

Cigar Insider

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FEATURED CIGAR

QUAI D'ORSAY
IMPERIALES

CUBA ■ PRICE: €12.00 ■ BODY: MED. TO FULL

For a full tasting, see page two.

93

POINTS

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PREVIEW: SMOKING JOE

JOE MANTEGNA is one of Hollywood's most serious cigar aficionados. The star of films and television headlines the August issue of *Cigar Aficionado* magazine, which also features stories on Dan Carr and Jorge Luis Fernandez Maique. It won't be on newsstands until next week, but to see the issue's top ratings turn to page two.



CIGARS RETURNING TO MORE NEVADA BARS

IT'S A MUCH WELCOMED PIECE OF GOOD NEWS IN THE FIGHT FOR CIGAR RIGHTS—SMOKE IS COMING BACK TO NEVADA BARS THAT SERVE FOOD. On June 17, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval signed a law permitting free-

standing bars and taverns that allow smoking to also serve food, if they wish to do so. Nevada is taking the decision out of the hands of government and placing it into the hands of business owners. The only restriction is that such establishments will have to prohibit anyone younger than 21 from entering. The Cigar Rights of America called the move "the biggest step forward in 2011 for property rights and small business in the nation."

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TASTING REPORT: EXCLUSIVE AUGUST 2011 CIGAR AFICIONADO PREVIEWS



93

RING GAUGE: 47
LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: Cuba
BINDER: Cuba
WRAPPER: Cuba

H. UPMANN SIR WINSTON

CUBA

Lightly hued and medium bodied, this Churchill is full of flavor ranging from toast and tea to rich nuts with an underlying sweetness. A balanced and dynamic cigar.

Box Date: April 2008
Price: £24.60 (U.K.)

Body: Medium



93

RING GAUGE: 47
LENGTH: 9 1/4"
FILLER: Cuba
BINDER: Cuba
WRAPPER: Cuba

MONTECRISTO "A"

CUBA

Nearly perfect in appearance, this cigar burns evenly, but the draw is a bit firm. The smoke is creamy and balanced with a complex range of sweet toast, coffee bean and a nougat-like aftertaste. Very flavorful.

Box Date: April 2010
Price: £39.77 (U.K.)

Body: Medium



93

RING GAUGE: 52
LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: Nicaragua
BINDER: Nicaragua
WRAPPER: Nicaragua

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 NO. 2

NICARAGUA

A rich, complex figurado that is full of caramel, coffee and nuts, with touches of licorice. The smoke gains intensity as it progresses.

Price: \$16.70

Body: Medium to Full



93

RING GAUGE: 47
LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: Cuba
BINDER: Cuba
WRAPPER: Cuba

QUAI D'ORSAY IMPERIALES

CUBA

From its reddish-brown wrapper to great cap, this cigar is a pleasure to behold and smoke. It begins floral with some citrus notes before picking up intensity with white pepper and profound cedar flavors.

Box Date: December 2009
Price: €12.00 (France)

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.*

TASTING REPORT: EXCLUSIVE AUGUST 2011 CIGAR AFICIONADO PREVIEWS



92

RING GAUGE: 52
LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: Dom. Rep.
BINDER: Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER: Dom. Rep.

ASHTON ESTATE SUN GROWN 22-YEAR SALUTE **DOM. REP.**
 An intensely toasty smoke that becomes nutty and coffee-like in flavor as it progresses. Well balanced.

Price: \$20.00

Body: Medium to Full



92

RING GAUGE: 54
LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: Nicaragua
BINDER: Nicaragua
WRAPPER: Ecuador

CABAIGUAN GUAPO **NICARAGUA**
 Solidly rolled with a lightly-colored wrapper and a pigtail cap. It exhibits great balance with a cocoa-powder sweetness, some light black pepper notes and cedary, leathery intonations.

Price: \$11.00

Body: Medium



92

RING GAUGE: 52
LENGTH: 6 3/8"
FILLER: Dom. Rep.
BINDER: Dom. Rep.
WRAPPER: Dom. Rep.

