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FEATURED CIGAR

COHIBA

PIRÁMIDES EXTRA

CUBA • PRICE: £33.70 • BODY: MEDIUM

For a full tasting, see page three.



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Ashton Virgin Sun Grown Pegasus	Dom. Rep.	90



ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN

ALSO KNOWN AS ASHTON VSG, this large line of cigars has 12 sizes that range from lonsdales to thick toros to perfectos—and *Cigar Insider* rated them all. They're made by the Fuentes in the Dominican Republic and feature dark, high-priming sun-grown wrappers. VSGs are positioned (and priced) as a premier premium brand from Ashton. Did the cigars live up to the claim? Find out on page two.



INSIDER RATINGS FOR CUBA'S NEW CIGARS THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED NEW RELEASES FROM CUBA

are hitting cigar shops around the world, but the biggest buzz surrounds Cohiba's Pirámides Extra. It's the first addition to the core Cohiba line in more than two decades, and also the first cigar to sport the new band, which has been redesigned to include elements like the signature Taino profile silhouette and more sophisticated holographic gilding. Samples were passed out earlier this year at the Habanos Festival, but now that the Pirámides Extra is in regular production, *Cigar Insider* put it to the test. We also rated the new H. Upmann Robusto Edición Limitada, a size that does not appear in the normal H. Upmann portfolio. See page three for results.



TASTING REPORT

ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN

VERTICAL BRAND TASTING

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia.

Distributor: Ashton Distributors Inc.

Filler: Dom. Rep.

Binder: Dom. Rep.

Wrapper: Ecuador

Purchase Date: September 2012

SPELLBOUND

91 POINTS • 7 1/2" x 54 • \$13.80 • HUMIDOR SELECTION Nuts and sweet cocoa notes build in intensity with each puff of this dark and streaky double corona. Some rich, earthy notes appear, as well as hints of caramel.

Body: Medium

TRES MYSTIQUE

91 POINTS • 4 3/8" x 44 • \$8.80 • HUMIDOR SELECTION A balance of caramel sweetness and spice stands out on this bold and zippy cigar. The draw and burn are both even and consistent.

Body: Medium to Full

BELICOSO NO. 1

90 POINTS • 5 1/4" x 52 • \$10.05

This short belicoso has a lush and full draw that imparts tea notes, some coffee and a spicy-sweet hint of BBQ sauce.

Body: Medium to Full

ECLIPSE

90 POINTS • 6" x 52 • \$12.00

A rich, full draw on this toro puts loads of pepper spice onto the palate, along with more subtle hints of nuts and coffee.

Body: Medium

PEGASUS

90 POINTS • 5" x 54 • \$10.25

This dark, oily cigar is bold and strong with woody notes that take on a bit of salty leather and spice. The draw is lush and substantial.

Body: Full

CORONA GORDA

89 POINTS • 5 3/4" x 46 • \$9.80

Rich oils stand out on this dark and streaky corona gorda. Peppery spices linger from beginning to end, but hints of walnut and licorice add some complexity.

Body: Full

ENCHANTMENT

89 POINTS • 4 3/8" x 60 • \$11.80

This semi-pressed perfecto burns crookedly at first but eventually evens out. It's nutty, toasty and earthy, with a touch of acidity on the finish.

Body: Medium to Full

ILLUSION

88 POINTS • 6 1/2" x 44 • \$9.80

A good draw on this lonsdale delivers grassy notes. The cigar becomes richer, with hints of brown sugar and woody notes on the finish.

Body: Medium to Full

ROBUSTO

88 POINTS • 5 1/2" x 50 • \$10.05

A dark, streaky smoke with predominantly hearty flavors of strong coffee and hard wood throughout. It burns and draws evenly.

Body: Medium to Full

SORCERER

87 POINTS - 7" x 49 - \$10.60

Squarish and softly pressed with an uneven head. The draw is a bit firm, offering coffee and wheaty flavors that leave an acidic aftertaste.

Body: Medium

100 POINT

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.

TORPEDO

87 POINTS • 6 1/2" x 55 • \$12.05

Large and imposing, this dark, oily torpedo has a notably firm draw and a flavor profile that combines wine, earth and minerals.

Body: Medium

WIZARD 37

87 POINTS • 6" x 56 • \$12.80

A woody, earthy smoke with a slightly firm draw. There are occasional sweet caramel notes, but the finish is slightly acidic.

