

# Cigar Insider

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## FEATURED CIGAR

### LA AURORA RESERVA ESPECIAL 2008 BELICOSO

DOM. REP. ■ PRICE: \$27.00 ■ BODY: MEDIUM

*For a full tasting, see page three.*

91  
POINTS

## BEST CIGARS THIS ISSUE

La Aurora Reserva Especial 2008 Belicoso	Dom. Rep.	91
Four Kicks Maduro Corona Gorda	Dom. Rep.	90
Four Kicks Maduro Robusto Extra	Dom. Rep.	90
Four Kicks Maduro Sublime	Dom. Rep.	90
The Oscar Habano Robusto	Honduras	90
Trinidad La Trova	Cuba	90
Macanudo Inspirado White Churchill	Dom. Rep.	89



## A NIGHT OF 35+ CIGARS THE BIG SMOKE MIAMI IS LESS THAN A MONTH AWAY,

and the night will feature no fewer than 35 handmade, premium cigars. Some of the biggest names in the cigar business will be on hand on Friday, March 16. For details and a list of cigars, see page 8.



## CIGAR FESTIVALS KICK OFF IN D.R. AND CUBA THE PROCIGAR FESTIVAL IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC BEGAN ON SUNDAY,

and next week Cuba's 20th annual Habanos Festival opens in Cuba. More than 1,000 cigar lovers from around the world will attend the Cuban festival, and several hundred will travel to the Dominican Republic for ProCigar. CIGAR AFICIONADO senior editor Gregory Mottola is in the Dominican Republic this week covering ProCigar, and senior contributing editor Gordon Mott will arrive in Havana next week to cover Cuba's festival. Follow them at [www.cigaraficionado.com](http://www.cigaraficionado.com).

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## TASTING REPORT

### FOUR KICKS MADURO

#### NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Maker:** Tabacalera La Alianza S.A.

**Distributor:** Crowned Heads LLC

**Filler:** Nicaragua

**Binder:** Nicaragua

**Wrapper:** U.S.A./Conn. Habano

**Release Date:** November 2017

### CORONA GORDA

90 POINTS ■ 5 5/8" x 46 ■ \$8.95

Enrobed in a dark and oily wrapper, this slim cigar delivers notes of almond, coffee and wood interwoven with pleasant touches of cocoa and herbs. A bold cigar.

**Body:** Medium to Full

### ROBUSTO EXTRA

90 POINTS ■ 5 1/2" x 56 ■ \$10.65

Big notes of wood, leather and earth inform the profile of this thick, well-made robusto. Sweeter elements of nougat and caramel also emerge before an oaky finish.

**Body:** Full

### SUBLIME

90 POINTS ■ 6" x 54 ■ \$10.40

This dark cigar is solidly rolled and crafted with a good head and cap. Its oaky, nutty smoke is accentuated by touches of red wine, nougat and coffee bean.

**Body:** Full

### ROBUSTO

88 POINTS ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$9.60

A dark and oily robusto that delivers notes of earth and coffee bean intertwined with some touches of black cherry sweetness. The finish is a bit short.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Four Kicks Maduro is the follow-up to Crowned Heads LLC's Four Kicks, released in 2011. The maduro version replaces the Ecuadoran Habano wrapper of the original

with a dark and oily Connecticut-grown Habano wrapper. The resulting blend is fairly strong, and three of the four sizes scored 90 points, impressing our blind-tasting panel with their consistency and character.

**Average Rating:** 89.5 points

### MACANUDO INSPIRADO WHITE

#### NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Maker:** General Cigar Dominicana

**Distributor:** General Cigar Co.

**Filler:** Mexico, Nicaragua

**Binder:** Indonesia

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** July 2017

### CHURCHILL

89 POINTS ■ 7" x 48 ■ \$7.29

The lush draw of this Churchill offers lots of woody smoke with hints of citrus and cocoa powder. There is a faint suggestion of licorice on the finish.

