

# Cigar Insider

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## FEATURED CIGAR

**JOYA SILVER  
CORONA**

NICARAGUA ■ PRICE: \$6.30 ■ BODY: MEDIUM TO FULL

*For a full tasting, see page two.*

92  
POINTS

## BEST CIGARS THIS ISSUE

Joya Silver Corona	Nicaragua	92
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## INSIDER IS CHANGING CIGAR INSIDER HAS A NEW LOOK.

Beginning in January, this PDF newsletter will be replaced by an all-new, mobile-friendly digital version with a fresh look featuring a dynamic redesign of our cigar ratings. The reviews and information will stay the same. [For a preview, click here.](#)



## A NEW VENUE FOR THE BIG SMOKE FLORIDA

### THE BIG SMOKE RETURNS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE IN 2019,

this time at a new, smoke-friendly venue. The event is scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 23, at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, Florida, where cigars can be enjoyed inside and outside of the Big Smoke ballroom. Come collect more than 25 cigars from some of the best cigarmakers in the world while enjoying food, high-end libations and the camaraderie of like-minded cigar smokers. General admission tickets start at \$275 and VIP passes, which admit guests an hour early, start at \$375. [Click here for more information.](#)

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**TASTING REPORT**
**ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN**
**CURRENT RELEASE**
**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Maker:** Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia.

**Distributor:** Ashton Distributors Inc.

**Filler:** Dom. Rep.

**Binder:** Dom. Rep.

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Purchase Date:** November 2018

**SORCERER**
**90 POINTS** ■ 7" x 49 ■ \$12.40

The superb draw of this box-pressed Churchill delivers notes of raisin and cocoa that meld pleasantly with hints of licorice, almonds and espresso bean.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**TORPEDO**
**90 POINTS** ■ 6 1/2" x 55 ■ \$13.70

A squarely-pressed figurado draped in a dark cover leaf. Elements of earth, milk chocolate and cedar intertwine with bready impressions before a sweet finish.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**TRÉS MYSTIQUE**
**90 POINTS** ■ 4 3/8" x 44 ■ \$10.25

This dark little cigar forms a gray, flaky ash as it burns. It's a toasty smoke with hints of licorice, spice and vanilla that lead to a sweet, maple finish.

**Body:** Full

**PEGASUS**
**87 POINTS** ■ 5" x 54 ■ \$12.00

Hints of dark chocolate and orange peel complement this dark, well-made robusto's oaky, nutty core, but the finish is rather chabby.

**Body:** Full

For the latest from *Cigar Aficionado*, follow us on Twitter: [twitter.com/CigarAficMag](https://twitter.com/CigarAficMag)


**JOYA SILVER**
**VERTICAL BRAND TASTING—NEW RELEASE**
**Country:** Nicaragua

**Maker:** Fabrica Joya de Nicaragua S.A.

**Distributor:** Drew Estate

**Filler:** Nicaragua

**Binder:** Mexico

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** August 2018

**CORONA**
**92 POINTS** ■ 5 1/4" x 42 ■ \$6.30 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION

Crafted with a three-seam cap, this box-pressed cigar burns evenly. Its earthy character is enlivened by hearty impressions of fruit, roasted nuts and coffee bean.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**ROBUSTO**
**90 POINTS** ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$7.10

This sharply-pressed cigar is topped with a three-seam cap. Its lush draw offers notes of earth and wood accented by hints of spicy leather and brown sugar.

**Body:** Full

**TORO**
**88 POINTS** ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$7.80

Big notes of oak and chocolate-covered almonds set the tone for this dark, box-pressed cigar. The finish is dry and woody.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**ULTRA**
**85 POINTS** ■ 6 1/4" x 46 ■ \$6.30

A thin, box-pressed cigar with a firm draw. Its woody smoke is bit dry and acidic with hints of minerals before a harsh finish.

**Body:** Medium to Full

**BRAND SUMMARY:** Joya Silver is the third addition to Joya de Nicaragua's modernized 'Joya' portfolio of brands, following Joya Red, released in 2014, and Joya Black, in 2016. Joya Silver comes packaged in shiny, silver-and-white, 20-count boxes. The Corona was the standout, earning 92 points.