Body: Medium to Full

BRAND SUMMARY: When the Ashton Virgin Sun Grown line was released in 1999, there were only six sizes. Thirteen years later, the line has doubled, becoming a very versatile portfolio with myriad shapes including the most recent addition: last year's robusto-sized Pegasus. The tremendously popular smokes are made by the Fuentes in the Dominican Republic using dark, oily, high-priming wrappers grown in Ecuador by Oliva Tobacco Co. The large and imposing Spellbound and the petit Tres Mystique cigars scored the best in this vertical tasting, both receiving 91 points, and earning the distinction of Humidor Selection.

Average Rating: 88.9 points

AURORA

NEW RELEASE

Country: Dominican Republic

Maker: La Aurora S.A.

Distributor: Miami Cigar & Co.

Filler: Dom. Rep.

Binder: Dom. Rep.

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

Release Date: September 2012

PREFERIDOS DIAMOND TUBO

90 POINTS • 5" x 54 • \$20.00

A dark perfecto with a handsome zeppelin shape. It burns and draws well, showing rich, semisweet chocolate flavor, raisin sweetness and a dried cherry finish.

Body: Full

COHIBA

NEW SIZE

Country: Cuba

Maker: N/A

Distributor: Habanos S.A.

Filler: Cuba
Binder: Cuba

Wrapper: Cuba

Box Date: June 2012

PIRÁMIDES EXTRA

93 POINTS • 6 1/4" x 54 • £33.70 • Humidor Selection The alluring cappuccino hue of this torpedo foreshadows its rich, nutty character balanced by sweet floral notes. The draw is lush and produces a velvety smoke.

Body: Medium

H. UPMANN

NEW SIZE

Country: Cuba

Maker: N/A

Distributor: Habanos S.A.

Filler: Cuba

Binder: Cuba
Wrapper: Cuba

wiappei. Cuba

Box Date: June 2012

ROBUSTO EDICIÓN LIMITADA 2012

92 POINTS • 47/8" x 50 • £18.59 • Humidor Selection Floral on first puffs, this well-rolled robusto leaves profoundly clear impressions of sweet cocoa flavor and a fresh tobacco finish. It is well balanced with a fine burn.

Body: Medium

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



100 POINT

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

SPECIAL REPORT: THE NEW CIGARS OF 2012: CONCLUSION

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA, ANDREW NAGY, G. CLAY WHITTAKER AND DAVID SAVONA

Our coverage of the IPCPR trade show concludes as the *Cigar Insider* team completes its report on the new releases, brand extensions and limited-edition cigars that will be heading to retail shops and tobacconists from now until the end of the year.

for the candy-cane effect. The line comes in three sizes: 6 by 60; 6 by 54 and 5 by 52.

What makes it special: Kendall's first time using Brazilian wrapper leaf.

SPIDER

Made by: Plasencia Cigars, Nicaragua

Wrapper: Nicaragua Binder: Ecuador

Filler: Nicaragua, Honduras, Colombia

Price: \$11.00

Details: Spider was launched as a one-size (so far) line with a blend of Jalapa wrapper, a Honduran binder and filler leaf from Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia. The one

size will be 5 3/4 by 52.

VINTAGE CIGAR DISTRIBUTORS OF NEW ENGLAND

7-20-4 LANCERO

Made by: Plasencia Cigars, Honduras

Wrapper: Brazil Binder: Costa Rica

Filler: Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia

Price: \$9.50

Details: Kurt Kendall has added a 7 1/2 by 38 lancero size to his core 7-20-4 brand, which is made at Nestor Plasencia's Honduran facility. The Lancero should hit cigar shops this month. The same size has also been added to Kendall's 7-20-4 1874 line, a blend composed of a Nicaraguan wrapper, Indonesian binder, and Nicaraguan filler produced at the Plasencia factory in Nicaragua. The price will be the same, but blending is taking longer on the 1874 and Kendall says he thinks that it will be out sometime around the holidays.

HUSTLER

Made by: Plasencia Cigars, Nicaragua

Wrapper: Brazil and Ecuador

Binder: Brazil Filler: Nicaragua Price: \$9.00-\$11.00

Details: A barber pole cigar made with two wrappers, Hustler takes a dark Brazilian Matafina wrapper leaf and entwines it with a lighter Ecuadoran Connecticut wrapper



XIKAR INC.