**Body:** Mild to Medium

### TORO

88 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 50 ■ \$6.99

There's a good draw and even burn to this lightly-hued cigar. As it smokes, hints of bread and cinnamon build around a predominantly woody core.

**Body:** Mild

### ROBUSTO

87 POINTS ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$6.49

Draped in a pale wrapper, this cigar burns evenly. Its smoke shows notes of dry wood, citrus and minerals with a faint hint of almond on the finish.

**Body:** Mild to Medium

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Macanudo Inspirado White is an offshoot of Macanudo Inspirado Orange: a brand that first appeared in Europe in 2014 and came to the United States in 2016. Inspirado White is draped in a lightly-hued Ecuadoran Connecticut wrapper leaf. The Churchill showed the most character, scoring 89 points.

**Average Rating:** 88.0 points

## 100 POINT SCALE

95-100: Classic ■ 90-94: Outstanding ■ 80-89: Very good to excellent ■ 70-79: Average to good commercial quality  
Below 70: Don't waste your money ■ N/A: Not Available *Note: Prices are manufacturers' suggested retail, before taxes.*

## THE OSCAR HABANO

### VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Honduras

**Maker:** Oscar Valladares Tobacco & Co.

**Distributor:** OV Cigars LLC

**Filler:** Honduras, Nicaragua

**Binder:** Honduras

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** August 2016

### ROBUSTO

90 POINTS ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$10.50

Dark and gleaming with oils, this attractive robusto offers notes of oak, cocoa and coffee bean as it burns. There are hints of licorice and minerals on the finish.

**Body:** Medium to Full

### SIXTY

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 60 ■ \$12.50

This fat cigar burns evenly, producing a very solid white ash. Its smoke shows oak and mineral impressions interwoven with a faint hint of cocoa powder.

**Body:** Medium

### TORO

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$11.50

Wearing a rich, cocoa-hued cover leaf, this cigar burns well, offering lots of toasty smoke with hints of acidity. The finish is rather short.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**BRAND SUMMARY:** The Oscar Habano is rolled with a dark, Ecuadoran Habano wrapper. There is also a maduro version of The Oscar available, rolled with a Mexican San Andrés cover leaf. Both versions of The Oscar ship in flat, wooden boxes of 11 that are designed to look like a cigar mold. The individual cigars in the box are nestled inside a sleeve of green candela leaf, similar to another product made by Oscar Valladares Tobacco & Co. called Leaf by Oscar. Though visually similar, Leaf by Oscar is made for "Island" Jim Robinson of Leaf & Bean cigar shop and is not distributed by OV Cigars LLC. In our vertical brand tasting of The Oscar Habano, our panel found the Robusto to offer the most complexity and balance of the line, earning 90 points.

**Average Rating:** 88.0 points

## LA AURORA RESERVA ESPECIAL 2008

### NEW RELEASE

**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Maker:** La Aurora S.A.

**Distributor:** Miami Cigar & Co.

**Filler:** Dom. Rep., Brazil, Nicaragua

**Binder:** Ecuador

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** July 2017

### BELICOSO

91 POINTS ■ 6 1/4" x 52 ■ \$27.00 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

A well-made figurado with a lush draw and even burn. Walnut and earth notes are elevated by hints of raisin sweetness and a bright cedar finish.

**Body:** Medium

## TRINIDAD

### NEW RELEASE

**Country:** Cuba

**Maker:** N/A

**Distributor:** Habanos S.A.

**Filler:** Cuba

**Binder:** Cuba

**Wrapper:** Cuba

**Box Date:** October 2017

### LA TROVA

90 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 52 ■ £33.30

Crafted with a pigtail cap, this large cigar delivers notes of fresh tobacco, wheat and nuts that are balanced by sweeter touches of caramel and gingersnap.

**Body:** Medium

Have a comment about *Cigar Insider*?  
We'd like to know what you think.  
Email us at [insidermail@mshanken.com](mailto:insidermail@mshanken.com).