**Average Rating:** 88.8 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.*

## MQBA

### VERTICAL BRAND TASTING—NEW RELEASE

**Country:** Costa Rica

**Maker:** Tabacos de Costa Rica

**Distributor:** Bombay Tobak

**Filler:** Ecuador

**Binder:** Ecuador

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** October 2018

## TORO

90 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$14.29

The open draw of this well-made cigar produces lots of thick, creamy smoke. Notes of spicy black pepper, chocolate and sweet vanilla build to a woody finish.

**Body:** Medium

## TORPEDO

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$14.29

Tart and tangy, this golden-brown torpedo shows notes of citrus and cedar interspersed with hints of black pepper and cocoa powder. The finish is dry.

**Body:** Medium

## DIADEM

86 POINTS ■ 7" x 56 ■ \$16.59

A golden-brown figurado that tapers at both ends. Its firm draw imparts notes of minerals and balsa wood along with hints of citrus and pepper.

**Body:** Mild to Medium

## NIKKA

86 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 42 ■ \$12.00

This thin cigar with a closed foot smokes evenly. Notes of citrus and cedar are met by wisps of almond before the short finish.

**Body:** Mild to Medium

**BRAND SUMMARY:** MQBA (pronounced em-kyoo-bah) is the newest brand from Bombay Tobak, best known for its MBombay and Gaaja cigar lines. According to company owner Mel Shah, MQBA is an Ecuadoran puro, made only with tobacco leaves from a single farm in Ventana, Ecuador. (Ecuadoran puros are uncommon in the cigar industry.) MQBA comes packaged in

24-count boxes and 4-count gift packs (save for the Diadem gift pack, which includes three cigars). In our vertical brand tasting of MQBA, our panel found the Toro size offers the most character and balance, earning 90 points.

**Average Rating:** 87.3 points

## LIBERATION BY HAMLET

### NEW RELEASE

**Country:** Nicaragua

**Maker:** Tabacalera Villa Cuba S.A. (TaviCusa)

**Distributor:** Rocky Patel Premium Cigars

**Filler:** Honduras, Nicaragua

**Binder:** Nicaragua

**Wrapper:** Ecuador

**Release Date:** August 2018

## TORO

86 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 55 ■ \$11.10

A fat cigar with a belicoso head and shaggy foot. Initial elements of earth and wood are overpowered by a charry, slightly metallic aftertaste.

**Body:** Medium to Full

## ROMEO Y JULIETA

### NEW RELEASE

**Country:** Cuba

**Maker:** N/A

**Distributor:** Habanos S.A.

**Filler:** Cuba

**Binder:** Cuba

**Wrapper:** Cuba

**Box Date:** May 2018

## TACOS EDICIÓN LIMITADA 2018

84 POINTS ■ 6 5/8" x 49 ■ £24.90

This long, rustic-looking cigar has a firm draw. Touches of walnut, oak and spice are obscured by an unpleasant waxiness. The finish is short.

**Body:** Medium to Full

## 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

### CIGAR IMPORTS CONTINUE TO RISE; NICARAGUA WIDENS LEAD OVER DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY DAVID SAVONA

Nicaragua continues to build on its lead position as the largest exporter of premium, handmade cigars to the United States. In August—the most recent month reported by the Cigar Association of America—the Central American nation shipped 16.9 million cigars to the U.S., up more than 22 percent from the 13.8 million shipped in August of 2017. The Dominican Republic shipped 9.7 million premium smokes to the U.S. in the same period, a slight decrease from the 11.9 million shipped in the same month of 2017.

For the year to date, Nicaragua has shipped 112.3 million premium cigars, compared to 75.2 million for the Dominican Republic, giving Nicaragua a firm lead. Honduras, the no. 3 exporter, has shipped 44.3 million cigars. Countries other than the top three include Costa Rica and Mexico, which ship relatively few premium, handmade cigars to the U.S.

Handmade cigar shipments in general remain on the upswing, with overall shipments up 5.2 percent for the month of August and up 9.9 percent for the year.

