures of contemporary fine wine production.

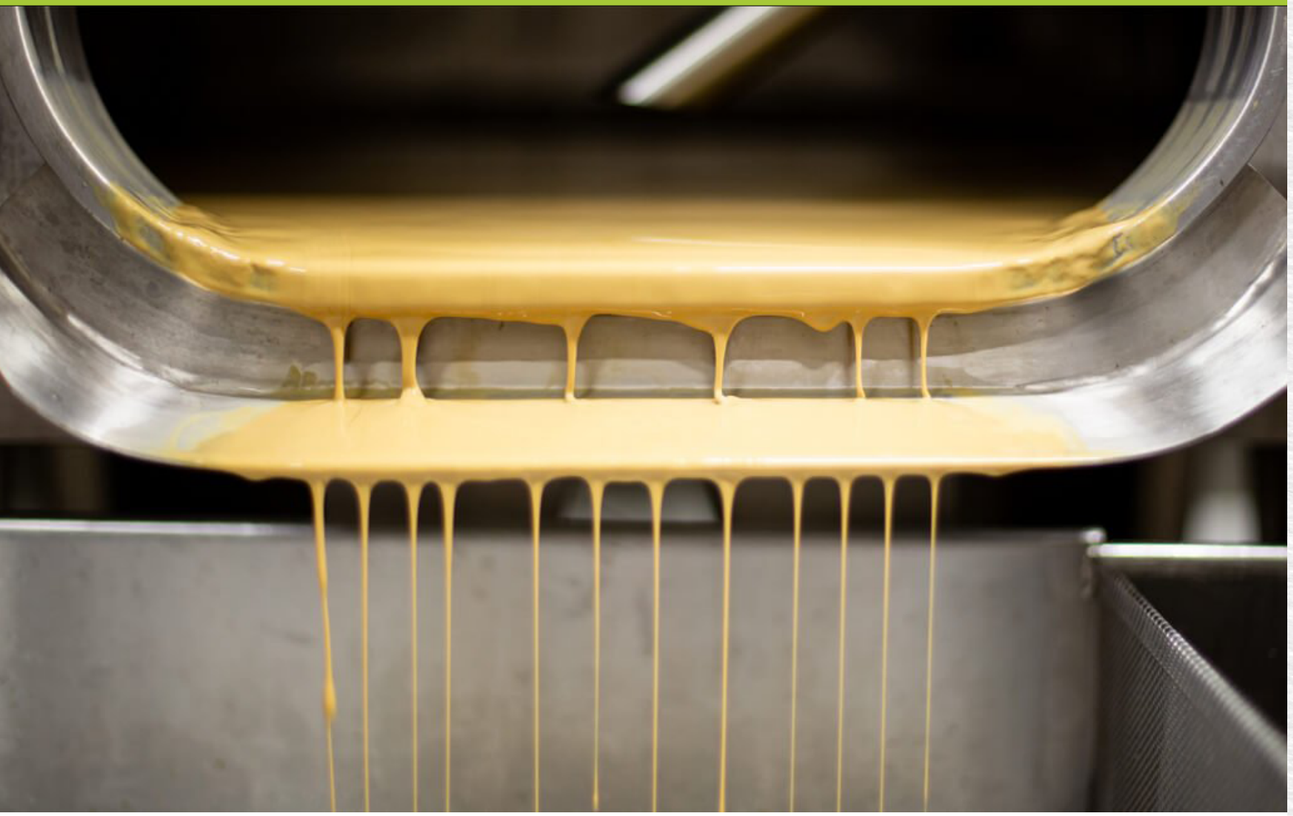
Nowhere is this more evident than in the great white wines of Burgundy, where bâtonnage became one of the defining signatures of modern Chardonnay vinification. Producers in appellations such as Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet, and Chassagne-Montrachet refined the practice into a nuanced art form. In these cellars, stirring the lees was not simply a technical operation but a means of sculpting masterpieces of taste: amplifying creaminess without sacrificing minerality, adding volume while preserving tension, and creating wines capable of decades of evolution. Yet bâtonnage is far from confined to Burgundy. It has become central to the production of fine Chardonnay across the world – from California to Australia, from Argentina to South Africa. It plays a crucial role in the elaboration of traditional-method sparkling wines, particularly in Cham-



pagne, where autolytic complexity defines the style of the greatest cuvées. Increasingly, it is also employed in red winemaking, amphora aging, oxidative styles, natural wines, and even certain fortified wines.

The significance of bâtonnage rests on a paradox: it is simultaneously a physical act and a biological dialogue. By stirring lees back into suspension, the winemaker reactivates interactions between wine and yeast derivatives. These interactions release mannoproteins, polysaccharides, amino acids, peptides, and volatile compounds that alter mouthfeel, aromatic perception, tannin integration, and oxidative behavior. Texture becomes broader; acidity appears softer; oak becomes more integrated; aromatic persistence lengthens. Not all lees are desirable, and the distinction between gross lees and fine lees is fundamental. Gross lees are the heavier, coarse particles that settle rapidly after fermentation. They often include grape skins, pulp fragments, stems, seeds, unstable proteins, and dead microorganisms. Prolonged contact with gross lees can generate unpleasant aromas associated with sulfur compounds, vegetal decay, or microbial spoilage. Traditionally, wines are racked off gross lees relatively early to reduce these risks. On the contrary, fine lees are composed mainly of smaller yeast particles and colloidal material that settle slowly and remain more homogeneous. These lees are the foundation of beneficial lees aging and bâtonnage. Over time, these components are released through autolysis – the enzymatic breakdown of yeast cells after fermentation.