## 100 POINT SCALE

95-100: Classic ■ 90-94: Outstanding ■ 80-89: Very good to excellent ■ 70-79: Average to good commercial quality  
Below 70: Don't waste your money ■ N/A: Not Available *Note: Prices are manufacturers' suggested retail, before taxes.*

## CIGAR NEWS

### THE YEAR OF 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARIES

BY THE CIGAR INSIDER STAFF

**Macanudo. Davidoff. Joya de Nicaragua.** Three famous cigar brands with one big thing in common—each is celebrating a 50th anniversary in 2018.

Each anniversary has quite a different origin. Joya de Nicaragua was founded in Estelí, Nicaragua, in 1968 and is Nicaragua's oldest brand. (**Padróns**, created in 1964, were originally made in Miami.) At one point, Joya de Nicaras were smoked in the White House, becoming the official smoke of U.S. dignitaries. But Joya de Nicaragua fell on troubled times roughly a decade after its founding. The factory, owned in part by Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, became a target when the nation became engulfed in war and was bombed by the National Guard and rendered a smoldering wreck in 1979. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan imposed an embargo on Nicaraguan goods, cutting off the brand's largest market.

The factory was rebuilt, this time using brick, and the embargo was dropped in 1990. But Joya was a shadow of its former self. In 1994, Alejandro Martinez-Cuenca acquired the factory and the brand, which was small. "There were two or three people making cigars" there at the time, Martinez-Cuenca once told CIGAR AFICIONADO.

Martinez-Cuenca looked for workers who knew Joya from the past, re-envisioned the brand by adding the powerful Antaño line, and built Joya back. In 2017 the Joya Black Nocturno scored 91 points and was named one of CIGAR AFICIONADO'S Top 25 cigars.

For Joya's golden anniversary, the company is putting a new emphasis on one of its oldest cigar lines, the Clásico. According to Juan Martinez, executive president of Joya de Nicaragua, the Clásico packaging and artwork was redesigned late last year in anticipation of the celebration. While the Clásico is currently the company's best-selling cigar in the European market, it's rather obscure in the United States, so Joya has big plans for a 50th anniversary push. Martinez also hinted that there may be more "50th Anniversary" surprise releases as 2018 progresses.

Macanudo's 50th anniversary is less direct. The brand is actually older than 50 years, but before 1968 it was small, known only to smokers in the United Kingdom. General Cigar Co. acquired Jamaica's Temple Hall Cigar Factory in 1968, and with it came Macanudo. The company, then run by the Cullman family, turned Macanudo into one of the largest handmade brands in the cigar world.

The hallmark of the original Macanudo was the brand's Connecticut-shade wrapper, now used on the company's mild Café line. Macanudo once was a top performer in the

#### WELL-AGED CIGARS

THE OLDEST—125 YEARS AND UP	
Punch	1840
H. Upmann	1844
Partagás	1845
Hoyo de Monterrey	1865
Romeo y Julieta	1875
Villiger	1888
J.C. Newman	1895
THE 100 CLUB	
Bolivar	1902
La Aurora	1903
Arturo Fuente	1912
THE HALF-CENTURY MARK	
Nat Sherman	1930
Montecristo	1935
Padrón	1964
Cohiba	1966
Davidoff	1968
Joya de Nicaragua	1968
Macanudo	1968

Source: Cigar Insider

annual *Cigar Insider* retailer poll, which measures the sales of premium cigar brands in top-shelf U.S. retail shops, but in recent years the brand has failed to make the list.

Today's Macanudos come in a host of varieties, including the more robust Macanudo Inspirado Orange Churchill, made in Honduras with a blend of Central American tobaccos and a Honduran wrapper leaf—quite different from a Macanudo Café. The cigar scored 92 points and was named the No. 20 Cigar of 2017 by CIGAR AFICIONADO.

For the 50th anniversary, General Cigar is creating a three-cigar collection of Inspirado launching late next month. More details on the release are expected this week.