FUENTE FUENTE OPUSX PERFECCION NO. 2 **DOM. REP.**
 A well-rolled torpedo with a dark and streaky wrapper. The first puffs are sweet and earthy, but then the cigar takes on savory leather flavors, rock candy notes and a spicy finish.

Price: \$15.00

Body: Medium to Full



92

RING GAUGE: 46
LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: Cuba
BINDER: Cuba
WRAPPER: Cuba

HOYO DE MONTERREY EPICURE NO. 1 **CUBA**
 This golden-brown cigar starts with sweet cinnamon toast flavors that usher in coffee bean notes. A balanced and tasty smoke.

Box Date: April 2008

Price: £15.31 (U.K.)

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.*

TASTING REPORT

MARCO V PLATINUM GRAND RESERVE

VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: Tobaccos Don Esteban

Distributor: Marco V Cigars Co.

Filler: Nicaragua, Dom. Rep.

Binder: Dom. Rep.

Wrapper: Brazil

Release Date: April 2010

FABULOSO

87 POINTS ■ 6" x 48 ■ \$6.00

A dark, double-tapered perfecto with a slightly firm draw. Spicy and licorice notes turn nutty, but lose some of their intensity.

Body: Medium

V. GIGANTE

87 POINTS ■ 5" x 60 ■ \$6.00

Dark, fat and veiny with an even draw and burn. Initial puffs are salty and earthy before taking on a mineral character. The smoke leaves the palate a bit dry.

Body: Medium

XV LANCERO

86 POINTS ■ 7" x 38 ■ \$6.00

This slim cigar is rolled with a tight pigtail and a rough wrapper. Woody and earthy notes are overwhelmed by heavy mineral flavors.

Body: Medium

BRAND SUMMARY: Based in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Marco V Cigar Co. started in 2009 and has its cigars manufactured at the Tobaccos Don Esteban Factory in Santiago, Dominican Republic. All cigars in the Platinum Grand Reserve line have a retail price of \$6 and are fashioned from Brazilian Arapiraca wrappers, Dominican Olor binders, and a filler blend of Dominican Olor, Dominican Piloto Cubano and Nicaraguan ligero from Estelí. Brand owner Marc Keiser says that the brand is intended for brick-and-mortar shops and will not be sold on the Internet.

Average Rating: 86.7 points

CASA MAGNA COLORADO

NEW SIZE

Country: Nicaragua

Maker: Plasencia Cigars S.A.

Distributor: S.A.G. Imports Inc.

Filler: Nicaragua

Binder: Nicaragua

Wrapper: Nicaragua

Release Date: March 2011

LANCERO

89 POINTS ■ 8 1/4" x 40 ■ \$12.95

An unusually long pigtailed lancero that is dark and oily. It produces a splitting ash as it smokes, but offers sweet wood, wine notes and touches of leather.

Body: Medium

FORCADE

CURRENT RELEASE

Country: Nicaragua

Maker: My Father Cigars S.A.

Distributor: Forcade Cigars Co.

Filler: Nicaragua

Binder: Nicaragua

Wrapper: Ecuador

Release Date: August 2010

TORO

89 POINTS ■ 6" x 52 ■ \$6.70

Well made with an attractive cap and a lush draw. It imparts a meaty smoke balanced by sweet cedar notes and a pleasant, toasty aftertaste.

Body: Medium to Full

For the latest from *Cigar Aficionado*, follow us on Twitter:
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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

OLIVA CIGAR SUING SAM LECCIA

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Oliva Cigar Co. has filed an injunction against former employee Sam Leccia for breach of contract.

Leccia, who had been part of developing Oliva's NUB cigar brand and concept back in 2008 and was the face behind the Oliva brand Cain, parted ways with Oliva in November of last year. Six months later, Leccia announced the birth of the Sam Leccia Cigar Co. and its new brand called Debut.

Shortly after, Oliva filed suit with the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, Miami-Dade County.



JOSÉ OLIVA

SAM LECCIA

"We are suing Sam for breach of contract, and we will be pursuing damages," José Oliva, the president of Oliva Cigar, told *Cigar Insider*. Oliva is headquartered in Miami Lakes, Florida, and makes its cigars in Nicaragua.