The past two years have been very good for cigar shipments. Despite pressure from the government, more and more handmade cigars are coming into the U.S. In 2017, handmade cigar imports increased by 2.4 percent to 330 million cigars, the highest level seen since 1998. If the current pace of growth continues for the remainder of the year, cigar shipments will exceed 360 million units, but it's too early to tell if that robust increase will be maintained throughout the fourth quarter. ■

#### HANDMADE IMPORTS ARE BOOMING

SHIPMENTS OF PREMIUM CIGARS, IN MILLIONS OF UNITS THROUGH AUGUST 2018

COUNTRY	AUGUST 2017	AUGUST 2018	FIRST THREE QUARTERS 2017	FIRST THREE QUARTERS 2018
Nicaragua	13.8	16.9	98.0	112.2
Dom. Rep.	12.0	9.7	73.7	75.2
Honduras	6.2	7.2	39.3	44.3
Other	0.1	0.1	0.9	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>211.9</b>	<b>233.8</b>

Note: Totals may not agree due to rounding.  
Source: Cigar Association of America

### RARE 1492 CUBAN HUMIDOR FETCHES \$31,000 AT AUCTION

BY BLAKE DROESCH

A limited-edition humidor filled with extremely rare, 26-year-old Cuban cigars was the top-selling item at an online auction held last week. The Cubatabaco 1492 humidor, filled with 50 cigars of the same name, was sold at an auction hosted by British cigar retailer C.Gars Ltd. for £25,000, or \$31,860.

The online auction, which ran from November 25 to December 2, featured more than 400 lots of rare and aged Havana cigars. Among the featured items were aged Cuban **Davidoff** and **Dunhill** cigars—two discontinued Cuban brands that are highly sought after by collectors—as well as anniversary humidors, Edición Limitadas and Regional Edition Cuban cigars.

But as the auction concluded Sunday night, the 1492 humidor proved to be the most coveted item of all. The humidor, which was released in 1992 by Habanos S.A. (known then as Cubatabaco), celebrated 500 years since Christopher Columbus landed in Cuba. And to honor the occasion, only 500 of these oblong-shaped cherry wood humidors were ever made. Inside are 50 cigars, also individually numbered, measuring 5 5/8 inches by 46 ring gauge.

Upon release, the 1492 humidor cost between \$1,000 and \$2,000, depending on the market. And the last reported appraisal by *Cigar Aficionado* magazine in December 2002 valued the humidor at about \$11,000.

This year, the humidor sold for a much higher five-figure premium, despite containing one cigar with substantial wrapper damage and four others with minor wrapper damage, according to C.Gars. There also isn't any paperwork to accompany the piece.

Other top-selling lots at the auction were two boxes of **Cohiba Siglo VI Gran Reservas**, which sold for £9,450 (\$12,041) and £7,550 (\$9,620). A pair of **Cohiba Majestuoso 1966 Humidors** sold for £8,500 (\$10,830) and £7,300 (\$9,301). While the cigars inside have not been significantly aged, they are quite rare. Upon debuting at the 2016 Habanos Festival in Cuba, it was announced that only 1,966 humidors would be made (just under 40,000 cigars) and each would cost at least \$4,000. Last year, as the humidors began to reach the global market, one Habanos distributor had already sold its humidors before they arrived, while another opted to hold them for sale later on, indicating that the pieces might appreciate in value.

The 1,966 production limit was meant to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Cohiba brand, which launched in 1966. It was one of two limited-edition Cohibas to mark the occasion, along with the even more elusive Cohiba 50th.

C.Gars Ltd. is scheduled to hold its next online auction in March 2019. ■



## HANDMADE CIGAR EXEMPTION STILL ON THE TABLE AS GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN LOOMS

BY ANDREW NAGY

Congress has until Friday to reach a deal on a new government spending package and avoid a partial shutdown. Among the many issues Republicans and Democrats will be debating as they try to figure out how to divide the roughly \$313 billion in available funds is a rider that blocks the FDA from using its budget to regulate “traditional large and premium cigars.”

The provision is being introduced by Reps. Tom Cole (R-OK) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA), who have attempted—unsuccessfully—to include various versions of the amendment in key spending bills in the past. Previous versions of the Cole-Bishop amendment have included a proper definition for “large cigars” in addition to language that changes the predicate date, or the date in which the FDA’s regulations would retroactively apply to new and existing cigar products.

Earlier this year, Bishop and Cole tacked their cigar-friendly amendment on to early drafts of the Agriculture and Rural Development Appropriations Bill for 2019. Although the Bishop-Cole rider remained in the version of the spending bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee, it was eventually removed by the Senate in the final version of the spending package.

In order to give the provision a better chance to pass, Bishop and Cole have toned it down in scope, choosing to focus on carving out an exemption for traditional large and premium cigars. Cigar industry experts expect the House to once again approve the Bishop-Cole provision, but it’s the Senate that could potentially block it again.