The Davidoff brand was created in 1968 in the Geneva, Switzerland, shop owned by Zino Davidoff. His cigars were Cuban, rolled in Havana, and later he named some of his smokes after the great châteaux of France. They found a great following among cigar lovers, but a dispute led to the end of Havana-made Davidoffs in 1990. Today those original, long gone Cuban Davidoffs sell for dear prices at auction, and often take classic ratings in the Connoisseur's Corner pages of CIGAR AFICIONADO.

In 1990, Hendrik Kelner began rolling Davidoffs in Santiago, Dominican Republic, using a blend of locally grown tobaccos and Connecticut-seed wrappers. Davidoffs now are sold worldwide.

For the 50th anniversary, Davidoff has repackaged five of its regular-production cigars with special 50th anniversary bands, which feature a stylized version of the number 50 and the word Davidoff beneath it in much smaller text. The blends of the cigars have not been changed. The cigars will revert back to their original bands next year.

Reaching 50 years of age is a notable achievement in any industry. Recently Padrón and Cohiba celebrated the milestone in grand fashion, with commemorative cigars, such as the Padrón 50 and the Cohiba Majestoso 1966. Back in 2003, La Aurora celebrated 100 years with the release of the Aurora 100 Años, and Arturo Fuente commemorated its own 100th anniversary with a line of cigars named Gran AniverXario Destino al Siglo. ■

## CAVICI & CO. SUES QUESADA AND S.A.G. IMPORTS

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Cavici & Co. Ltd., the company behind boutique brand Regius, has filed a petition for legal action against S.A.G. Imports Inc. and its owner Manuel Quesada. The petition, filed in Texas on February 12, alleges breach of contract and is seeking just over \$48,000 in restitution from S.A.G., distributor of the Quesada family's Fonseca, Quesada and Casa Magna brand cigars.

According to the lawsuit, S.A.G., which distributed the Regius brand of cigars from 2012 to 2017, failed to make payments on six invoices.

The distribution agreement between the companies ended on April 30, 2017. According to Cavici, S.A.G. returned unsold inventory, but a balance still remains.

"Despite receiving this credit, as well as a credit in the amount of \$52,500 for advertising costs, S.A.G. and Quesada continues to owe Cavici the amount of \$48,304.66," the legal document states.

As the petition reads, S.A.G. was authorized as a distributor to obtain inventory of Regius cigars directly



from the Plasencia Cigars factory (where the Regius brand is produced) and sell the cigars through its own sales channels. Cavici alleges that S.A.G. failed to pay for many of the cigars it sold.

*Cigar Insider* contacted Quesada, but he said he had yet to see the document. "I have not been served so I cannot comment on something I haven't seen," he said.

Quesada Cigars is located in Licey, Dominican Republic, on the outskirts of Santiago. It has been making cigars in the Dominican Republic since 1974. Its distribution arm, S.A.G., is headquartered in Miami.

Cavici is incorporated in Hong Kong and is listed in the suit as the dba (doing business as) company of Regius Cigars, which is owned by Akhil Kapacee, who was not named in the suit. Regius cigars are distributed in the U.S. by Oscar Valladeres Tobacco & Co. ■

## ENCOURAGING REMARKS FROM D.C. FOR PREMIUM CIGARS

BY ANDREW NAGY

Premium cigars were on the minds of policymakers at a recent House Budget Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., and the cigar lobbying groups are taking it as an encouraging sign that lawmakers are considering adjusting the FDA's controversial cigar regulations. Or, at the very least, they are listening.

At the February 14 budget hearing on Capitol Hill, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) raised the issue of FDA cigar regulations during his questioning of Mick Mulvaney, the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), who was testifying before the committee.

"I want to talk about an industry that has a rich history with south Florida, the cigar industry," said Diaz-Balart. "It has been struggling in the face of excessive and burdensome regulations imposed by the FDA. It is my understanding, Mr. Director, that the FDA is currently reviewing these regulations and plans to release an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the coming months ... How is your office going to work to ensure that the FDA's decision on the topic is supported by appropriate cost-benefit and regulatory flexibility analysis?"

