

Cigar Insider

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FEATURED CIGAR

DIAMOND CROWN JULIUS CAESER PYRAMID

DOM. REP. ■ PRICE: \$17.30 ■ BODY: MED. TO FULL

For a full tasting, see page two.



93

POINTS

BEST CIGARS THIS ISSUE

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NEW YORK TAX RELIEF?

ONE OF THE LARGEST CIGAR MARKETS IN THE U.S.

is under seige due to a prohibitively high state tax. A new measure, a move to cap the tax on cigars at \$1, could bring much needed relief to the tobacconists of New York State and put some cash back in the pockets of consumers. See page six.



COUNTERFEIT ALERT—FAKE COHIBA BEHIKES

THE HOTTEST CIGARS IN THE WORLD ARE UNDER FIRE.

The Cohiba Behike BHK trio of cigars has been on sale for more than a year, and the BHK 52 was named *Cigar Aficionado's* Cigar of the Year in January, but their complex cigar bands (each one has two holograms) and luxe packaging have limited the impact of counterfeiters. Early attempts were packed in bundles, the bands regular Cohiba bands. But now we have found fakes attempting to mimic not only the bands but the boxes. To view videos of how the fake cigars (pictured, far left) compared to the real visit www.cigaraficionado.com.

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TASTING REPORT

DIAMOND CROWN JULIUS CAESER

NEW RELEASE—VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia.

Distributor: Fuente & Newman Premium Cigars Ltd.

Filler: Dom. Rep.

Binder: Dom. Rep.

Wrapper: Ecuador

Release Date: December 2010

PYRAMID

93 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 52 ■ \$17.30 ■ HUMIDOR SELECTION
Lots of rich, coffee-laden smoke layers the palate with each puff. The bold coffee is balanced by sweet and spicy woody flavors and a savory finish.

Body: Medium to Full

CHURCHILL

90 POINTS ■ 7 1/4" x 52 ■ \$15.80

An attractive cigar with a reddish-brown wrapper and well-made cap. The overall flavor profile is well rounded with a palate of wood, nuts, orange peel and cedar.

Body: Medium

ROBUSTO

89 POINTS ■ 4 3/4" x 52 ■ \$10.80

This well-made cigar burns a bit unevenly, but imparts a cedary smoke with coffee bean flavors and earth notes on the aftertaste.

Body: Medium

TORO

88 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$13.30

Covered in a veiny wrapper, this cigar burns a bit unevenly, though draws well, offering a woody and earthy smoke with minerality on the finish.

Body: Medium

BRAND SUMMARY: Made by the Fuente family in the Dominican Republic, the Diamond Crown Julius Caesar was released last year specifically for Diamond Crown branded lounges. As

of the first of June, the brand is now available to appointed retailers as well. Note, the Caesar is misspelled, as this is how the company founder spelled his name. Stronger than traditional Diamond Crown cigars, the standout here is the Pyramid, a cigar that scored 92 points.

Average Rating: 90.0 points

MACANUDO CRÜ ROYALE

VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: General Cigar Dominicana

Distributor: General Cigar Co.

Filler: Nicaragua, Dom. Rep., Brazil

Binder: Dom. Rep.

Wrapper: Ecuador

Release Date: October 2010

ROBUSTO

88 POINTS ■ 5" x 50 ■ \$5.79

The wrapper of this robusto is dark and a bit rustic. The smoke is meaty without being overpowering and delivers some chocolate notes and a chewy finish.

Body: Medium

GIGANTE

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 60 ■ \$6.99

Very thick with a slightly firm draw. Flavors are a bit muddled, especially on the second half of the cigar, and range from creamy and sweet to herbal and stemmy.

Body: Medium

LONSDALE

87 POINTS ■ 6 1/2" x 42 ■ \$5.79

A dark, oily lonsdale with a full draw and dead-even burn. Initial puffs are dry and herbal, but the cigar eventually takes on sweet wood, fruit and some licorice notes.