After yeast completes alcoholic fermentation, cells gradually die and begin to self-degrade and autolysis is the biochemical heart of bâtonnage. This process occurs slowly and can continue for months or years. Many of the tactile sensations prized in elite white wines – silken mid-palate, creamy breadth, pastry-like nuance, hazelnut complexity, saline persistence – derive at least partly from lees management. Mannoproteins are perhaps the most celebrated products of autolysis. Derived from yeast cell walls, they enhance mouthfeel by increasing colloidal density and reducing the perception of harsh acidity or tannin. Other compounds released from lees, especially glutathione, can protect wine against oxidation. This paradoxical relationship is one of the most fascinating aspects of bâtonnage: while stirring may introduce oxygen, lees-derived antioxidants can simultaneously buffer oxidative damage. The balance between oxygen exposure and reductive protection lies at the core of successful lees management. Frequent stirring intensifies texture and autolytic expression but also increases oxygen exposure. Some wines undergo bâtonnage for only several weeks; others continue for a year or more. For these reasons, bâtonnage behaves differently depending on the aging vessel. For instance, oak permits controlled oxygen ingress, amplifying textural integration and complexity. This is the classical Burgundian model. Lees stirring in stainless steel emphasizes purity and texture without oak influence. The natural convection currents inside concrete tanks may keep lees partially suspended even without active stirring. Lees interaction in clay vessels often produces highly textural wines with mineral tension and oxidative nuance. One of the great technical tensions in bâtonnage lies between reduction and oxidation. Lees consume oxygen and can create reductive environments. Mild reduction may produce desirable flinty or smoky notes, especially in Chardonnay. Excessive reduction, however, generates unpleasant sulfur aromas of rotten egg, burnt rubber, onion, cabbage, and the like. Stirring introduces oxygen into wine. Controlled oxygen exposure can stabilize color and integrate oak. However, too much oxygen risks browning, reducing freshness, sherry-like



aromas, and premature aging. The art of bâtonnage therefore depends on mastering oxygen kinetics.

Though associated primarily with white wine, bâtonnage increasingly appears in red winemaking. In red wines, lees stirring can soften tannins, increase mid-palate volume, stabilize color, enhance integration of oak, and generally improve mouthfeel. The practice is especially useful in varieties with naturally firm tannic structures, such as Syrah, Nebbiolo, or Cabernet Sauvignon. However, the risks are higher. Red wines contain more phenolics and microbial substrates, making sanitation and oxygen management critical. Some modern producers employ micro-bâtonnage during élevage to achieve silkier textures without overt oak sweetness. Climate change may further increase the importance of these techniques, as warmer growing seasons produce grapes with risk of higher alcohol, lower acidity, and greater phenolic ripeness – all defects that can be mitigated by skillful bâtonnage. As modern fine wine increasingly values texture as highly as aroma, bâtonnage occupies a central role in this evolution because it transforms wine from merely flavorful to tactilely compelling. Great wines are not only tasted; they are physically experienced across the palate. The finest examples create movement, tension, density, and persistence simultaneously. Thus, texture has become one of the defining frontiers of elite winemaking. In this sense, bâtonnage represents more than a technical process – it embodies a philosophy of sensuality and wines masterfully shaped by bâtonnage possess exceptional gastronomic versatility.

Bâtonnage is among the most subtle yet transformative practices in winemaking. What appears outwardly to be a simple act of stirring sediment is in reality a sophisticated orchestration of microbiology, oxygen management, texture engineering, and sensory architecture. Yet its true importance lies not merely in technique but in philosophy. Bâtonnage embodies a conception of wine as something living and textural rather than purely aromatic. It recognizes that greatness in wine often resides not in overt power or intensity but in tactile resonance – the sensation of harmony unfolding across the palate with depth, nuance, and persistence. Ultimately, bâtonnage reminds us that wine is shaped as much by what remains after fermentation as by fermentation itself. In the silent darkness of the cellar, among barrels resting on their lees, transformation continues long after sugar has become alcohol. The dead yeast cells at the bottom of the vessel – once considered mere residue – become agents of elegance, texture, and longevity. It is one of the great paradoxes of wine that decay can create beauty.