HC SERIES HABANO²

Made by: Tabacalera Fernandez,

Nicaragua

Wrapper: Ecuador Binder: Ecuador

Filler: Nicaragua, Honduras

Price: \$6.75-\$8.50

Details: Xikar's new regularproduction HC line extension, Habano², is known by some as the

"brown label," and stands for Habano to the second power. The box-pressed line comes in four formats: a Robusto measuring 5 inches by 50 ring gauge; 6 by 54 Belicoso; 6 1/2 by 52 Toro; and a 6 by

6 1/2 by 52 Toro; and a 6 by

60 size known as Grande. Each size comes in boxes of 21 cigars. Habano² is made with a Habano 2000 wrapper grown in Ecuador, which is a first for Xikar. Also, previous Xikar cigars were rolled by Jesus Fuego in Danlí, Honduras, but the new Habano² cigar brand is being made across the border in Estelí, Nicaragua, by A.J. Fernandez, who is best known for making San Lotano cigars. ■

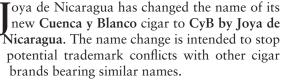
For the latest from *Cigar Aficionado*, follow us on Twitter:

twitter.com/CigarAficMag



NAME CHANGE: CUENCA Y BLANCO BECOMES CyB

BY DAVID SAVONA



While the packaging, boxes and bands on the cigars will be changed, the cigars themselves will remain the same, made at the Joya de Nicaragua factory in Estelí from a blend of Nicaraguan, Peruvian, Dominican and Ecuadoran tobaccos.

"We did not realize there was any potential conflict over the name, otherwise we never would have used it to begin with," said Alejandro Martínez Cuenca, owner and president of Joya de Nicaragua and the "C" in the brand name. "It is never our intention to imitate others and rather than waste energy in a possibly long, drawn out legal dispute, simply changing it resolves any issue. I want our efforts focused solely on the working tobaccos, maintaining the quality of our cigars and satisfying our customers. Our industry is facing much more relevant challenges today that demand our united and collective efforts."

José Blanco, the senior vice president of Joya de Nicaragua and the "B" in CyB, said: "All of us are extremely proud of CyB...We may have changed the name, but the jewel we have created continues to be exactly the same."

CyB by Joya de Nicaragua is the first cigar created by Martínez and Blanco since Blanco joined Joya de Nicaragua last August. News of the new cigar brand broke in the May 18 *Cigar Insider*, and the cigar made its debut to U.S. tobacconists at the International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers trade show this summer. CyB by Joya de Nicaragua is distributed by Drew Estate, the makers of **Acid** and **Liga Privada** cigars.

Cigar Insider conducted a vertical brand tasting of the CyB brand (then called Cuenca y Blanco) in the September 25 issue. Two of the five cigars—the Corona Real, which retails for \$7.45; and the Lonsdale Club, which sells for \$8.45—scored 90 points. The brand scored an average of 88.8 points.

The first shipments of the cigars bearing the new bands and new packaging will leave Nicaragua this week, and should begin arriving in the United States sometime in mid-October.

LA RIQUEZA BRAND GETS NEW PACKAGING

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

It's been four years since La Riqueza cigars hit the market, and brand owner Pete Johnson (who also owns Tatuaje) laments that it's become the weakest seller in his entire brand portfolio. Rather than cancel the line, he's decided to repackage it, changing the format from 25-count boxes to 10.

"It might be more attractive in a 10-count box," said Johnson. "I can't find an audience for the cigar. We did a push at the [IPCPR] trade show to see if people would pay more attention to it. Right now, we're just letting the old packaging run out."



When La Riqueza was first released, the box-pressed cigars came in classic dress boxes of 25, adorned with vintage art, as La Riqueza is an old pre-revolution Cuban line that Johnson revived in 2008. The following year, Johnson released La Riqueza Cabinet Selection, a five-size line of regular, round parejo cigars that came in slide-lid cabinets. The Cabinet Selection will also be repackaged into boxes of 10. Johnson promises that all the sizes in both La Riqueza and the La Riqueza Cabinet Selection will remain in production. "I'm still making every size," he said. "When I commit to a size, I do it forever."

Retailing in the \$7.00 to \$10.00 range, La Riquezas are made in Nicaragua at the My Father Cigars S.A. factory. The blend consists of a dark, Connecticut Broadleaf wrapper around Nicaraguan binder and filler. They are warehoused and distributed by Tatuaje Cigars Inc., located in Los Angeles, just outside of Culver City.