Oliva said the lawsuit is based around a non-compete clause in Leccia's contract. Although he wouldn't specify the length of Leccia's non-compete clause, he did say "it's certainly longer than the six months that Sam has not been with us."

Leccia confirmed that there was an injunction filed against him, and made this comment: "It is unfortunate that José Oliva has decided to pursue legal action against me. My legal team is looking forward to vigorously defending these baseless claims, while I concentrate on the launch of the Debut, the first offering from the Sam Leccia Cigar Co." ■

JOSÉ BLANCO LEAVES LA AURORA

BY DAVID SAVONA

José Blanco, the outspoken director of sales for Aurora S.A., has left the Dominican cigar company. Blanco, 61, retired from Aurora on June 15, and news of his departure broke first that morning on *Cigar Aficionado.com*.

Blanco has worked for nearly three decades with Aurora or Grupo León Jimenes, its former parent company. He joined León Jimenes in 1981 as a salesman, working on the company's best-known brands, Presidente beer and Marlboro cigarettes. A longtime member of Aurora's test-smoking panel, in 1999 he moved full-time to Aurora as its sales director. He has not only been heavily involved with the company's marketing efforts, but he has been part of the blending process, working on such Aurora creations as Aurora 1495 and Aurora 107.

Blanco has smoked cigars nearly his entire life. "My father grew tobacco," he told *Cigar Aficionado* during an interview in 2006. "I had my first cigar at 15, but really I started to smoke at 16. And rarely did I ever smoke cigarettes, as it was always cigars." His cousin Jochi is a tobacco grower in the Dominican Republic.

Guillermo León purchased La Aurora from E. León Jimenes in May. In a statement, León called Blanco a big part of the company's success and wished him well in the future.

Blanco, a huge fan of the New York Yankees, made mention of his age, saying: "The number 61 has always had a special meaning to me. In 1961, Roger Maris hit 61 home runs to break Babe Ruth's single-season record. As a young boy and Yankee fan, that was huge. 1961 also marked the end of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic and allowed me and my family to return to Santiago. Now that I am 61, it seemed to be a natural time to make a transition."

Blanco is scheduled to lead a blending seminar at next month's International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers trade show in Las Vegas, and he said he would still do that event. He also said he would be at the Aurora and Miami Cigar booths during the trade show.

First, Blanco said he intended to go on a long vacation beginning this week.

"After that, who knows?" said Blanco, "but tobacco and cigars are in my blood." ■



JOSÉ BLANCO

MARYLAND SEEKS TO REPEAL BAN ON INTERNET CIGAR SALES

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

When the state of Maryland banned all mail-order and Internet sales of tobacco products last month (including premium cigars), the backlash from cigar smokers was so severe, it prompted state comptroller Peter Franchot to reconsider the law. Now, Franchot has reached out to the president of Maryland's Senate and Speaker of the House of Delegates in an attempt to exempt premium cigars from the ban.

"I recommend that the Maryland General Assembly act at the earliest possible juncture to repeal the Internet sales on premium cigars," Franchot wrote in an official memo.

The letter verifies that initial concerns about smuggling and sales to minors are "simply not pertinent" to the premium cigar industry.

"In recent weeks, we have all been made aware of an unintended consequence of this new law on consumers who buy premium cigars from online retailers... While I recognize that this is an uncommon request, I do believe it is warranted in this particular case."

If repealed, the law will allow Maryland residents to once again purchase premium cigars over the Internet. All other tobacco products will still have to be purchased at retail outlets within the state. ■

TORAÑO LINKS WITH LECCIA

BY DAVID SAVONA

Toraño Family Cigar Co., the owners of the *Carlos Toraño* cigar brands and a company with a long, storied legacy in the premium cigar business, has taken on distribution of a second boutique cigar brand. Only weeks after picking up distribution of *Graycliff* cigars, Toraño announced on June 14 that it would distribute the cigars from the new Sam Leccia Cigar Co.

Charlie Toraño, president of Toraño, called Leccia "one

of the industry's most creative minds." Leccia was previously involved with *Oliva Cigar Co.* and was partially responsible for such smokes as *NUb* and *Cain*. (Leccia has been sued by his former employer. See page five for the complete story.)