中国杂志

Available in:
ENGLISH
CHINESE





Blind Tasting

88 SPIRITS
90 Rum
96 Whisky

102 CIGARS
104 Lancero
107 Piramide
111 Robusto
115 Toro



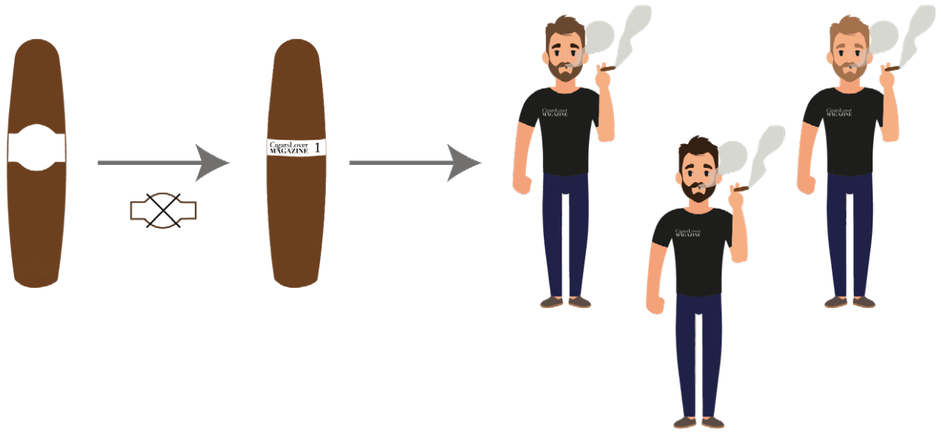






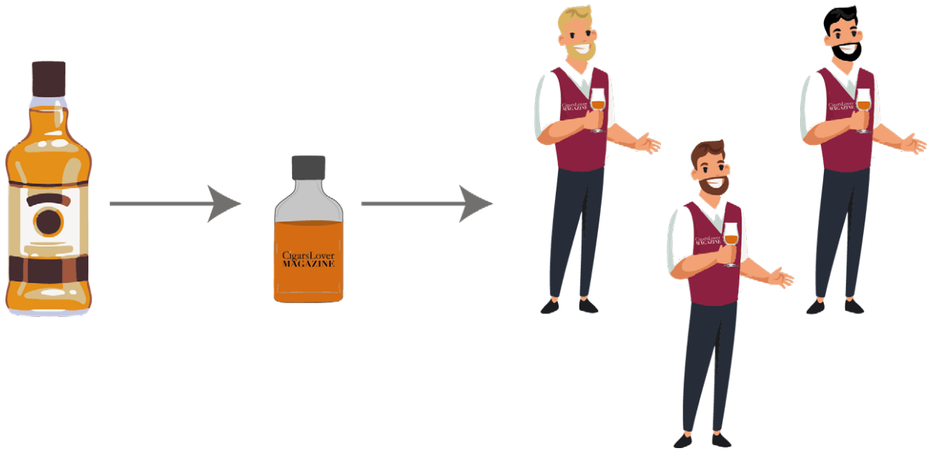


HOW ARE THE BLIND TASTINGS MADE?



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.

The tastings are compared to create the definitive review and the rating, expressed in a 100 scale.

Cigars & Spirits Results



1

KAVALAN
Solist Fino Sherry

2

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

3

INTENSE AND COMPLEX

4

On the nose, ripe fruit, with rich plum notes, together with honey and a mix of exotic fruit, including coconut. Then cocoa. On the palate, exotic fruit, caramel and honey, along with rich white pepper notes and orange zes. The persistence is long. There are white pepper, cocoa and walnut notes, with a touch of orange peel.

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

94

5

Legend

All the information in the blind tasting

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

1 Spirit image.

2 Name of the spirit reviewed.

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

3

• COUNTRY: where the spirit is made.

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

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

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

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



Rum





MARLEY MORTON
Aged 10 Years

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Dominican Rep.	52.3% | 105	$$

SMOKY AND UNIQUE

Sugarcane and smoke seize the nose, trailed by balsamic scents of cloves and mint. Peat and smoke rule the palate, framed by oak, vanilla, peppery notes, and a touch of varnish. Pepper and smoke draw out the medium-long finish.

Uncommon and whisky-like, surprising in how smooth it stays despite the high strength. Nice depth and complexity.

91



MHOBA
Bushfire

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
South Africa	55% | 110	$$

SMOKY AND WILD

Campfire smoke, burnt sugarcane, and charred wood tear through a wild bouquet, laced with ester funk, ripe peach, and a whiff of ginger. Intense and bold, it burns with peat smoke, cane, grilled pineapple, oak, and salted caramel. Smoke, ash, and pepper cling to the medium-long finish.

Bold and unapologetically smoky, a rum built to capture the braai. Divisive, intense, and unique.

90



TAKAMAKA
Grankaz

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Seychelles	45.1% | 90.2	$$

TOASTED AND DRY

A soft floral lift comes first, quickly overtaken by toasted oak, caramel, and vanilla. The palate turns delivers heavily charred oak tannins, butterscotch, and a thread of vanilla. Dry tannins and a spirituous black-pepper spice draw out the long finish.

Deceptively floral on the nose, then squarely oak-driven and dry to taste. Structured and warming, with a tannic backbone.

90



BUMBU
XO

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Panama	40% | 80	$

RICH AND COFFEE-LACED

Oak, vanilla, and toffee meet the nose, followed by toasted almonds and ground coffee. Smooth across the palate, it delivers coffee beans, toasted oak, vanilla, and a lift of orange zest. Coffee beans, oak, and a gentle pepperiness close the medium finish.

Balanced and easy to appreciate, with a distinctive rich note of ground coffee beans.

90



LEÓN JIMENES
1903

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

WARM AND HONEYED

Orange peel, sherry, and vanilla drift up first, rounded out by cardamom, honey, and brown sugar. The palate confirms the orange and vanilla, now enriched by peppery notes, fine wood, and dried fruit. Medium-long finish, delivering wood, honey, toasted aromas, and peppery nuances.

Easy to appreciate yet not banal, smooth and warm with a broad array of aromas.

