

# Cigar Insider

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## FEATURED CIGAR

### RAFAEL GONZALEZ

88 EXCLUSIVO ASIA PACÍFICO

CUBA ■ PRICE: HK\$268.00 ■ BODY: MEDIUM

*For a full tasting, see page three.*

92  
POINTS

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## APPLE PULLS CIGAR APP

### APPLE COMPUTER HAS REMOVED THE WHERE TO SMOKE APP,

a useful application that points users to cigar-friendly locations. Apple says that the **Cigar Aficionado** app is in violation of its antitobacco policy, yet Apple allows apps that promote marijuana use. For the story, turn to page four.

CIGAR AFICIONADO'S

# BIG SMOKE LAS VEGAS

NOVEMBER 17-19, 2017  
THE MIRAGE

## A WEEKEND FOR CIGAR LOVERS

### THE 22nd BIG SMOKE LAS VEGAS WEEKEND IS A CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD LIFE.

It's a grand cigar party that spans three days at Sin City's Mirage Hotel and Casino. During the day, Big Smoke attendees sit in on smoke-friendly educational cigar seminars and get the opportunity to learn about the craft from some of the biggest names in the premium cigar industry. By night, guests make their way to the ballroom for the evening event where everyone receives more than 35 cigars and gets the chance to meet industry icons in the country's biggest, most convivial cigar setting. To see details on the seminars and the full Big Smoke itinerary, go to [TheBigSmokes.com](http://TheBigSmokes.com).

TO SUBSCRIBE GO TO [WWW.CIGARINSIDER.COM](http://WWW.CIGARINSIDER.COM)

## TASTING REPORT

### MONTE BY MONTECRISTO AJ FERNANDEZ

#### NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Nicaragua

**Maker:** Tabacalera A.J. Fernandez Cigars de Nicaragua

**Distributor:** Altadis U.S.A.

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

**Binder:** Nicaragua

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** July 2017

#### TORO

91 POINTS ■ 6" x 55 ■ \$11.44 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

Enrobed in a pristine, chocolate-brown cover leaf, this cigar burns and draws evenly, delivering big notes of coffee, fruit and toast with touches of dark chocolate.

**Body:** Medium to Full

#### BELICOSO

90 POINTS ■ 6 1/8" x 54 ■ \$11.70

A well-made figurado with a very pointy tip. It's a toasty smoke with notes of licorice, spice and nuanced nuttiness that transition to a long, anise finish.

**Body:** Medium

#### ROBUSTO

90 POINTS ■ 4 1/4" x 54 ■ \$11.23

A short, fat, beautifully crafted cigar that delivers heavy notes of coffee bean and chocolate. Hints of caramel and clove precede a mineral-like finish.

**Body:** Medium to Full

#### CORONA

89 POINTS ■ 5" x 44 ■ \$10.92

This slim, box-pressed cigar is rolled with a chocolate-brown wrapper. Its dense, powerful smoke shows elements of earth, minerals and a chocolate sweetness.

**Body:** Full

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Blended by cigarmaker A.J. Fernandez for Altadis U.S.A., Monte by Montecristo AJ Fernandez is a fresh, fuller-bodied take on an iconic brand name. According to Altadis,

Monte by Montecristo AJ Fernandez is intended for consumers "With a taste for stronger, bolder smoking experiences." While the Toro was certainly bold, it also showed the most balance and complexity, scoring 91 points.

**Average Rating:** 90.0 points

### GAAJA MADURO

#### NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Costa Rica

**Maker:** Tabacos de Costa Rica

**Distributor:** Bombay Tobak

**Filler:** Dom. Rep., Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay

**Binder:** Ecuador

**Wrapper:** Brazil

**Release Date:** February 2017

#### TORO

89 POINTS ■ 6" x 54 ■ \$15.50

The lush, open draw of this dark, box-pressed cigar imparts a primarily earthy smoke with underpinnings of walnut shell, anise and licorice.

**Body:** Medium

#### TORPEDO

89 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 54 ■ \$15.50

A dark, box-pressed torpedo whose cedary smoke is accented by notes of coffee bean, dried fruit and clove. The draw is even and consistent.