Diaz-Balart's remarks refer to FDA commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb's announcement on July 2017 in which he said that the agency would be taking a fresh look at the treatment of premium cigars under the agency's current regulatory structure.

"We have absolute confidence the FDA is going to apply the [Trump] Administration's sort of new standard when it comes to cost-benefit analysis that we are actually going to do them, and we will actually have science and numbers behind them as opposed to the qualitative type

analysis that was done by the previous administration,” Mulvaney responded. “I think one of the things you can count on with Director Gottlieb at the FDA is a much more rational approach to the process and when it comes to OIRA [Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs], our job is to make sure that is exactly what has happened. We are sort of the policy police and regulatory police to make sure the folks follow the rules at the various agencies. We don’t supplement our view for theirs, we just make sure they have gone about it in the proper process.”

The OMB, which is the largest office in the executive branch, does not directly oversee the budget for the FDA. However, the OMB is tasked with assessing the quality of agency programs, policies and procedures to see if they comply with the president’s policies. In other words, at the end of the day, the OMB has the power to influence the tobacco policies of the FDA.

Both the Cigar Rights of America and the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers association, which represent the premium cigar industry’s lobbying efforts, took Mulvaney’s remarks as a positive sign that the Trump Administration is listening to the concerns of the premium cigar industry.

“CRA and our industry allies look forward to continuing our dialogue with the [Trump] Administration and congressional advocates for the premium, handmade cigar industry,” said Glynn Loope, executive director of the Cigar Rights of America, in a statement. “Messages conveyed such as that by Con. Diaz-Balart yesterday and over the course of the last several years have worked to tell the unique, artisan message of premium cigars, and recent actions by the Administration and regulators have proven that this message is being heard.” ■

## ALEC BRADLEY CANDELA RETURNS

BY DAVID CLOUGH

The tradition continues. For the past five years, Alec Bradley Cigar Co. has released a limited-edition cigar with a green candela wrapper in honor of St. Patrick’s Day called **Alec Bradley Black Market Filthy Hooligan**. This year, the company has brought back Filthy Hooligan in its popular barber pole format, draped in Honduran candela cover leaf intertwined with Nicaraguan tobacco from Jalapa. The cigars are shipping to retailers now.

Along with its eye-catching combination of wrapper tobaccos, Alec Bradley Black Market Filthy Hooligan Barber Pole contains an Ecuadoran Sumatra binder and filler from Panama and Honduras. The cigar comes in one size, Toro, measuring 6 inches by 50 ring gauge, and retails for \$8.75.

Filthy Hooligans come in 22-count boxes. This year, only 2,000 boxes have been produced. ■

## COHIBA AND PARTAGÁS HEADLINE NEXT WEEK’S HABANOS FESTIVAL

BY GORDON MOTT



A Cohiba Robusto Reserva Cosecha 2014. New releases of Partagás Linea Maduro. Gala dinners with live entertainment. A full program of seminars and contests, all focused on the world of Cuban cigars. All that and more is in store for those who attend the Festival del Habanos next week, which is celebrating its 20th year.

It all begins on Monday with a dinner at the El Laguito protocol hall. The highlight of the evening will be the preview tasting of the Cohiba Robusto Reserva Cosecha 2014, a new premium release of the country’s most iconic brand.

The closing Gala, the fanciest night of the Festival, is Friday night and will feature the release of new sizes in the Partagás Linea Maduro line. The dinner for more than 1,200 people always showcases a lineup of Cuba’s finest musicians, the Habanos Man of the Year award and a special auction of custom humidors designed especially for the Festival del Habanos. The auction benefits Cuba’s public health system. ■

## EPC AND VIAJE COLLABORATE

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

The **Viaje Juntos** is back. Andre Farkas, owner of Viaje Cigars, has teamed with Ernesto Perez-Carrillo of EPC Cigar Co. for the second installment of Juntos, Viaje’s collaborative brand that means “together” in Spanish.