“It is critical for all those passionate for great cigars to contact their two members of the U.S. Senate and voice their support for the premium cigar exemption in the current House Appropriations bill,” said Glynn Loope, executive director of the Cigar Rights of America. “It is especially important for New York cigar patrons to reach out to U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer, given his leadership role in any budget conference process, as well as Kentucky cigar enthusiasts with U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell. As always with the Senate, it only takes one to cause a problem, and this is our moment to be heard, in light of the threats posed by the FDA to the entire premium cigar industry.”

Congress has temporarily put off budget talks to honor former President George H.W. Bush, who died last week. The House canceled votes for yesterday and today, and the Senate is not expected to convene until Wednesday, at the earliest.

This reprieve gives cigar lovers a last-minute opportunity to reach out to their legislative representatives. Loope is urging all cigar lovers to visit [CigarRights.org](#) and submit their petition to members of the Senate. ■

## U.S. SANCTIONS NICARAGUAN LEADERS—CIGARS UNAFFECTED

BY DAVID SAVONA

President Trump has signed an executive order sanctioning Rosario Maria Murillo De Ortega, Nicaragua’s vice president, as well as national security adviser Nestor Moncada Lau, after months of violence and unrest in the Central American nation.

“The Ortega regime’s systematic dismantling and undermining of democratic institutions and the rule of law, its use of indiscriminate violence and repressive tactics against civilians, as well as its corruption leading to the destabilization of Nicaragua’s economy,” wrote President Trump in his executive order, “constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”

Violence erupted in Nicaragua in April when the Ortega Administration announced sweeping changes to the country’s social security system, sparking protests and a brutal crackdown. According to various news reports, more than 350 people have been killed in the violence.

The order, signed on November 27, prohibits Murillo, who is the wife of Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega, and Moncada from conducting business with the U.S. and from removing any assets they have here.

President Trump also called for elections in Nicaragua “to give the Nicaraguan people a true voice and vote in their future.”

The move does not appear to have any impact on cigar shipments from Nicaragua, the world’s leading producer of handmade cigars. In 2017, it shipped 148 million cigars to the U.S., 45 percent of the 330 million shipped that year, more than any other producer.

Cigarmakers interviewed by *Cigar Insider* said they do not expect the sanctions to have an impact on their business.

“We don’t see a concern right now,” said Rocky Patel, who makes many of his cigars in Estelí, Nicaragua at his TaviCusa factory. While there was a time earlier in the year when roadblocks and protests made shipping problematic, he said that business has been operating as normal for some time now, with materials coming in for cigarmaking and cigars leaving the country.



“We don’t see any implications in our business with these sanctions,” said Nestor Andrés Plasencia, one of the larger cigarmakers and tobacco growers in Nicaragua. “There is nothing so far regarding trade between both countries.”

Shipments of Nicaraguan cigars have remained strong throughout 2018 despite the violence. In the first three quarters of 2018, shipments were up nearly 14 percent over 2017 levels.

“Things can turn on a dime,” said Patel. “Let’s hope they don’t.” ■

## FOUNDATION CIGAR SHIPS NEW TABERNACLE

BY DAVID CLOUGH

The follow-up project to Foundation Cigar Co.’s **The Tabernacle** is now shipping to retailers. The **Tabernacle Havana Seed CT No. 142** is a modified version of the original Tabernacle, released in 2016. Brand owner Nick Melillo says the new line is named after the tobacco seed varietal used for the wrapper, which is grown in the Connecticut River Valley.

“This Cuban-seed wrapper grown in Connecticut has been in fermentation for three years and is finally ready for release,” Melillo told *Cigar Insider*. “We only have about 200 boxes of each size to start because the rest are still aging, which will be ready in January.”

Blending The Tabernacle Havana Seed CT No. 142 was a passion project for Melillo, and he says it took three years to perfect. The wrapper, he explains, was particularly difficult and time consuming to ferment.

“This wrapper is incredibly oily, unique and flavorful,” Melillo said. “It is one of the most difficult wrappers to ferment in my opinion but the end result is well worth it. The wrapper is much thinner than broadleaf but due to



the tremendous amount of *grasa* on the leaf, as we say in Estelí, or fat on the leaf—it takes a considerable amount of time to cure.”