**Body:** Medium

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Gaaaja Maduro is the follow-up to Gaaaja, a cigar brand launched in 2016. Both lines belong to Mel Shah of Bombay Tobak, best known for his MBombay cigar brands. Gaaaja Maduro replaces the Ecuadoran Connecticut wrapper of the original Gaaaja with a dark, Brazilian Mata Fina cover leaf. "This wrapper has played a very important factor in increasing the flavor and the body to the cigar," Shah told *Cigar Insider*. "Brazilian Mata Fina has definitely added more complexity into the mix." The two sizes of Gaaaja Maduro are box-pressed and come packaged in 10-count wooden boxes. Both vitolas of Gaaaja Maduro offered an interesting, consistent range of flavor and character, each scoring 89 points.

**Average Rating:** 89.0 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.*

## PADILLA 1932

## NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

**Country:** Honduras**Maker:** Fabrica de Tabacos Raices Cubanas S. de R.L.**Distributor:** Padilla Cigar Co.**Filler:** Nicaragua**Binder:** Nicaragua**Wrapper:** Nicaragua**Release Date:** July 2017

## ROBUSTO

91 POINTS ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$9.50 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

This robusto has a firm draw and even burn. Notes of earth, peanut and salted pretzel are balanced by sweeter impressions of maple and toasted marshmallow.

**Body:** Medium to Full

## TORO

91 POINTS ■ 6" x 50 ■ \$10.00 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

Crafted with an excellent head and cap, this dark, oily cigar has a rich leather and sweet cocoa quality that melds pleasantly with touches of juniper and anise.

**Body:** Medium to Full

## CHURCHILL

90 POINTS ■ 7" x 50 ■ \$9.75

A long cigar enrobed in a dark and toothy cover leaf. Each puff leaves malty, nutty and woody impressions along with hints of pencil lead and honey.

**Body:** Medium

## TORPEDO

88 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$9.50

This attractive figurado burns unevenly, but offers notes of graham cracker, sweet woods and white wine before a honey-like finish.

**Body:** Medium

## DOUBLE TORO

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 60 ■ \$10.50

Tightly packed with tobacco, this fat cigar has a firm draw that delivers notes of sweet cedar, earth and cocoa. The finish is woody and a bit musty.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Ernesto Padilla has relaunched Padilla 1932, a brand introduced in 2006. The brand now returns in five core sizes (though three additional sizes are offered at select retailers). Two cigars were exceptional. The Robusto and Toro both scored 91 points.

**Average Rating:** 89.4 points

## ESPINOSA HABANO

## CURRENT RELEASE

**Country:** Nicaragua**Maker:** Tabacalera La Zona S.A.**Distributor:** Espinosa Premium Cigars**Filler:** Nicaragua**Binder:** Nicaragua**Wrapper:** Ecuador**Release Date:** July 2016

## TORO BOX-PRESSED

88 POINTS ■ 6" x 54 ■ \$8.40

An alluringly box-pressed cigar with a three-seam cap. The creamy, nutty smoke carries a touch of cinnamon and a yeasty, bread-dough finish.

**Body:** Medium

## RAFAEL GONZALEZ

## NEW SIZE

**Country:** Cuba**Maker:** N/A**Distributor:** Habanos S.A. via Pacific Cigar Ltd.**Filler:** Cuba**Binder:** Cuba**Wrapper:** Cuba**Box Date:** December 2016

## 88 EXCLUSIVO ASIA PACÍFICO

92 POINTS ■ 5 1/4" x 48 ■ HK\$268.00 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

This tapered perfecto burns evenly, showcasing floral characteristics with touches of walnuts, brown sugar and oak white wine. Elegant and refined.

**Body:** Medium

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

### APPLE REMOVES WHERE TO SMOKE FROM ITS APP STORE

BY DAVID SAVONA

Apple Computer has removed *Cigar Aficionado's* Where To Smoke app from its store. Despite the best efforts of *Cigar Aficionado* to change Apple's decision, the app is no longer available. Apple claimed Where To Smoke, which points users to cigar-friendly locations and does not sell cigars, was in violation of its policy.

"This is David versus Goliath, and it's a disgrace," said Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of *Cigar Aficionado* magazine. "Where To Smoke is a reader service, provided free of charge, to allow our fellow cigar lovers to find cigar-friendly locations. The fact that Apple banned it is an outrage. It's not only a disservice to our large readership, but an affront on free speech and the rights of Americans to enjoy a legal adult product."

Apple continues to allow apps that promote, among other things, the procurement of marijuana. Weedmaps is described as "the largest and most comprehensive marijuana directory and discovery resource on the planet," and Leafly claims to be "the world's cannabis information resource," that allows users to "explore thousands of marijuana strains and access the map to find a dispensary nearby that carries the cannabis strain for their medical needs."