89



OXBOW
Single Barrel Rhum Louisiane

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

POWERFUL AND ZESY

Plantain banana and fresh cane sugar open the nose with remarkable elegance, followed by exotic fruit and heady floral notes. On the palate, distinguished and fleshy, with greengage plum, vanilla, cut hay, cinnamon, and a bright citrus lift. Long and rich on the finish.

A vibrant and expressive rum, where a high ester character deliver, layered complexity.

89



RIVIÈRE DU MÂT
15 Year Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Réunion	43% | 86	$$

WOODY AND MINTED

A minty freshness rises first, edged with Timut pepper, dried fruit, and a clean woody frame. The palate is broad, showing frank wood and sweet spices before aeration draws out ripe fruit and liquorice root. Wood and spice trail through the very long finish.

Elegant and persistent, with a clean woody spine and mineral freshness. Refined and made for slow sipping.

88



PROVIDENCE
Dunder & Syrup

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Haiti	56% | 112	$$

FUNKY AND VEGETAL

Banana, pineapple, and glue scents are joined by vanilla, lime zest, and toasted coconut. On the palate, it is medium-bodied, layered with underripe banana, toasted coconut, nuttiness, vinegar, and lime. Fresh cane, brine, orange peel, and pineapple rind linger on the long finish.

Raw, funky, and boldly vegetal, it holds your attention all night. Complex and full of character.

88



SAINT JAMES
Double Cask

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Martinique	42% | 84	$$

WOODY AND SPICED

Oak, dried fruit, and warm spice lead the bouquet, backed by cocoa, vanilla, and grassy cane. To the palate, it turns to woody tannins, black pepper, more dried fruit, and a touch of mocha. Oak, spice, and lingering cane fruit see out the finish.

A characterful aged agricole, woody and spice-driven with underlying cane freshness. Balanced, with a touch of complexity.

87



HABITATION VELIER
Renegade Old Bacolet

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Grenada	55% | 110	$$

HERBAL AND MINERAL

Green mango, dry hay, and green apple jump from the glass, sharpened by tarragon, white pepper, and cardamom. Energetic and finely textured on the palate, it runs crisp and vegetal, with tropical fruit, peppery heat, and a clean mineral edge. Herbs, cane, and salinity carry the long finish.

Terroir-driven, bright and unabashedly raw. Singular, and rooted in place.

87



ISAUTIER
Agent Double 02

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Réunion	55% | 110	$

FRESH AND MINTED

Mint and liquorice set a fresh tone, wrapped in toasted and floral accents. Round and expressive to the palate, it fills out with exotic fruit, sugarcane, orchard fruit, and a lift of spice. Cane and spice ride the long finish.

Fresh and intense, an original blend of cane juice and molasses. Balanced and vibrant.

85



DBM
VSOP

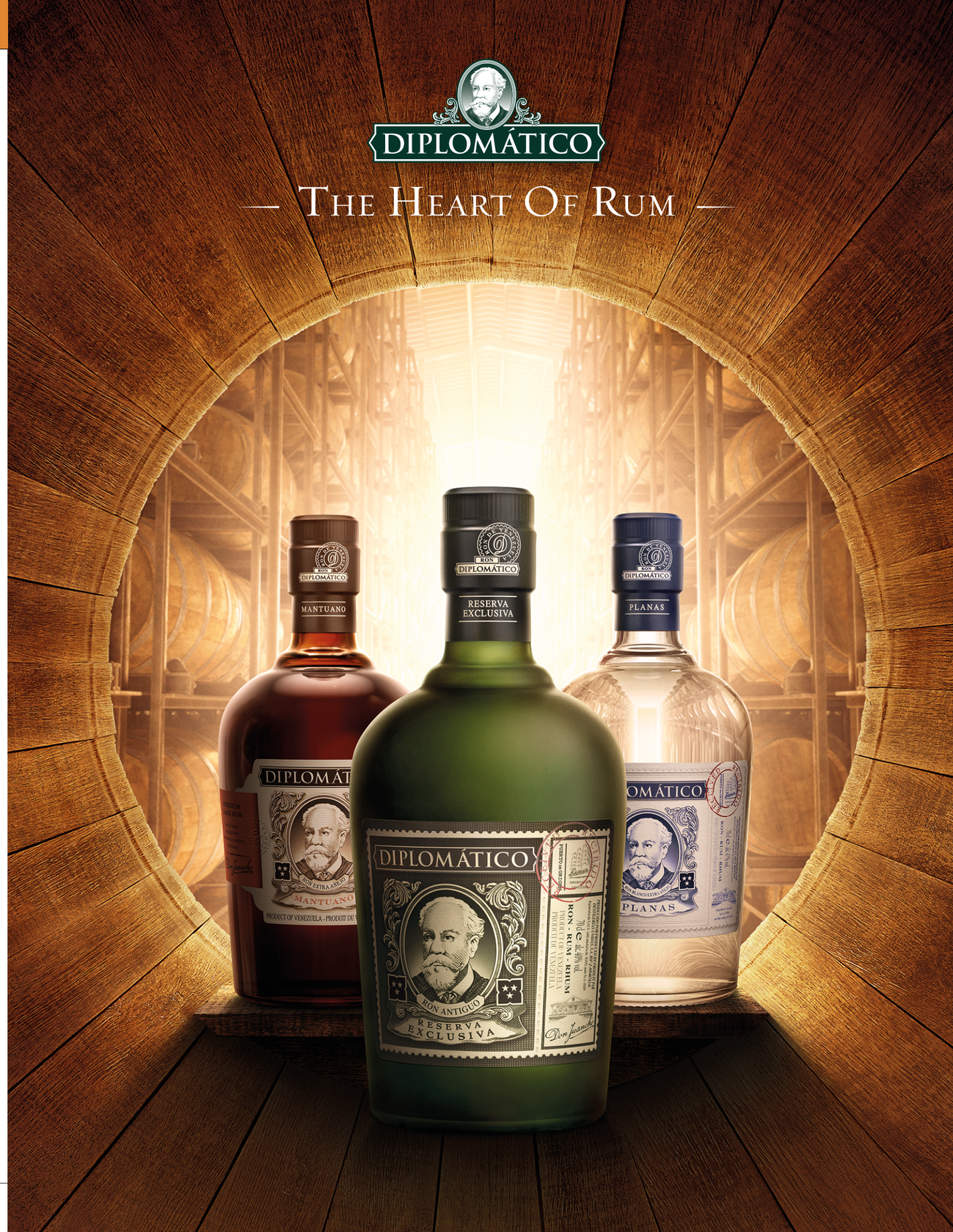
COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Seychelles	42% | 84	$