Under the wrapper lies another dark leaf, Mexican San Andrés binder. The filler is from Nicaragua’s Estelí and Jalapa regions, along with a bit of Honduran tobacco from Jamastran. The cigar is shipping in four sizes: Toro, measuring 6 inches by 52 ring gauge (\$11.50); Robusto, at 5 by 50 (\$10.50); Corona, 5 1/4 by 46 (\$9.00); and Double Corona, at 7 by 54 (\$12.00). The cigars come packaged in 24-count boxes.

The Tabernacle Havana Seed CT No. 142 is rolled for Melillo at Tabacalera A.J. Fernandez Cigars de Nicaragua in Estelí, Nicaragua. ■

## BESPOKE SMOKES FROM BOOTH

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Known for his modern jewelry and **Room101** cigar brand, Matt Booth is now making small batches of customized cigars for individual clients. This can include cigars for shops, clubs or even vanity projects for people who want a cigar made exclusively for them. He’s called the venture the Micro Batch Program.

“I wanted to offer something bespoke like the custom program with our jewelry,” Booth told *Cigar Insider*. “If a store wants it, I’ll make it for a store. If a consumer wants it, I’ll do that as well.”

But Booth insists that he is not making house brands for cigar shops. “That’s not the way I want to position it. I really enjoy the customization of making individual pieces in my jewelry business and that’s what I’m trying to do here with cigars.”

The minimum commitment to have bespoke smokes made under Booth’s Micro Batch Program is 2,000 cigars. They will be produced in the Dominican Republic at the William Ventura factory, where some of his other cigar brands such as **Room101 Farce** are currently manufactured.

All Micro Batch cigars have room for the client’s custom emblem, symbol or name, and each comes wrapped in black paper with a “Booth Skull” emblem to show that it’s part of Booth’s bespoke series.

“This is what I love in jewelry,” Booth added. “Sitting down and making something people want.” ■



## TOP 25 COUNTDOWN BEGINS

The clock is ticking down, and soon the best cigars of the year will be revealed. In less than two weeks, the first of *Cigar Aficionado's* Top 25 Cigars of 2018 will be announced at [cigaraficionado.com](http://cigaraficionado.com).

The reveal begins with the Best Buy list, which goes public on Friday, December 14. This ever-popular list showcases high-scoring cigars that have reasonable prices, \$6 or less per cigar before taxes.

On Monday, December 17, cigars 10, 9 and 8 go live, followed by cigars 7, 6 and 5 on Tuesday the 18th and cigars 4, 3 and 2 on December 19. On Thursday, December 20, we will reveal the Cigar of the Year.

On Friday December 21, cigars 11 through 25 will go live.

*Cigar Aficionado* has named 14 Cigars of the Year in its history. Seven have come from Nicaragua, three each from the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and one from Honduras. The Fuentes, Garcias and Padróns are the only companies to win multiple times, with Padrón holding the record of having been named Cigar of the Year three times. ■

### THE WINNERS CIRCLE

#### CIGAR AFICIONADO'S CIGARS OF THE YEAR

YEAR	CIGAR	COUNTRY	RATING
2004	Padrón Serie 1926 40th Anniversary	Nicaragua	93
2005	Fuente Fuente OpusX Double Corona	Dom. Rep.	95
2006	Bolivar Royal Corona	Cuba	94
2007	Padrón Serie 1926 No. 9	Nicaragua	97
2008	Casa Magna Colorado Robusto	Nicaragua	93
2009	Padrón Family Reserve No. 45 Maduro	Nicaragua	95
2010	Cohiba Behike BHK 52	Cuba	97
2011	Alec Bradley Prensado Churchill	Honduras	96
2012	Flor de Las Antillas Toro	Nicaragua	96
2013	Montecristo No. 2	Cuba	96
2014	Oliva Serie V Melanio Figurado	Nicaragua	96
2015	My Father Le Bijou 1922 Torpedo Box Pressed	Nicaragua	97
2016	La Flor Dominicana Andalusian Bull	Dom. Rep.	96
2017	Arturo Fuente Don Carlos Eye of the Shark	Dom. Rep.	97
2018	To be revealed December 20 at <a href="http://CigarAficionado.com">CigarAficionado.com</a>		



Source: *Cigar Aficionado*

## MIXED RESULTS FOR RECENT EDICIÓN LIMITADAS

BY DAVID SAVONA

Cuba's annual trio of limited-edition smokes is beloved by consumers, but recent offerings are delivering mixed results in terms of ratings. *Cigar Insider* rated the first 2018 Edición Limitada, the **Romeo y Julieta** Tacos EL 2018, in this issue (see page three) and it scored an underwhelming 84 points in a blind tasting.