"The 10-count box format is a heavy trend right now, and as much as I hate trends, I want to see the brand survive. I'm doing the same thing with the El Triunfador line. I think they're both misunderstood in the market."

Smokers should start seeing the new boxes hit shelves sometime early next year. ■

NEW AND LIMITED LIGA PRIVADAS IN THE WORKS

BY DAVID SAVONA



Liga Privada No. 9, one of the hottest premium cigar brands in the U.S. market according to the latest *Cigar Insider* retailer poll, will have two new sizes added to the brand in 2013. Steve Saka, chief executive officer of Drew Estate, makers of the Liga Privada line, gave *Cigar Insider* a teaser about the new smokes during a recent visit to the company's New York City offices.

The Liga Privada Único Serie UF-13, an iteration of the Liga Privada T52 blend (shown), is being designed as a powerful addition to the brand. "It's probably the strongest Liga to date—with the exception of the Dirty Rat," said Saka.

The final dimensions of the UF-13 are still in the works, but Saka said the smoke would resemble a long and fat robusto with a "unique" pig style pigtail.

The small-batch smoke will be limited to 3,000 boxes, each containing somewhere between 12 and 18 cigars. They should be on sale in the spring.

The Liga Privada Velvet Rat is being crafted using a toned-down version of the Dirty Rat blend. "It's the Dirty Rat blend, but a little smoother, a little less sharp and a little sweeter," said Saka. Look for that cigar in the summer of 2013.

The original Liga Privada No. 9 has been a hit for Drew Estate since its launch in 2007, but the company is perennially short of supply, and the brand is backordered. Saka described the difficulty of making the cigar: "It has seven different tobaccos from seven different vendors, and it has the most difficult wrapper, Connecticut Broadleaf, No. 1 darks." Drew Estate buys broadleaf by the bale and ships the leaf in containers to Nicaragua, where its factory is located. The company ferments the tobacco there itself, for 18 months to two years. "I still have tobacco from 2009 I haven't used," Saka says. The leaf, which is dark, sweet and earthy when properly cured, has remarkably low yields. Saka said it can take 33 pounds of broadleaf to make 1,000 toros, six times what it would take for a wrapper such as Ecuador Connecticut.

"Everything about [broadleaf] is traumatically expensive," says Saka.

In the 2012 *Cigar Insider* poll of U.S. retailers, Liga Privada tied with Fuente Fuente OpusX for third hottest brand, the cigar brands requested most often by customers in high-end cigar stores. It was Liga Privada's best showing ever in our survey.

AVO BRAND CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

BY G. CLAY WHITTAKER

Aquarter of a century is quite the accomplishment in the cigar industry. And famed jazz pianist and cigar brand ambassador Avo Uvezian is celebrating this milestone with a special release: the limited-edition Avo 25th, a full-bodied cigar blended by Davidoff's Hendrik "Henke" Kelner.

Born in Lebanon in 1926, Uvezian grew up in a musical family and came into his talent at an early age. Uvezian arrived in the United States in 1947, where he studied

at Julliard. In the 1970s, he found himself in Puerto Rico, playing piano in a bar. On top of the piano were the cigars he loved to smoke, which he would give away to anybody who requested one.

One day, his daughter
Karin—five years old at the
time—admonished Uvezian
for giving away the cigars,
rather than selling them.
That inspired him to
strike out and create a
cigar brand, and in 1987
he joined with Kelner
to produce cigars under his
own name. (The brand was later
acquired by Davidoff.) Twenty-five
years later, Uvezian has released this
limited edition to mark the brand's quarter-

century anniversary.

The stunning box is shaped like a grand piano, painted with a glossy piano lacquer finish. In addition to 25 cigars, the box comes packed with a small humidification device powerful enough to protect every cigar that you can fit in the box. And the "keys" are actually a coffin-style sliding lid on a front compartment to the humidor, which can hold a lighter, cutter and a box of matches.

Luis Miguel Torres, the General Manager of Davidoff's flagship store on Madison Avenue in New York, says that the cigars are selling very well. "The packaging is probably the most spectacular I've ever seen," says Torres, "It's befitting of a milestone."

The 25th anniversary is a Dominican puro rolled in the Dominican Republic comes in one size, a 6-inch-by-52-ring parejo. It's blended with Dominican filler and a Piloto Cubano binder from the Dominican Republic. The wrapper, a sun-grown Dominican criollo, completes a blend that is being described as one of the most full-bodied produced under the Avo label. The cigars will retail for \$16 each, and a box of 25 is priced around \$400. Only 2,000 boxes are being released, amounting to 50,000 cigars.