MELLOW AND WOODY

Vanilla and gentle wood greet the nose, softened by acacia blossom, honey, and stewed plum and pear. The body is fatty and mellow, moving through discreet oak, salted-butter caramel, and fresh pastry. Coffee and earthy nuances close the long finish.

Smooth and gently complex, with delicate wood and a soft, honeyed sweetness. An easy, mellow sipper.

84



Whisky





WHISKY ACRES
Straight Bourbon 7 Years Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	53.5% | 107	$$

STRUCTURED AND PEPPERY

Resins, wood, and peppery baking spices open the nose, joined by vanilla pod and a balsamic edge. On the palate, it is rich and lightly sweet, layered with oak, black pepper, cereals, toffee, and a return of ripe fruit. Black pepper and wood slowly uncover vanilla and a touch of honey on the long finish.

Round, complex, and smooth, with a structured profile and rich, generous aromas.

91



BENROMACH
2014 Cask Strength Batch #3

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	60.6% | 121	$$

RICH AND SMOKY

Sweet vanilla, fruitcake, brown sugar, and spicy ginger scents are joined by cinnamon, milk chocolate, and oak. On the palate, it is creamy and spicy, with stewed plum, Seville orange, cracked black pepper, toasted oak, and a touch of liquorice. Lingering smoke and a hint of aniseed carry the long, full finish.

Bold and powerful at cask strength, yet mellow and beautifully integrated. A malt full of character.

91



SAGAMORE
Rye Double Oak

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	48.3% | 97	$$

BOLD AND DENSE

Rich scents of cinnamon, baking spices, pepper, and seasoned wood get delivered to the nose, with resin and chestnut honey. On the palate, it is round and dense, layered with spices, pecan, honey, a hint of vanilla, and a dry vegetal edge. A riot of spices, seasoned wood, and caramel fills the long finish.

Rich and bold, with a solid profile and a thick, coating mouthfeel that reads as smooth.

90



GLENALLACHIE
Sintesis 2014
11 Years Old

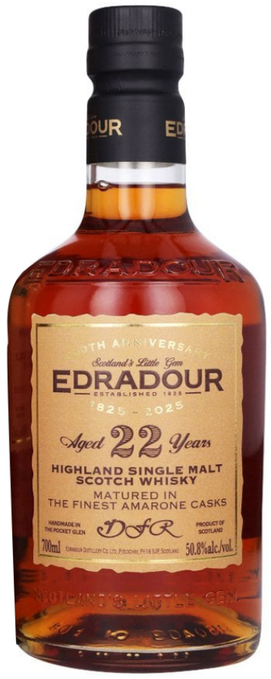
COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	57.4% | 115	$$

DEEP AND SINGULAR

Scents of orange zest, mace, and floral notes lift a fresh nose. On the palate, it is rich, and delivers honey, brown sugar, dried orange, balsamic and toasted notes, and a spice mix of mint, cinnamon, and pepper. Dried orange, spices, and balsamic notes linger on the long finish.

Rich, deep, and complex, singular in its character and peculiarity. It takes focus to be fully understood.

90



EDRADOUR
22 Years Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Scotland	50.8% | 102	$$$$

DARK AND INDULGENT

Dark cherries, plums, and raisins open the nose, joined by honey, polished oak, spice, and cocoa. On the palate, it is full-bodied, with red berries, figs, chocolate, malted barley, wine-soaked oak, and warming spice. Dried fruits, and refined oak tannins linger on the long finish.

Rich, and layered, with bold red fruit and elegant oak. Complex and thoroughly rewarding.

89



MIDDLE WEST
Straight Rye
Dark Pumpernickel

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	48% | 96	$

RESINOUS AND INTENSE

Seasoned oak and pine needles open the nose, joined by a resinous depth and a soft touch of vanilla. On the palate, it is round and intense, with orange peel, bright vanilla, and honey, unfolding with richness. Peppery notes, oak, and a dry, honeyed edge linger on the medium finish.

Nicely intense, with rich and complex notes that unfold with depth. It captivates your attention.