Apple said it made the move because Where To Smoke violated the rules of its App Store. "We continue to find that your app promotes the use of tobacco or nicotine-related paraphernalia, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, pipes, hookahs, or e-cigarettes, which is not permitted on the App Store," a representative from Apple wrote in an email to M. Shanken Communications Inc., the owner of *Cigar Aficionado* and other magazines.

*Cigar Aficionado* fought the removal, but the argument failed to sway Apple. The app was removed on October 30.

Users who have already downloaded the app onto their iPhones can continue to use it, and they will continue to see new locations that *Cigar Aficionado* adds, although they will not get other updates, such as new designs or bug fixes.

While you can no longer get the app from Apple, you can still access Where To Smoke via other methods. Where To Smoke is available free of charge on our website. Simply go to [wts.cigaraficionado.com](http://wts.cigaraficionado.com) and you can find more than 2,600 cigar-friendly locations near you. It works just like the app.

If you have an Android phone, you can get the Where To Smoke app in the Google Play Store. Again, it is free of charge. ■

### FDA LAWSUIT MARCHES FORWARD AS AGENCY FILES RESPONSE

BY ANDREW NAGY

The cigar industry is seeking relief, but the FDA wants it denied. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has asked the court overseeing the cigar industry's joint lawsuit against the government agency to deny the industry's motion for preliminary injunction as well as its motion for partial summary judgment filed last month.

The cross motion, which was filed on October 24 with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, is the FDA's response to motions that the cigar industry filed on October 4. The filings are part of the cigar industry's ongoing lawsuit that was filed last year by the major cigar lobbying groups—The Cigar Association of America, International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association and the Cigar Rights of America—against the FDA.

In the case, called *Cigar Association of America, et al. v. United States Food and Drug Administration*, the cigar industry is challenging the



FDA's Final Deeming Rule, which was published in 2016 and placed strict regulations on cigar manufacturers, including costly quarterly user fees, pre-market approval for new products and more stringent packaging/warning label guidelines.

The cigar industry is asking for, among other things, the FDA to vacate costly user fees and set aside the warning requirements scheduled to go into effect on August 10, 2018. Additionally, the motions argue that the Final Deeming Rule violates the First Amendment, while also seeking injunctions restraining the FDA from implementing the health warning and other labeling requirements on cigars.

In response, the FDA argues that the cigar industry's motions wrongly ignore the carcinogenic and toxic effects associated with cigars. The FDA's cross motion also claims that since the cigar industry waited 17 months to ask for an injunction, this "undercuts any claim of irreparable harm, and it should not be rewarded by a favorable exercise of equitable discretion."

The FDA also contends that new cigar packing and health warnings do not violate the First Amendment. Also, the FDA believes that the costly user fees placed on cigar manufacturers are not unfair, but are in line with the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which was the law passed in 2009 that granted the FDA regulatory authority over all tobacco products.

Previous reports online from other outlets wrongly stated that Judge Amit Mehta, who is overseeing the lawsuit, rejected the cigar industry's motions. However, Judge Mehta has not ruled on the motions, and won't do so until December 14, when the lawsuit trial is scheduled to begin. ■





## COHIBA TALISMÁN APPEARS—WITH PIGTAIL

BY DAVID SAVONA

Cuba's first Edición Limitada of 2017, the **Cohiba Talismán**, made its debut today in London. The big, dark cigars had a bit of a surprise—pigtail heads.

When Talismán was announced in February at the Habanos Festival, art for the new Cohiba showed a picture-perfect mounted head. But there's always a long delay—typically several months—between the Cuba preview and marketplace appearance for new Cuban cigars, and this year when the finished cigars arrived in London they had pigtails.

Habanos had no comment when asked why the change had been made.

In London, a single Talismán retails for £65 (\$85) and a box of 10 sells for £600 (\$784). The cigars, which measure 6 1/8 inches long by 54 ring, were rolled at Cuba's famed El Laguito Factory, according to Habanos S.A. They are slated to go on sale worldwide soon after this British debut.

The other two 2017 Limitadas—the **Punch Regios de Punch** (4 3/4 by 48) and the **Partagás Serie No. 1** (5 1/2 by 52) are expected later. ■

## GIANNINI JOINS VENTURA CIGAR CO. AS CREATIVE DIRECTOR

BY ANDREW NAGY

Cigar industry veteran Michael Giannini is taking his talents to a new home: Ventura Cigar Co. Giannini will assume the role of creative director at Ventura Cigars.