Body: Medium

TORO

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 54 ■ \$6.49

Thick and dark with an easy draw and semi-even burn. Cedary flavors carry some floral notes for a sweet-and-sour smoke.

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.*

BRAND SUMMARY: General looked at its Macanudo portfolio and found a gap—it needed a medium-strength cigar. Macanudo Crü Royale is far stronger than Macanudo Café but not as powerful as Macanudo 1968, and it has several tobaccos not seen in traditional Macanudos. This vertical tasting was very consistent.
Average Rating: 87.3 points

PUNCH RARE COROJO

NEW SIZE

Country: Honduras

Maker: HATSA (Honduras American Tabaco S.A.)

Distributor: General Cigar Co.

Filler: Honduras, Nicaragua, Dom. Rep.

Binder: U.S.A./Conn. Broadleaf

Wrapper: U.S.A./Connecticut

Release Date: April 2011

10TH ANNIVERSARY

88 POINTS ■ 5 1/2" x 50 ■ \$6.50

Box-pressed and toothy with a draw that could be more substantial. This is a primarily woody-tasting cigar with some dry nutty notes and a walnut finish.

Body: Medium

AVO UVEZIAN

NEW SIZE

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: OK Cigars

Distributor: Davidoff of Geneva (FL) Inc.

Filler: Dom. Rep.

Binder: Peru

Wrapper: Dom. Rep.

Release Date: March 2011

85TH

86 POINTS ■ 6 5/8" x 50 ■ \$17.50

Initial puffs of this double-tapered figurado start a bit musty, but flavors turn woody and wheaty with some orange peel on the finish.

Body: Medium

ILLUSIONE SINGULARE 2010

NEW SIZE

Country: Honduras

Maker: Fabrica de Tabacos Raices Cubanas S. de R.L.

Distributor: Illusione Cigars

Filler: Nicaragua

Binder: Nicaragua

Wrapper: Nicaragua

Release Date: August 2010

PHANTOM

90 POINTS ■ 6" x 50 ■ \$12.00

A great-looking smoke with plenty of leather and black peppercorn notes. There is a touch of dryness on the finish, but well balanced overall.

Body: Medium

POR LARRAÑAGA

NEW SIZE

Country: Cuba

Maker: N/A

Distributor: Habanos S.A. via Pacific Cigar Ltd.

Filler: Cuba

Binder: Cuba

Wrapper: Cuba

Release Date: March 2011

ENCANTOS EXCLUSIVO ASIA PACÍFICO

88 POINTS ■ 6 3/4" x 43 ■ HK\$193

Solidly rolled in a light wrapper, this slender smoke has a firm draw, delivering toasty, oaky flavors with a touch of tartness on the finish.

Body: Mild to Medium

Have a comment about **Cigar Insider**?
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 Email us at insidermail@mshanken.com.



100 POINT SCALE

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 Below 70: Don't waste your money ■ N/A: Not Available *Note: Prices are manufacturers' suggested retail, before taxes.*


CIGAR NEWS

GUILLERMO LEÓN BUYS LA AURORA S.A.

BY DAVID SAVONA



Guillermo León, the president of La Aurora S.A., has acquired the Dominican cigar company from E. León Jimenes, the family-run company that has owned Aurora since 1903. León, who has run the Aurora cigar division for 15 years, completed the purchase in late May. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The **Aurora** cigar brand was created more than 100 years ago by León's grandfather, Edu-

ardo León Jimenes, and is the oldest maker of cigars in the Dominican Republic. While cigars are its original business, the company has long had much larger operations in beer and banking, and once made Marlboro cigarettes for Philip Morris. The company owns the Presidente brand, which commands more than 90 percent of the Dominican market for beer.

The deal includes all of the company's cigar brands, which include **Aurora**, **Guillermo León** and **León Jimenes**, and the company's cigar factory in Guazumal, Dominican Republic. In addition to making cigars by hand, Aurora also makes flavored cigars using old cigarette machines, such as **Tatianas** for Miami Cigar & Co., the distributor of Aurora's cigar brands in the United States.