News of Leccia opening his own cigar company, with a new smoke called *Debut*, was announced on *Cigar Aficionado Online* on May 26. *Graycliff* cigars are made in Nassau, the Bahamas.

Toraño was once distributed by C.A.O. International Inc., prior to C.A.O. being consolidated with *General Cigar Co.* Toraño took back distribution of its cigars last August and soon after launched *Master by Carlos Toraño* and *Single Region Serie Jalapa*. ■

AMERICAN-MADE CASA MIRANDA COMING ON FOURTH OF JULY

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

Nestor Miranda will be releasing his Miami-made *Casa Miranda* series on the fourth of July. The brand, originally slated to be produced by Pepin Garcia at *El Rey de Los Habanos Inc.*, was turned over to the *Titan de Bronze* factory owned by Willy Herrera in Miami. The name was temporarily changed to *Nestor Miranda Americano* before going back to Miranda's original idea of *Casa Miranda*,



something that Nestor calls his "elite" cigar. It's Miami Cigar & Company's first Miami-made cigar and will carry the tagline "A new approach to an old-school tradition."

The cigar has a Nicaraguan binder and filler, finished with an Ecuadoran Habano wrapper.

"We are honored and proud to have been selected to make this cigar," said Herrera, who makes his own *Titan de Bronze* brand in the same factory.

With an initial production run of 20,000 cigars, *Casa Miranda* will come in three sizes: *Robusto*, 5 inches by 50 ring (\$10); *Toro*, 6 by 52 (\$11); and *Torpedo*, 6 1/2 by 52 (\$12). They will be packaged in wooden boxes of 20. ■

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



601's MILDEST AND STRONGEST CIGARS EVER

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

United Tobacco has gone for both ends of the power spectrum by releasing the **601 White** and the **601 La Bomba**, the mildest and most powerful cigars in the company's history.

The 601 White, which has already shipped to American retailers, comes after the discontinuation of the 601 Black brand, a cigar that was also made with a Connecticut wrapper.

"The 601 Black was a Connecticut cigar that was too strong for the average Connecticut smoker, but too mild for the full-bodied smoker, so we had to discontinue it earlier this year and come out with a really mild Connecticut cigar," said company president Eddie Ortega. The cigar is made with a Connecticut-seed wrapper grown in Ecuador, and the rest of the blend consists of Nicaraguan tobacco. Four standard sizes are available—Robusto, Toro, Torpedo and Churchill—retailing in the \$7.50 to \$7.95 range.

In the opposite direction is the 601 La Bomba line, which translates to "bomb." The cigar is loaded with strong, ligero tobacco from Nicaragua and finished with an Ecuadoran Habano wrapper whose extended pigtail cap resembles the long fuse of an actual bomb. Four sizes will ship to retail on June 25: Atom, 5 1/2 inches by 46 ring gauge; Napalm, 5 by 52; Nuclear; 6 by 50; and Atomic, 6 by 60. These cigars come adorned with a yellow foot band and packaged in boxes of 10. According to Ortega, it's the strongest cigar in the company's portfolio.

Both the 601 White and La Bomba are made in Nicaragua at My Father Cigars S.A. and distributed by Rocky Patel Premium Cigars Inc., which owns half of United Tobacco. ■



LIMITED-EDITION CASA MAGNA

BY DAVID SAVONA

Casa Magna, the bargain-priced Nicaraguan cigar brand that took the cigar world by storm when it was named Cigar of the Year by *Cigar Aficionado* in 2008, will soon have a new, limited-edition version.

The Casa Magna Domus Magna, made at Plasencia

Cigars S.A. in Estelí, Nicaragua, and blended by Manuel Quesada and the Plasencia family, will come in two sizes. The Maximus will measure 6 1/2 inches by 55 ring, and the Optimus will measure 5 3/4 by 52. They are scheduled to go on sale next month for \$9.95 and \$8.95, respectively.



The cigars will be box pressed—a first for the brand—and both sizes have been made with pigtail caps. The cigars are being packed in ten-count boxes.