89



SWEETENS COVE
Bourbon

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	46.85% | 94	$$

ROUND AND GENTLE

Butterscotch and oak open the nose, joined by orange zest, brown sugar, and a light touch of alcohol. On the palate, it is round and gentle, with soft oaky notes, caramel, and more butterscotch. Vanilla, butterscotch, and oak linger on the medium finish.

Simple and easy to appreciate, smooth and round, with a nice balance. It lacks a little in structure.

88



77
Straight Rye

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
U.S.A.	47.5% | 95	$

FRESH AND BALANCED

Vanilla, oak, and peppermint open the nose, joined by a touch of ginger and a fresh, inviting lift. On the palate, it is peppery, layered with cereals, a hint of vanilla, orange peel, and a nuance of honey. Oak, vanilla, and spices linger on the long finish.

Round and balanced, with a harmonious and fresh profile. The lingering pepperiness prolongs the pleasure.

88



HAUTES GLACES
Episteme XO

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
France	44.8% | 90	$$$

FINE AND MINERAL

Prune, clove, and cardamom open a fragrant nose, joined by an elegant woody depth. On the palate, it is buttery and rounded, with a generous cereal amplitude, gentle oak, fine resin, and a peppery lift. A poised pepper-and-sugar accord carries the long, cereal-driven finish.

Rustic yet refined, mineral and direct, singular in its character.

87



ST KILIAN
Classic

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Germany	46% | 92	$

MILD AND FRUITY

Scents of ripe apricot, peach, and yellow plum are joined by creamy vanilla, oak, and a mix of mint and sage. On the palate, it is balanced, layered with apricot, peach, toffee, spicy oak, and a pinch of white pepper. Creamy caramel, brittle, and dry oak spice linger on the medium finish.

Mild and fruity, sweet yet warming, with a fresh herbal lift. Balanced and easy to appreciate.

85



SAKURAO
Single Malt

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

SWEET AND COASTAL

Raisin, orange, and peach open the nose, joined by sweet vanilla and a faint wisp of smoke. On the palate, it is soft and rounded, delivering orange, citrus brightness, vanilla, coconut, sour apple, and gentle oak spice. A subtle smoke and a deep, lingering sweetness carry the long finish.

Balanced and elegant, softly sweet with a gentle coastal edge. An introduction to Japanese malt.

84



PENDERYN
15 Years Old

COUNTRY	ABV - PROOF	PRICE
Wales	59% | 118	$$$

LIGHT AND TROPICAL

Honey, vanilla, and pear open the nose, joined by oaky notes, cinnamon, and a tropical lift of papaya and pineapple. On the palate, it is rich and syrupy, with sponge cake, marzipan, light oak, bourbon, and soft yellow fruit. Fruit and a persuasive malty note linger on the finish.

Light and fruit-forward, with a syrupy sweetness and tropical brightness. Thin in structure.

82

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Legend

All the information inside the blind tastings

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



1

ADVENTURA
Royal Return King's Gold Robusto

COMPLEX AND RICH

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

2

3 95 4

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x127mm (5")	$ 13.5 | € 13.5

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

5

1 Cigar picture.

2 Cigar tasting notes: the flavor profile delivered throught the smoke.

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

4 Flag identifying the country where the cigar is made.

Cuba · Dominican Rep. · Nicaragua · Honduras · Mozambique · Mexico

U.S.A. · Costa Rica · Italy · Philippines · Cina · Haiti

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

Lancero





LIGA PRIVADA 10 SELECCIÓN DE MERCADO LANCERO

BALANCED AND FLAVORFUL

Aged wood, earth, and cocoa beans lead with vegetal nuances in the background. Black pepper, cardamom, and hot spices are added in the second half.

94

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	40x178mm (7")	$ - | € 17

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



COHIBA LANCEROS

RICH AND COMPLEX

Wood, white pepper, and a sweet, nutty base give way to the smoke. Earth and cocoa develop with mellow sweetness. Spices intensify later on alongside more cocoa and earth.

93

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x192mm (7 ½")	$ - | €93

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



CALDWELL LLTQ QUEEN'S SWORD

CREAMY AND REFINED

Roasted notes lead the opening, joined by hazelnut and fine wood. Gentle spices emerge over a lightly sweet base, while a touch of cocoa rounds out the finish.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x178mm (7")	$14.5 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



THE WISE MAN MADURO LANCERO

BOLD AND FLAVORFUL

Cocoa and spice lead, turning to black pepper, leather, and earth. Dark coffee and a subtle mineral note follow. Balsamic and toasted oak join before a spicy finale.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	40x178mm (7")	$15.2 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



BLACKENED S84 LANCERO

SMOOTH AND HARMONIOUS

Hay and clean tobacco lead the way, turning to cappuccino, pepper, and wood further into the smoke. Hazelnut joins next, with herbs rounding off the profile.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	40x178mm (7")	$13.1 | € -

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



HIRAM & SOLOMON VEILED PROPHET LANCERO

RICH AND LAYERED

Ripe fruits, caramel, and nuts open the smoke, joined by dark chocolate and espresso. Charred wood builds depth. Licorice and black pepper close boldly.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	38x178mm (7")	$17.5 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
BRAZIL	INDONESIA	NICARAGUA, PARAGUAY



CONFIDENCIAAL LANCERO

BOLD AND SPICY

Pepper and chili lead boldly, joined by wood further into the smoke. Coffee develops later, alongside nuts, while the spices dominate until the end.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x178mm (7")	$- | €10.2