“Ernesto and I got to work blending Piña in November 2016,” Farkas said. “What we ended up with was a second blend we both loved—so much so, we decided to use it for Juntos.”

The new version of Juntos is made with a Connecticut broadleaf wrapper, Ecuadoran Sumatra binder and Nicaraguan filler. It comes in two sizes—Toro and Torpedo—that both measure 6 inches by 54 ring gauge and will retail for \$14 each. They are on sale now.

Like the previous Juntos release, which Viaje did with Quesada Cigars in 2016, the smokes are packaged in two interlocking tins with one size stowed in the top tin and another in the bottom. When stacked, both tins form one long canister. ■

## INSIDER Q&A: NICK MELILLO, OWNER, FOUNDATION CIGAR CO.

BY GREG MOTTOLA



NICK MELILLO

Nick Melillo, 39, has spent most of his professional life in the tobacco business. Fresh out of high school, he went straight to tobacco retail, and a few years later found himself in charge of tobacco at Drew Estate. But in order to fulfill his lifelong dream of owning a brand, Melillo knew he'd have to venture out on his own. In 2015, he did just that and started the Foundation Cigar Co.,

which is headquartered in his home state of Connecticut. His experience served him well. The next year, one of Melillo's cigars made *Cigar Aficionado's* list of Top 25 cigars for 2016. Melillo recently spoke about his career in the cigar industry with senior editor Greg Mottola.

**MOTTOLA:** When did you enter the cigar business?

**MELILLO:** August of 1996 at the age of 18. I had just graduated high school that June. The last week of August I started running the humidor at the Calabash Shoppe in Connecticut. That same week I entered my freshman year at Quinnipiac University for International Business.

**Q:** What first drew you to cigars?

**A:** I was always surrounded by the aroma of Connecticut broadleaf. One of my grandfathers worked at the Winchester factory in New Haven after World War II. I started to learn about the indigenous use of tobacco and the important role that cigars had in the formation of the U.S.A. But it wasn't until I enjoyed my first cigar with my grandfather and brother that I really fell in love with the ceremony of cigar smoking.

**Q:** When did you join on with Drew Estate?

**A:** March of 2003. I had met [Drew Estate founder] Jonathan Drew circa 1998 at the Calabash Shoppe after doing an event one Saturday. Jonathan and I became friends immediately and exchanged contact information. We kept in touch from 1998 to 2002 via email and phone.

**Q:** You went straight from retail to Drew Estate?

**A:** I graduated university in May of 2000 and ended up moving to Italy working for the Vatican that year. I backpacked around Europe and moved back to Connecticut to work on my master's degree in 2001. After a year working on my master's I received a job offer in Italy for a Renaissance art history tour for high school students. I accepted

the job for the summer and then decided that I didn't want to finish my master's, so I purchased an around-the-world ticket and navigated the globe. I went from Rome to Paris, to India, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China and Japan.

**Q:** When did Jonathan Drew offer you a job?

**A:** In Japan I received a one sentence email from Jon: "Call me, we obviously have some serious shit to talk about." I made the call and Jonathan made it clear that he wanted me to be his right hand man and live in Estelí.

**Q:** What were your primary responsibilities?

**A:** I began learning what the factory, warehouse and packaging [department] were doing. I then started to reorganize the systems and planning and at the same time learned production and fermentation of tobacco. As the company began to grow my main focus was blending, purchasing tobacco, overseeing fermentation and the planning of production and shipments. My first title was director of tobaccos and production, and then later, vice president of international operations.

**Q:** When did you leave Drew Estate?

**A:** I left in 2014. I knew if I didn't start my own company I may not be able to ever create my own brands.

**Q:** What was the first brand you released on your own?

**A:** El Güegüense, a word meaning "The Wise Man." El Güegüense represents the heart and soul of Nicaragua. I felt an obligation to Nicaragua to represent this treasure and share it with the cigar world.