In an interview with *Cigar Insider*, Giannini, who worked with General Cigar Co. for 17 years before parting ways last year, said that his duties will include brand ambassador for existing Ventura Cigar brands such as **Archetype**, **Psyko Seven** and **Case Study**. Additionally, he will develop new cigar projects, all the way from blending to marketing.

"There's some interesting projects I'll be working on with the crew," said Giannini. "I want the work to speak for itself. It's about the brands and not about me."

While the news of Giannini joining forces with Ventura broke last week, he said that he actually began working for the company, which is a subsidiary of Kretek International, Inc., a couple of weeks ago.

"I started working on the East Coast, visiting old friends at cigar shops in Virginia, the Carolinas," Giannini said. He added that he will be relocating to Los Angeles soon to be near the Ventura headquarters, which are situated in Moorpark, California.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Giannini began his career as a pipe tobacco blender and retail clerk before switching over to cigars with a job at Ashton Distributors Inc. He then moved on to General Cigar in 1999, where he worked on the **La Gloria Cubana** brand.

In March 2012, Giannini was promoted to his role as creative director, which also carried the title of director of innovations. He was responsible for coming up with non-traditional cigar releases, and started the Foundry Cigar Co., a subsidiary of General dedicated to unorthodox cigars, including the signature **Foundry** brand. It featured cigars made from blends of tobacco he wouldn't reveal, packed in odd-shaped boxes, one of which came together in a shape reminiscent of a bundle of TNT.

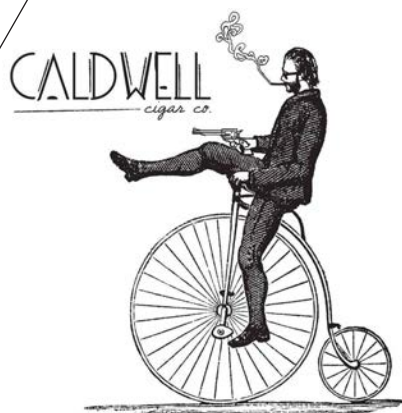
"Giannini is a key addition to the Ventura Cigar Co. team, we're excited that Michael is back doing what he does best," said Jason Carignan, chief marketing officer of Kretek International, Inc. "His vast industry knowledge and creative prowess are resources that we are excited to tap into and use to further develop the brands and products within the Ventura Cigar Co. portfolio. He is a true visionary with a business mind, and we are pleased to have him aboard." ■



MICHAEL GIANNINI

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## CALDWELL CIGAR CO. SHIPS THE T.

BY DAVID CLOUGH

The latest Caldwell collaboration is now in stores. Last week, Caldwell Cigar Co. shipped out a cigar called **The T.**—a brand that's the brainchild of three cigarmakers: Robert Caldwell of Caldwell Cigar Co., Matt Booth of Room101 Cigars and A.J. Fernandez of AJ Fernandez Cigar Co.

Announced earlier this year under a different name, the cigar once called **The Truth** has been renamed The T. and is now available in five sizes.

"I call it my trillaboration," Booth told *Cigar Insider*. "Two stores in Texas had the first deliveries in the country to support events we held in-house."

Caldwell, Booth and Fernandez originally planned for the cigar to be called The Truth, but after learning that Tatuaje Cigars owns the trademark for **La Verite** (French for The Truth), Caldwell and his fellow cigarmakers opted to change the name of their new project to The T.

"The T. is short for any word in the world beginning with 'T' that is not now, nor ever will be trademarked by anyone in the tobacco class or otherwise," Booth explained. "I simply became tired of having to focus on the name of a product, when the focus should be on the product itself. I am extremely proud to be working on this project with Robert and A.J."

The T. is a Nicaraguan puro available in five sizes: Short Churchill, measuring 5 1/2 inches by 48 ring gauge; Toro Grande, 6 1/2 by 56; Robusto, 5 by 52; Lonsdale, 6 1/2 by 44; and Toro, 5 by 52. The cigars ship in 20-count boxes, except for the Short Churchill, which ships in a 10-count box.