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



ROJAS BLUEBONNET LANCERO

BALANCED AND LINGERING

Leather and nutty notes lead, joined by earth and black pepper, with a faint herbal note. Espresso joins later on. Herbal notes return balsamic as pepper turns spicier.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x178mm (7")	$11 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



MONTECRISTO ESPECIAL

ELEGANT AND FLAVORFUL

The opening reveals notes of black pepper, wood, and hazelnut. Aromas of leather are added, while the hazelnut changes to walnut towards the end.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x192mm (7 ½")	$ - | €25.3

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



COHIBA RIVIERA LANCERO

BALANCED AND BOLD

Pepper, wood, spices, and a mineral nuance lead the way. Subtle sweetness and earthy notes emerge alongside nuts. Earth, nuts, and spices are confirmed in the finale.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	38x178mm (7")	$ 14.9 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	HONDURAS	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



AGANORSA LEAF ANIVERSARIO C. LANCERO

BALANCED AND NUANCED

Earth and vegetal notes lead the way with very soft spicy nuances. Toasted wood develops alongside. Balsamic notes round off a balanced but understated finale.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	40x192mm (7 ½")	$16.5 | €16.3

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



KISKEYA LANCERO

LINEAR AND CONTAINED

Earth and wood establish the profile early, with vegetal aromas joining. The flavor holds steady from start to finish, balanced but with little evolution.

87

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	38x192mm (7 ½")	$ - | €32.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP.

Piramide





AGING ROOM BLUE AMBER BLUE MAESTRO

BOLD AND COMPLEX

Earth leads the smoke in the opening, turning to pepper, cocoa, and nuts later on. Leather, wood, and a spicy retrohale develop, with espresso joining towards the end.

91

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x152mm (6")	$42 | € -

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



TATUAJE BLACK LABEL PRIVATE RESERVE TORPEDO

INTENSE AND EVOLVING

Nuts and light spices lead the opening, turning to black pepper, earth, and wood. Leather joins next. Ripe fruit and balsamic notes develop before a bold spicy finale.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x156mm (6 ⅛")	$13 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



HORACIO BULIER GRAN RESERVA H 52

DARK AND SWEET

Black cherries and caramel lead with balsamic notes. A ripe fruit sweetness develops later on. Licorice and burnt sugar close with herbs and a lingering minty finish.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$ - | €14

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA



OLIVA SERIE V MELANIO MADURO TORPEDO

RICH AND LAYERED

Sharp cedar leads with bittersweet chocolate and coffee. Hazelnut and cocoa develop with earth and pepper. Creaminess builds as dark chocolate appears towards the finale.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x165mm (6 ½")	$20.4 | €21.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



DAVIDOFF MILLENNIUM PIRAMIDES

NUANCED AND EVOLVING

Light spice, coffee, and leather set the tone. Spice and leather deepen with earthy nuances being added. Wood joins towards the end of the smoke.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x156mm (6 ⅛")	$36.3 | €34.5

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



DON PALOMON DOMAIN SIGNATURE BELICOSO

SWEET AND DELICATE

Light sugar, together with herbal and mint notes, sets a sweet, gentle tone for the beginning. Floral and creamy notes develop later on. Caramel closes out the smoking experience.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●●	52x156mm (6 ⅛")	$ - | €13.2

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



ASHTON VSG BELICOSO NO. 1

STRAIGHTFORWARD AND BOLD

Earth and black pepper set the tone for the first half. Wood and vegetal nuances join. The spices intensify in the second third alongside earth, holding steady until the end.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x133mm (5 ¼")	$16.3 | €13

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



STOLEN THRONE CASTLE 919 BELICOSO

BALANCED AND NUANCED

Earth and cedar take the lead, with dark cocoa and pepper developing alongside. A hint of dried-fruit sweetness rounds out the smoke toward the end.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x127mm (5")	$11 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA, PERU



LLTK MAD MOFO HABANO BELICOSO

FLAVORFUL AND STRAIGHTFORWARD

Roasted hazelnut takes center stage alongside earth and seasoned wood. Earth grows dominant in the second half, turning slightly dry as hazelnut fades.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x140mm (5 ½")	$15.8 | €-

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
N/A	N/A	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA,U.S.A.



ORIENT CAIRO

BOLD AND CONSISTENT

Earth and aged wood lead the way, with pepper and piquant peaks alongside. Vegetal notes linger in the background throughout a bold and consistent profile.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●●	54x152mm (6")	$ - | €19

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	PERU	COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA



SANS PAREIL BLUE PIRAMIDE

BALANCED AND ROUND

Seasoned wood, vanilla, and earth lead the way. White pepper adds depth in the second half. Bold balsamic aromas and wood resin take over in the finale.

87

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x156mm (6 ⅛")	$42 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



PARTAGAS MADURO NO. 2

INTENSE AND LINEAR

Woody and slightly sweet, with mineral and black pepper. Nuts join as the sweetness gives way to a light bitter note. Wood, nuts, and pepper hold steady until the end.