The building where Aurora rolls its bomb-shaped Preferido cigars in Santiago, adjacent to the Museum of the City of Santiago, is not part of this deal, and will remain owned by E. León Jimenes. The small factory, a popular spot for tourists to visit, will continue to make Aurora Preferidos for León.

"I'm very happy. Very excited," León said during an interview with *Cigar Insider*. "Now we can make faster decisions. That's an advantage. The philosophy won't change, the philosophy of how we handle business."

José Blanco, head of marketing for Aurora, said that the company would "continue the tradition" that it has had for more than a century of "making good cigars."

Aurora has made several standout smokes over the years. It's **Aurora 100 Años Belicoso**, released in 2003 to celebrate the company's centennial, was *Cigar Aficionado's* No. 2 cigar of 2004, the first year the magazine published its list of Top 25 Cigars of the Year. ■

MONTECRISTO HELPING JOPLIN

BY DAVID SAVONA

The Montecristo Relief Organization is donating \$25,000 to help the people of Joplin, Missouri, who are recovering from one of the deadliest tornados ever. In addition to this donation, the organization will match, dollar for dollar, the first \$75,000 in contributions made by the company's employees, customers, consumers and vendors until June 15.

To make a donation that the organization will match, you can send a check made payable to the Montecristo Relief Organization/Joplin fund to:

Montecristo Relief Organization
Joplin Tornado Relief
c/o Altadis U.S.A.
P.O. Box 407179
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33340-7166

Funds raised from this drive will be distributed to the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army and will be designated specifically for aid to Joplin. ■

GURKHA NAMES GARY HYAMS PRESIDENT, C.E.O. OF COMPANY

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Kaizad Hansotia, owner of Gurkha Cigars, has named Gary Hyams as the company's new chief executive officer and president.

"I think Kaizad has done a great job in creating such a unique brand in Gurkha, which has unlimited potential both here in the U.S. and indeed globally," said Hyams, who has been in the cigar industry for more than 30 years. Most recently, Hyams served as chairman of C.A.O. International Inc. (which is now part of Scandinavian Tobacco Group), and he has also held positions as the managing director of Henri Wintermans in the United Kingdom and managing director of Loretta Cigars London Ltd.

This appointment marks the first time that Hansotia has ever hired a C.E.O. for president for Beach Cigar Group, the company that owns and distributes the **Gurkha** brand.

"That title has really only been held by Kaizad," Hyams explained. "He ran everything himself, and that's always difficult. Now he is going to be presiding as chairman and concentrate on the packaging aspect of Gurkha, and that has always been his expertise. My goal is to put a great team around him and bring Gurkha to the next level."

By "next level," Hyams is referring to international expansion (especially southeast Asia), increased attention

to Beach Cigar's machine-made flavored cigar **Cojimar**, (which Beach acquired last year) and more focus on the brick-and-mortar side of the industry.

"The Internet is its own side of the business," said Hyams, "But I am looking to extend distribution to the brick-and-mortar side of the industry. Because of my background, I have always respected the importance of a specialist."

Currently, Gurkha contracts its brands to be made in the Cuevas Factory in the Dominican Republic, and at Nestor Plasencia's factory in Nicaragua. Gurkha cigars were previously made by the Scandinavian Tobacco but that arrangement came to an end after Scandinavian was acquired by Swedish Match A.B.

"Every company can improve" said Hyams. He started the role as C.E.O. and president on June 1. ■

LA AROMA DE CUBA ADDS ROTHSCHILD SIZE

BY DAVID SAVONA

Ashton Distributors has added a 4 3/4 inch by 50 ring cigar to its immensely popular **La Aroma de Cuba** line of Nicaraguan cigars. The La Aroma de Cuba Rothschild began shipping recently to American smoke shops.

The cigar has a suggested retail price of \$4.85.

"It's the first time we've had a cigar in one of our premium lines under \$5," said Sathya Levin of Ashton.