The T. is the latest in a series of blending collaborations

between Caldwell and other cigar industry luminaries. Earlier this year, Caldwell released a brand with Matt Booth called **Hit & Run**, which the duo created together at Tabacalera William Ventura in the Dominican Republic. Just beforehand, he was involved in two other high-profile blending projects: **All Out Kings** with Jonathan Drew and Willy Herrera of Drew Estate, and a cigar line with E.P. Carrillo called **Anastasia**.

The T. is on store shelves now. It's made at Fernandez's Tabacalera A.J. Fernandez Cigars de Nicaragua S.A. factory, in Estelí, Nicaragua, and distributed by Caldwell Cigar Co.

In conjunction with The T., Booth also released a branded spirit last week called Room101 gin. He chose gin for its versatility in cocktails and intended the spirit to be paired with his cigars. ■

## JOHN MILLER NAMED PRESIDENT OF SWISHER INTERNATIONAL

BY BLAKE DROESCH

Swisher International, the parent company of Drew Estate and the makers of popular machine-made Swisher Sweets cigars, has appointed John Miller to company president. Miller, the current VP of sales and marketing, will replace CEO and president Peter Ghiloni, who plans to retire from the company at the end of the year.



JOHN MILLER

John Miller joined Swisher International in 2012, after previously working for the U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company. He brings to the role 25 years of experience in the tobacco and consumer packaged goods industries.

"I am honored and thrilled in being named Swisher's next president," Miller said in a press release. "I look forward to expanding Peter's legacy and maintaining the company as the industry's leader."

It was under the leadership of Peter Ghiloni that the company, which was previously known to only manufacture flavored, machine-made cigars, entered the premium market when it acquired Drew Estate in 2014.

Swisher also announced that Lou Caldrolpoli, the current senior VP of finance and a 21-year veteran of the company, will be promoted to the newly-created position of chief operations officer. John Haley, current VP of corporate marketing, will be replacing John Miller as senior VP of sales and marketing.

Swisher International's changes in leadership will become effective on January 1, 2018. ■

## A LOOK AT CUBA'S RESERVAS, GRAN RESERVAS

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Priced and positioned as luxury goods, Cuban cigars can be quite expensive, especially in countries like England and Canada. But if you're willing to pay even more, Habanos S.A., the worldwide distributor for Cuban cigars, offers premium smokes with vintage-specific tobaccos. They come from a selection of cigars classified as Reservas and Gran Reservas. According to Habanos, Reservas contain tobacco aged for three years. Gran Reservas contain tobaccos aged for five years.

In February, sources say that the **Cohiba Robusto Reserva** will be introduced at the Habanos Festival. It has the same dimensions as the classic Cohiba Robusto, only with three-year-old tobacco. Most cigars in the Reserva and Gran Reserva program are classic sizes easily recognized by cigar enthusiasts and emblematic of the brand.

Reservas were first released in 2003 when Cuba created the Cohiba Selección Reserva, a box-set of 30 cigars all made with tobaccos from 1999. Then, in 2005 the market saw the Partagás Serie D No. 4 Reserva. It cost a bit more than normal Partagás Serie D No. 4 cigars, but the smoke performed well in the *Cigar Aficionado* blind tastings, and was awarded *Cigar Aficionado's* No. 5 cigar of 2005.

Aside from the vintage tobacco, a few things make Reservas and Gran Reservas stand out on the shelf. Firstly, these cigars come packaged in hinged wooden boxes finished with a thick, luxurious, black piano-lacquer finish—similar to the **Cohiba Behike** boxes in the market today.



Secondly, the Reserva band is very distinct. It was also redesigned for the 2005 release. What was once a fairly non-descript band in 2003 became a highly stylized silver-and-black design with distinct fonts two years later. The flashier Reserva band was created by Dennis Hernandez and is still used today.

Though another Reserva was released in 2007, the first Gran Reserva hit the market in 2009—the Cohiba Siglo VI Gran Reserva. The Gran Reserva sports a gold-and-black band designed by Nelson Alfonso, who is also responsible for the most current Cohiba band designs.

When it came out, the Cohiba Gran Reserva retailed for £85 (about \$111). By comparison, regular Cohiba Siglo VI cigars were retailing for £29 (about \$38) each—a nearly 200 percent markup.

The Reservas and Gran Reservas tend to score well in *Cigar Insider* and *Cigar Aficionado*, and each release is guaranteed to have a resale value, as these special smokes tend to appear at auctions being sold for many times the original price.