87

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	55x120mm (4 ¾")	$ - | €28

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA

Robusto





MY FATHER LA LEALTAD ROBUSTO

DYNAMIC AND EVOLVING

Clean tobacco and fine wood open, turning peppery and nutty. Leather joins further in. Coffee takes over with pepper fading, before balsamic and spices return at the end.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x133mm (5 ¼")	$11.0 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA



COHIBA MADURO 5 GENIOS

BOLD AND FLAVORFUL

Cocoa and earth set the stage. Honey and walnut develop alongside. Earthy notes deepen the profile in the second half. Vegetal notes and balsamic hints close the smoke.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x140mm (5 ½")	$ - | €101

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



LA AURORA FAMILY CREED PERSEVERANCIA ROBUSTO

INTENSE AND LAYERED

Earth, spices, and nuttiness lead the way. Wood, walnut, vegetal notes, and balsamic hints develop. Earth and balsamic notes alternate through to the finale.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x127mm (5")	$16 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CAMEROON	MEXICO	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA, U.S.A.



VALACARI NEOCLASSIC HABANO ROBUSTO

HARMONIOUS AND ROUND

Earth, cocoa, and walnut set the tone in the beginning. Vegetal notes appear in the second half, joined by green and white pepper toward the end of the smoke.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x127mm (5")	$11 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



PUNCH PRINCESAS EDICIÓN LIMITADA 2025

GRADUAL AND BUILDING

Honey and tobacco open softly, followed by cocoa and nuts. Leather joins early. Cinnamon is added in the second half, before the spices intensify for a flavorful finale.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x135mm (5 ⅜")	$ - | €55

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



ZINO HONDURAS ROBUSTO

RICH AND LAYERED

Baking spices, walnuts, and wood lead the way. Subtle sweetness and cocoa develop alongside. Black pepper and leather emerge in the second half, deepening the profile.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x127mm (5")	$7.5 | € 7.8

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	HONDURAS	HONDURAS



ROCKY PATEL SAPPHIRE ROBUSTO

MILD AND LINEAR

Earth and spice lead the way, turning to cocoa and earth further into the cigar. Wood develops next, with black pepper rounding off a gradually evolving profile.

87

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x140mm (5 ½")	$15.9 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	HONDURAS, NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



CAMACHO ECUADOR ROBUSTO

LINEAR AND UNBALANCED

Black pepper and earth open the smoke. Vegetal nuances join and gradually build in boldness. In the finale, vegetal aromas take over, overshadowing the pepper and earth.

86

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	50x127mm (5")	$9.8 | €9.8

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	BRAZIL	DOMINICAN REP., HONDURAS

CigarMate

Handmade CigarMate
for handmade cigars



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

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

Toro





BUFFALO TEN BROADLEAF

RICH AND PERSISTENT

Wood, dark chocolate, black pepper, and cream define the profile. Licorice and espresso join later on. Floral notes close out the smoke with nuanced pepper.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	50x152mm (6")	$6.1 | € -

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



ARTURO FUENTE OPUS X DOUBLE ROBUSTO

BOLD AND FLAVORFUL

Fine wood, white pepper, nutmeg, and honey define the first half. Cocoa joins as spices peak with hot spices. Earthy and vegetal notes with balsamic hints close the smoke.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●●	52x146mm (5 ¾")	$38.5 | € 53

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.	DOMINICAN REP.



HIRAM & SOLOMON MYSTIC TIE

SMOOTH AND GROUNDED

Fine wood, earth, and toasted notes set the foundation. Vegetal nuances and a touch of pepper appear later on. Wood and earth close out the profile.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$16 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR, MEXICO	INDONESIA	DOMINICAN REP., PARAGUAY



JFR LUNATIC MADURO HOMBRE LIBRE

BOLD AND BALANCED

Nuts, earth, and wood lead the way alongside leather. Cappuccino adds creaminess. Balsamic notes develop, with pepper emerging late to close the profile.

90

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x152mm (6")	$9.3 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
MEXICO	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA



NOTORIOUS CRÈME DE LA CRÈME TORO

DELICATE AND CONSISTENT

Hay and floral notes give way to smoke, then turn to cappuccino and light baking spice later on. Creamy smoke, hazelnut, and herbs follow, holding steady throughout.

89

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●	52x152mm (6")	$16.5 | € -

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



TRINIDAD ESMERALDA

BALANCED AND FLAVORFUL

Toasted notes, white pepper, and chili spice set the tone with vegetal nuances in the background. Earth joins in the second third. Walnut surfaces towards the end.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	53x145mm (5 ¾")	$ - | €66

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
CUBA	CUBA	CUBA



VOLITION AMERICA BY GURKHA HABANO

HARMONIOUS AND LAYERED

Wood and black pepper make a spiced opening, with walnut joining shortly after. Leather and earth develop alongside, before balsamic nuances close the profile.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	54x152mm (6")	$13 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
N/A	NICARAGUA	DOMINICAN REP., NICARAGUA



PEREZ-CARRILLO ASCEND RIDGE

SMOOTH AND CONSISTENT

Hay and wood lead the way, turning to nuts, wood, and light pepper. Roasted coffee joins as pepper retreats to the retrohale. Earth rounds off the profile toward the end.

88

STRENGTH	SIZE	PRICE
●●●	52x152mm (6")	$13.8 | € -

WRAPPER	BINDER	FILLER
ECUADOR	NICARAGUA	NICARAGUA

Credits

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picture by: Drew Estate

The Next Chapter
picture by: Drew Estate

The Generational Tobacco Ban
picture by: Renz A. Mauleon

The Sweet Tip
picture by: Mario Amelio

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The Art of Lees Stirring
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Blind tasting - Spirits
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Blind tasting - Cigars
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