The company's La Aroma de Cuba Robusto measures 5 inches by 54 ring. This Rothschild is closer in stature to the standard Cuban robusto vitola, which is 4 7/8 by 50.

The cigars are made at My Father Cigars S.A., the cigar factory in Estelí, Nicaragua, operated by the Garcia family. ■



Have a comment about **Cigar Insider**?
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Email us at insidermail@mshanken.com.



HOT VIAJE BRAND EXPANDS

BY DAVID SAVONA

Hot boutique brand **Viaje** is expanding its offerings. There is a new shape, a double torpedo, on the way for two Viaje brands. The cigars are known as the **Viaje Oro Reserva Double Torpedo VOR DT** and the **Viaje Platino Reserva Double Torpedo VPR DT**.

The smokes are 5 3/4 inches long with a 52 ring gauge at their fattest point. "There are only a few rollers in the factory that can roll this impressive shape," said Andre Farkas, president of Viaje Cigar Co. Both retail for \$11.60. "Originally these were going to be a limited edition, but I like the shape too much. This will be regular production."

The cigars are made from Nicaraguan tobacco sourced from Aganorsa, and they are rolled at Fabrica de Tabacos Raices Cubanas S. de R.L. in Honduras.

Viaje Oro Reserva VOR No. 5 is *Cigar Aficionado* magazine's No. 2 cigar of 2010. The 5 1/2 by 52 smoke scored 95 points. ■

MARTÍN FAMILY OF CIGARS COME TO MARKET

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

From the woman who admits to learning everything from her father, Maria Martín has released the **Martín Family of Cigars**, a brand made in Nicaragua that has slowly been coming to the market since March. Her father, the late Pedro Martín, was a tobacco luminary who founded and owned Tropical Tobacco before selling it in 2002 to Eduardo Fernandez, owner of the agricultural conglomerate Aganorsa S.A.

"All our tobacco comes from Aganorsa," says Martín. Formerly a sales rep for **Camacho** cigars, Martín began experimenting with blends last November leading to a production run that started in February.

"I had 65 cigars laid out in front of me. Arsenio [Ramos of Aganorsa] made all these blends, and I smoked them all until I found what I was looking for," she said. By March, Martín had three small-production brands.

Martín Family of Cigars comes in three varieties: Ruby, Gold and Corojo. She describes the Ruby as a medium- to full-bodied cigar with a savory palate. Its all-Nicaraguan blend features a Corojo wrapper. The lighter-bodied Gold consists of a Nicaraguan binder and filler bound by an Ecuadoran Connecticut wrapper and the Corojo line, which is the most powerful, also uses a Corojo wrapper with amped up Nicaraguan components. All three come in five

standard sizes: Robusto, Toro, Torpedo, Churchill and Six by Sixty. They retail in the \$6 to \$7 range. Ruby and Gold are available at retail, but the Corojo is still awaiting shipment on account of the boxes not being ready.

Martin says that this is strictly a brick-and-mortar cigar and will send reorders to retailers in bundles to fill the empty boxes. The cigars are made at a small factory in Nicaragua called TABSA. ■

DAVIDOFF EXPANDS PURO D'ORO

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

The Davidoff Puro d'Oro line has received a new size: the Eminentes. The 6 1/4 inch by 52 ring gauge Toro becomes the largest size in the series, and it's the first addition to the brand since it was released last year.

The Toro, which retails for \$18.50 per cigar, comes in 4-packs or in boxes of 25. Each cigar is adorned with a gold foot band and a pigtail cap.



Puro d'Oro is a puro, made solely with Dominican tobacco and is distinguished by a dark, oily wrapper grown in the Yamasá area of the Dominican Republic. The cigars are darker and stronger than traditional Davidoffs.

Eminentes brings the Puro d'Oro line to five sizes. The Puro d'Oro line is made at the Davidoff factory in the Dominican Republic. ■

TORAÑO FAMILY CIGAR CO. BEGINS DISTRIBUTING GRAYCLIFF

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Toraño Family Cigar Co. of Miami will now distribute the Graycliff cigar brand, which is produced in Nassau, the Bahamas, in the United States.