Last year's **Punch** Regios de Punch Edición Limitada 2017 also scored 84 points. The two scores are the lowest ever given by *Cigar Aficionado* or *Cigar Insider* for a Cuban Edición Limitada.

Other recent ELs have been quite good, by comparison. The **Cohiba** Talismán Edición Limitada 2017 scored 91 points, the **Partagás** Serie No. 1 Edición Limitada 2017 scored 90 points and all three 2016 ELs scored in the 90s—the **Trinidad** Topes (92), **Romeo y Julieta** Capuletos (91) and **Montecristo** Dantés (90).

Like many new Cuban cigars, the Edición Limitadas tend to come to market rather late. The **Bolivar** Soberano EL 2018 made its market debut in late November, and will be rated soon. The **H. Upmann** Propios EL 2018 still hasn't shown up on store shelves. ■

## CIGARMAKER JOSÉ OLIVA ELECTED HOUSE SPEAKER IN FLORIDA

BY BLAKE DROESCH

José Oliva is now the presiding member of the Florida House of Representatives. The cigar-maker and CEO of Oliva Cigar Co., who has served as a Florida State Representative since 2011, was elected Speaker of the House last month. During a brief address, Rep. Oliva laid out his vision for easing government regulations, seeking “to remove the countless and unnecessary barriers to prosperity, to opportunity and to freedom.”

Rep. Oliva, a Republican representing Florida's 110th district, was elected to the position after his party retained control of the House in the midterm elections. He was sworn in on November 20 and will serve as the 101st Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives until 2020.

Before entering Florida politics, Oliva worked full-time in the family cigar business. Oliva Cigar Co. was founded



ASSOCIATED PRESS



in 1995 by his father, Gilberto Sr., and brother Gilberto Jr., but the family has a tobacco-growing history that dates back to Cuba in the late-1800s.

In 2010, José Oliva was an up-and-coming cigar industry executive, heading sales for Oliva Cigar Co. and serving as the de facto face of the company. But it would not be long until he embarked on a second career, this time in Florida state politics. Oliva won a special primary election in 2011, which earned him the chance to fill a vacant seat in the Florida House. He then went on to win the general election and has served as a State Representative for the last seven years.

During his time in office, Rep. Oliva has maintained an active position with Oliva Cigar Co., which in the past five years has seen growth, accolades and a high-profile acquisition. In 2012, the company announced the creation of its **Oliva Serie V Melanio** brand and, two years later, the Figurado size was named *Cigar Aficionado's* Cigar of the Year. In 2016, Oliva was purchased by J. Cortès Cigars N.V., a Belgian company that specializes in machine-made cigars.

According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, dozens of family members attended the swearing-in ceremony for José Oliva, including his mother, Carmen. Florida's next legislative session begins March 5, 2019. ■



## NEW WAND LIGHTER FROM S.T. DUPONT

BY DAVID CLOUGH

Just in time for the holiday season, luxury accessories maker S.T. Dupont has launched a new table-top lighter designed not only for toasting cigars, but lighting up barbecues, fireplaces, candles and any occasion that brings people together. It's called The Wand, and it's a slender torch-flame lighter measuring more than seven inches long—meant to bring a stylish touch to hard-to-reach combustibles.

S.T. Dupont The Wand is available in six finishes: Black Lacquer and Chrome (\$214); White Lacquer and Gold (\$214); Brushed Chrome (\$240); Brushed Gold (\$240); Blue Lacquer and Chrome (\$214), and Red Waves Lacquer and Chrome (\$214). The lighter is fueled by butane and produces a powerful, fan-like blue torch flame. The Wand is driven by a thumb-press ignition button engraved with the S.T. Dupont logo, similar to the company's Minijet and Maxijet lighters.

The Wand has two-year warranty and is available in retail stores now. ■

## CIGAR AFICIONADO'S BIG SMOKE 2019 SCHEDULE

March 23

HOLLYWOOD, FL

SEMINOLE HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO

November 15-17

LAS VEGAS, NV

THE MIRAGE

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

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW**

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

## IN THE NEXT CIGAR INSIDER

The ultimate buying guide to cigars—*Cigar Insider's* Year in Review, with analysis by country, brand and much more.

➔ Your Next *CIGAR INSIDER* Arrives on Tuesday, Dec. 18.

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