There is no word yet on the price for the upcoming Cohiba Robusto Reserva release but one thing is certain—the cigar will not be cheap. ■

## TERENCE REILLY RESIGNS FROM QUESADA CIGARS

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

After more than eight years with Quesada Cigars, Terence Reilly has turned in his resignation. October 31 was his last day.

Reilly was not only Quesada's national sales manager, he is a member of the Quesada family and was instrumental in spearheading creative brands such as the **Quesada Oktoberfest**, **Heisenberg**, **Domus Magnus** and **Fonseca Nicaragua**.

"After much thought and sleepless nights, I have decided to resign my position at Quesada Cigars to explore new opportunities for my professional growth," said Reilly in a release. "The company is heading in a new direction, and I wish them much success in years to come."

Reilly joined the business in June 2009. He moved to Santiago in the Dominican Republic where he worked for five months at the Quesada factory before moving to Miami to oversee Quesada's distribution center and U.S. headquarters, which operates as SAG Imports Inc.

Though his time in the factory was intended to give him a comprehensive understanding of the production process, his primary task was to co-manage the sales team in the U.S., but his roles were quite numerous. At the same time,

### CUBAN RESERVA AND GRAN RESERVAS

BRAND	YEAR OF RELEASE
Cohiba Selección Reserva 2003 (Various Sizes)	2003
Partagás Serie D No. 4 Reserva	2005
Montecristo No. 4 Reserva	2007
Cohiba Siglo VI Gran Reserva	2009
Montecristo No. 2 Gran Reserva	2011
Romeo y Julieta Churchill Reserva	2012
Partagás Lusitania Gran Reserva	2013
H. Upmann No. 2 Reserva	2014
Romeo y Julieta Wide Churchills Gran Reserva	2015
Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 2 Reserva	2016
H. Upmann Sir Winston Gran Reserva	2017
Cohiba Robusto Reserva	2018

Source: *Cigar Insider*



Reilly was responsible for logistics, marketing and, more recently, FDA compliance. By 2015, Reilly became the national sales manager.

In addition, Reilly also collaborated with the factory to select blends for new cigars and create the subsequent marketing to support those brands. His time was split between the factory in Santiago, company headquarters in Miami and retail events around the country.

For Reilly, Quesada Cigars was a family business. Company owner Manuel “Manolo” Quesada is a first cousin once removed, though given the age difference and relationship, Reilly often referred to Quesada as his uncle.

“[Terence] will always be in our hearts and minds,” Quesada said. “We wish him all the best in whatever path he chooses for his future. The honor and privilege has also been ours.” ■

## PURO SABOR CIGAR FESTIVAL RETURNS THIS JANUARY

BY DAVID CLOUGH

Early next year, cigar lovers from all over the world will head to Nicaragua to take part in Puro Sabor, the country’s largest celebration of tobacco and cigars. Now in its seventh year, the week-long cigar festival starts in the lakeside city of Granada before heading north towards Estelí, the cigar making capital of the country.

The festival is a mix of entertaining and educational segments. Arriving in Granada, festival attendees can explore the city, admire the colonial-era architecture and visit the shores of Lake Nicaragua. After two days of sightseeing, cultural activities and relaxation, festival-goers travel to Estelí to embark on an immersive tour of cigar factories and tobacco plantations from some of the biggest names in the business, including A.J. Fernandez, Padrón, Drew Estate, Joya de Nicaragua, My Father Cigars, Plasencia Cigars, General Cigar, Oliva and Rocky Patel.

Interspersed throughout the festival are lively gala dinners, unique souvenirs and a multitude of cigars to smoke. The event is hosted by the Nicaraguan Chamber of Tobacco, an organization that aims to promote the image of Nicaraguan tobacco growers and cigarmakers.

“The festival has become a way of presenting our wealth of culture, history and traditions,” said Anielka Orteza, president of the Nicaraguan Chamber of Tobacco. “We want our friends and clients to enjoy and learn more about our country and to let themselves be seduced by Nicaragua’s natural charms.”

The seventh Puro Sabor cigar festival runs January 22 to 27, 2018. For tickets and more information, visit [www.nicaraguancigarfestival.com](http://www.nicaraguancigarfestival.com) ■

## CIGAR AFICIONADO’S BIG SMOKE 2017 SCHEDULE

# BIG SMOKE

LAS VEGAS

### TICKETS ON SALE NOW

November 17–19

#### 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.

Visit [TheBigSmokes.com](http://TheBigSmokes.com)

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