“After many years of doing our own distribution, we decided that it was best if we partnered with Toraño to handle that part of our business, so we could focus on the production side,” said Paolo Garzaroli, president of Graycliff. “We chose Toraño for the similarity in our family values and because our respective cigar brands will complement each other very well.”

Toraño president Charlie Toraño echoed the sentiment: “We are honored to be given the responsibility to grow [Graycliff’s] distribution nationwide. This union of two very passionate tobacco families will only enhance both of our positions in the cigar industry.” ■

POSSIBILITY OF A CIGAR TAX CAP NEARS FOR NEW YORK STATE

BY ANDREW NAGY

One of the largest cigar markets in the United States is inching closer to a cap on its state cigar tax. The New York Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee passed a bill on June 2 that would, if passed, cap the state cigar tax on a single cigar at one dollar.

Senate Bill 3410, now in the hands of the Senate Finance Committee, would cap the state tax on premium cigars at \$1.00 apiece, or 75 percent of the wholesale price, whichever is less. As most premium cigars have a wholesale price of \$2.50 and up, the cap would make for a considerable savings. For example, a cigar with a suggested retail price of \$5 has a wholesale price of approximately \$2.50, so its New York State tax is \$1.87 under current law. A \$20 cigar has a tax of about \$7.50.

The bill, which has been heavily lobbied for by the New York Tobacconist’s Association, the Cigar Association of America, the Cigar Rights of America and the International Premium Cigars & Pipe Retailers serves two purposes. First, according to the organizations, it would ensure the state a dependable revenue stream. Second, the bill protects the state’s tobacconists so they can remain competitive with surrounding states, most notably Pennsylvania, which does not have a cigar tax of any kind.

“I can sell a box of cigars for, say, \$250 to my customer in New York, but he can go to Pennsylvania or the Internet

and get that same box of cigars for \$130 to \$150,” said Ron Melendi, general manager of Del a Concha in New York City and president of the New York Tobacconist’s Association, in a press release.

A dollar tax cap was previously defeated in April when it was removed from state budget bill. At that time, the Senate had passed the dollar tax cap in its version of the state budget, but the cap was unable to garner support with the state Assembly.

This time around, though, there is a belief among the pro-cigar lobbying groups that the dollar cap could be passed before the legislature adjourns on June 20.

Craig Williamson of the Cigar Association of America estimated the cap has a “50/50 shot” of being passed. “It seems we have a little momentum,” he said.

Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, now in her third-term, has sponsored Assembly Bill 1093, which is virtually the same bill as the one passed in the Senate. Glynn Loope, executive director of the CRA, says Schimel is a strong supporter of small business. “She said ‘This is not about smoking or tobacco, this is about another empty building on Main Street, New York,’” said Loope.

The CRA has sent an email alert out to all New York tobacconists asking for their urgent support. The alert contained a letter for tobacconists to print out on company letterhead to then fax to Assemblywoman Schimel’s office. ■

WASHINGTON SENATE PASSES SMOKING LICENSE BILL

BY ANDREW NAGY

The Washington Senate recently passed a measure that would legalize cigar smoking in a limited number of tobacco shops and cigar lounges.

Senate Bill 5542, which passed May 17 by a 26-21 vote, would set up a special state program, controlled by the State Liquor Control Board, in which businesses could apply for a smoking license and gain the right to permit smoking.

The application fee for the yearly cigar lounge license endorsement is \$17,500, and the state could only grant a maximum of 100 cigar lounge licenses. The fee to apply for a retail tobacco shop smoking endorsement is \$6,000, and only 500 of this type of license could be granted.

The bill was the brainchild of the Cigar Association of Washington, a political organization that represents the interests of tobacco retailers and is comprised of small business owners, employees and customers.

The stipulations included in SB 5542 ensure that only serious tobacconists could apply to become a legal smok-

ing establishment. Employees would also be required to sign a waiver stating that they are aware they work in an environment where smoking is legal.