**Q:** How did you choose the factory for El Güegüense?

**A:** The biggest challenge with creating an all-Nicaraguan blend is the wrapper. Due to the soil and sun exposure it is difficult to grow a thin, silky, uniform wrapper in Nicaragua. I had met Eduardo Fernández from Aganorsa back in 2003 and had purchased a lot of tobacco from them over the years. I was very familiar with their filler tobaccos and I knew they grew some of the best Corojo wrappers in Jalapa, Nicaragua. In order to do it properly and get a yield of wrapper it is very labor intensive. I was very familiar with *Illusione* cigars—many of which are made at Aganorsa's TABSA factory in Estelí. Eduardo and his team welcomed me to the TABSA factory with open arms and after working with Arsenio Ramos at the factory I knew I was in the right place.

**Q:** What are all your brands?

**A:** El Güegüense, *The Wise Man Maduro*, *The Tabernacle*, *The Upsetters*, *Charter Oak* and *Highclere Castle*.

**Q:** None of your brands came out before the FDA's predicate date. Will this be a problem?

**A:** All Foundation brands have entered the market before August 8, 2016, which means they will be passed via substantial equivalency. The biggest issue with the FDA is the lack of clarity as to the final rules and dates. I think it's the objective of the FDA to make things uncertain so new people do not enter the market. The FDA's whole argument is that they have seen an increased consumption of cigar smoking among youth and there is a public health threat. The FDA is really talking about machine-made products that are sold in convenience stores and gas stations. Everyone knows this and I think through the efforts of the Cigar Rights of America, more politicians and state representatives understand the difference than ever before. Children are not purchasing handmade cigars. This can be proven with studies and via the FDA's own statistics.

**Q:** Do you consider yourself a boutique manufacturer?

**A:** The word boutique is thrown around a lot in our industry, but in reality, the whole handmade industry is boutique. We don't use high-volume machines for products. We are a handmade, artisan product that has existed for hundreds of years. Regulation of the handmade cigar industry would do nothing but destroy small business in the United States and potentially entire economies in Central America and the Caribbean. ■

## CIGAR LINEUP: BIG SMOKE MIAMI

The Big Smoke Miami is only weeks away, and it's a gathering of some of the biggest names in the premium cigar business. So far, a partial list of 35 cigars has been announced, some straight from CIGAR AFICIONADO'S Top 25 Cigars of 2017. Here's the current list of cigars you'll be able to light up in Miami:

A.J. Fernandez Bellas Artes	La Flor Dominicana
A.J. Fernandez San Lotano	La Palina
Aging Room	Macanudo
Alec Bradley Prensado Lost Art	Mbombay-Gaaja
Alec Bradley Tempus Natural	Micallef Experiencia La Crema
Arturo Fuente	Nub
Casa Fernandez	Oliva
Cohiba	Padrón
Cornelius & Anthony	Plasencia Cosecha 146
Diamond Crown	Regius
Don Pepin Garcia Cuban Classic	Rocky Patel
El Artista	Romeo San Andres
E.P. Carrillo Core Plus	Tatuaje
Club 52 Natural	Trinidad Santiago
Hamlet Paredes	Undercrown Churchill
Joya de Nicaragua	Undercrown Shade
La Aroma de Cuba	Ventura Archetype Axis Mundi
La Aurora	Villiger La Flor de Ynclan

## CIGAR AFICIONADO'S BIG SMOKE 2018 SCHEDULE

March 16

**MIAMI • FONTAINEBLEAU MIAMI BEACH**

November 9 - 11

**LAS VEGAS • THE MIRAGE**

Big Smoke evenings scheduled on Friday and Saturday, as well as cigar and lifestyle educational seminars on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

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## IN THE NEXT CIGAR INSIDER

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🔄 Your Next CIGAR INSIDER Arrives on Tuesday, March 6.

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