While the new cigars are made entirely from Nicaraguan tobaccos, they will be quite different in style from the Casa Magna Colorado and Oscuro varieties that are already on sale.

"It's a totally different blend," explained Quesada. "The wrapper is a sun-grown Jalapa wrapper, and we have blended for the wrapper. It's a totally different taste. I would consider them a little stronger and a totally different direction in the taste."

The Casa Blanca Colorado also has a wrapper from Jalapa, Nicaragua, but it is grown in the shade, rather than in direct sunlight. ■

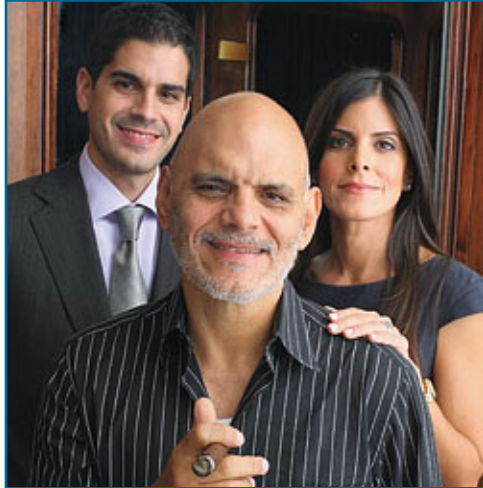
SECOND SHORT RUN FROM ERNESTO PEREZ-CARRILLO

BY DAVID SAVONA

Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, the man who once made **La Gloria Cubanas** in Miami, has launched his second **E.P. Carrillo Short Run** cigar. The smokes are on their way to cigar stores now.

The original Short Run was the second smoke from Perez-Carrillo after he left La Gloria. The Short Run came out in mid-2010, with a line of three sizes, made with Ecuador Sumatra wrappers, Nicaraguan binders and a mix of Dominican and Nicaraguan filler.

The E.P. Carrillo Short Run 2011 is somewhat different on paper. Perez-Carrillo has opted for a Havana-seed Ecuador wrapper (rather than Sumatra seed) while the other components are the same. His son Ernesto Perez-Carrillo III called the cigars "a bit stronger" than the previous version. A non-blind test smoke of the Bombones size seemed to prove that true. The cigar had a spicy character, with an earthy flavor and a somewhat dry finish, with a considerable amount of power.



The E.P. Carrillo Short Run 2011 comes in three sizes: Bombones, which measures 4 7/8 by 50 ring, with a suggested retail price of \$6.35; Cañonazos, 5 7/8 by 52, \$7.10; and Inmensos, 6 1/4 by 60, \$8.60. The cigars are comparable in price to the previous edition of Short Run.

Like the original, these will be limited. There are only 1,000 boxes per size, and 24 cigars to each box.

The cigars are made at the Perez-Carrillo's Tabacalera La Alianza factory in Santiago, Dominican Republic. ■

JOE CHIUSANO RETURNS TO CIGAR BUSINESS

BY DAVID SAVONA

Joe Chiusano, the former president of Cusano Cigars, is returning to the cigar business. Chiusano has launched C&C Cigars.

Following a similar model to Cusano, which was built on providing cigars for low prices, Chiusano said C&C will focus on making good cigars at reasonable prices. "People love to buy products that are better than the price they paid and stores love to sell to satisfied consumers," said Chiusano, whose surname is pronounced "Coosano."

C & C is getting out of the gate fast, launching two cigar lines made in the Dominican Republic at the trade show next month. C & C LRMD is a maduro in three sizes, and Roll Back will be sold in trays and will have maduro or Connecticut wrappers.

While Joe Chiusano has returned to the cigar business, his brother Michael (who founded Cusano) is under a non-compete clause and is not joining him.

Cusano, based in Pinellas Park, Florida, is a subsidiary of Davidoff of Geneva. ■

CIGAR AFICIONADO "BIG SMOKE"

October 28–30

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IN THE NEXT CIGAR INSIDER

We survey American cigar shops to name the best-selling cigar brands in the United States, and find out the latest trends in the premium cigar business. You'll always read it first in *Cigar Insider*.

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