“We took all the arguments the other side has made over the years and addressed them point by point,” said Joe Arundel, president of the Cigar Association of Washington and owner of Rain City Cigar in Seattle.

In 2005, Washington passed a very strict smoking ban, outlawing indoor smoking in all public buildings, including restaurants, bars and even retail tobacconists. ■

TOBACCO GROWER AGANORSA OPENS MIAMI CIGAR FACTORY

BY DAVID SAVONA

Aganorsa S.A., the huge grower of premium cigar tobacco in Nicaragua and the owner of such brands as Casa Fernandez, has opened a small factory in Miami where it is making cigars.

“We’ve got one roller, little by little we’ll get cranking,” said Eduardo Fernandez, owner of the company.

Unlike most Miami rolling galleries, this isn’t intended as a tourist draw. First of all, it’s not on Calle Ocho, the street where you’ll find most Miami cigar factories.

Paul Palmer of Aganorsa said all the work at the factory would be done Cuban style, with triple caps.

“It’s not for the tourist trade. We’re doing it in our own warehouse,” said Fernandez, who said he has a former general manager of El Credito Cigars running the facility. El Credito, the birthplace of the Miami La Gloria Cubana brand, no longer rolls cigars in any large quantity.

Fernandez said that some of the first brands being rolled there will be made under contract. “And we’re going to come out with one of our own,” he said. ■

A FAT SMOKE FOR ALEC BRADLEY

BY DAVID SAVONA

Six inch long, 60 ring gauge cigars, sometimes referred to as gordos, are among the hottest on the American market. To tap the demand for that size, Dania, Florida’s Alec Bradley Cigar Co. has added a 6 by 60 size to its highly rated Alec Bradley Family Blend line.

The Alec Bradley Family Blend GS57 began shipping to



cigar stores late last week. Made at the Fabrica de Tabacos Raices Cubanas S. de R.L. factory in Danlí, Honduras, the smoke is made up of a medium-bodied blend of Honduran, Nicaraguan and Indonesian tobaccos. The cigar's Honduran wrappers—grown on a farm known as Trojes—are finished with the brand's signature pigtail cap.

This is the sixth size in the Alec Bradley Family Blend line, which was originally created as a cigar to honor his father, as well as the fathers of Ralph Montero and George Sosa, two of the head people at Alec Bradley. The original Alec Bradley Family Blend cigar, a corona gorda measuring 5 1/2 by 50, scored 92 points and was named *Cigar Aficionado's* No. 16 cigar of 2009.

"We know there is a market for 6 by 60," said Alan Rubin, president of Alec Bradley, "but production and scheduling will only allow us to make 1,000 boxes for the first issue of the GS57 for this year."

More than 30 percent of the tobacconists surveyed in the most recent *Cigar Insider* retailer survey named the 6X60 size as a hot size. "Six by 60s are off the hook—it's the new wave," said Kentucky retailer Jeff Schwab at the time. ■

NEW JEFFREY UVEZIAN CIGAR

BY DAVID SAVONA

Jeffrey Avo Uvezian, who entered the cigar business more than a decade ago with the release of *Next Generation* cigars, is part of a new cigar launch called *Rock-A-Feller*.

Put out by Vintage Rockefeller Cigar Group Corp. and Uvezian's International Tobacco Partners Ltd., the cigar has been two years in the making.

RAF cigars, which began shipping in March, retail for around \$7 to \$11 per cigar.

The cigars are made by a factory known as L & V CxA in Tamboril, Dominican Republic, using a blend of Nicaraguan and Dominican filler and binder tobaccos. There are two Ecuadoran wrapper varieties available, Habano (darker) or Connecticut (which is lighter).

Uvezian, whose father is famed cigar man Avo Uvezian (and has no relation to this product) has been involved in the tobacco business since 2000, most recently with cigarettes and filtered cigars imported from Armenia and other parts of the world. ■

CIGAR AFICIONADO "BIG SMOKE"

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