STRONGER FOUR KICKS COMING NEXT MONTH

BY DAVID SAVONA

The makers of Four Kicks cigars have created a new, stronger version that will be available in November in limited quantities. The Four Kicks Mule Kick, a one-size smoke made with darker wrappers and a stronger blend than the original Four Kicks, came from an off-the-cuff discussion between the owners and maker of the cigar brand.

Four Kicks, owned by Crowned Heads LLC and made by Ernesto Perez-Carrillo in Santiago, Dominican Republic, is a boutique brand made in small quantities and with a good amount of creativity. At the August cigar trade show, Jon Huber and Mike Conder of Crowned Heads were in a discussion with Perez-Carrillo when the talk turned to exercise, and the cigarmaker executed a creative move called a Mule Kick. Huber remarked that it would make a nice name for a cigar.

"It was very spur of the moment," says Huber. Perez-Carrillo remarked that he had set aside some Ecuador Habano wrapper because it was too dark for the standard Four Kicks—good cigarmakers strive not only to make cigars that taste the same, but look consistent from cigar to cigar—and the group got to thinking that they could use this darker wrapper leaf on a limited-run cigar. "We added some stronger ligero," says Huber, had it rolled into a new shape (5 7/8 by 52) and the result is the Four Kicks Mule Kick Limited Edition 2012.

The cigars will come out in 10-count boxes, will have secondary bands reading "Limited Edition 2012" and will retail for about \$8.95. They are expected to be out in early November.

"It's a nice way to end 2012," said Huber.

GREAT BRITAIN RECEIVES NEW REGIONAL EDITION SMOKE

BY DAVID SAVONA

Ledition Punch Medalla d'Oro, cigar shops in the United Kingdom have received their 2012 Regional Edition cigar from Cuba: The Ramon Allones Petit Belicoso.

Described by some as the "little brother" to the U.K.'s original Regional Edition, the 2005 Ramon Allones Belicoso, the Petit Belicosos measure a tidy 5 inches long by 52 ring gauge. The smokes are priced at about £17.40 (\$28) per cigar, or £145 (\$234) for a box of ten. They carry the silver



and red secondary bands that say Exclusivo Gran Bretaña. Production has been limited to 5,000 boxes, each of them numbered.

Whereas the 2011 Regional Edition smokes were very late, the 2012s were early by "a few weeks," said British cigar retailer Ajay Patel, who runs the United Kingdom's sole La Casa del Habano.

PROCIGAR FESTIVAL RETURNS TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY ANDREW NAGY

Devotees of Dominican cigars, rum and golf in exotic locales take note: Registration for the ProCigar Festival has begun.

Now in its sixth year, the 2013 ProCigar Festival will take place in the Dominican Republic on February 17 through 22. Billed as the ultimate experience for lovers of Dominican cigars, the festival offers numerous cigar-related activities, including tours of some of the world's best cigar factories, hikes through tobacco fields and the chance to eat, drink and smoke with some of the Dominican cigar industry's most recognizable cigarmakers.

As in years past, the festival will be broken up into two parts: La Romana and Santiago. Festival-goers choosing La Romana will have the chance to explore the Cueva de las Maravillas, or Cave of Wonders, which features wall engravings and paintings created by the original inhabitants of the island nation. For cigar lovers, the highlight of La Romana will be a factory tour of Tabacalera de Garcia Ltd., considered the largest handmade cigar factory in the world. Tabacalera de Garcia is capable of rolling some 60 million cigars per year, and it's where Dominican Montecristos, Romeo y Julietas and H. Upmanns are produced.

Casa de Campo, the island's marquis vacation resort, is once again the partner hotel of the La Romana portion of ProCigar. Guests who opt to stay there will have the chance to tee it up at the legendary Teeth of the Dog golf course.

On Wednesday, February 20, the festival moves to Santiago, with a handful of cigar factory tours. Attendees will be free to choose from a cigar and rum pairing seminar inside the La Aurora factory, maker of Guillermo León and Aurora; a trip to General Cigar Dominicana, the huge factory that produces such cigars as Macanudo, La Gloria Cubana and

Partagas, to both test cigar samples with a master blender and get the chance to roll one's own cigar; a Davidoff factory tour; a look inside Manufactura de Tabacos S.A. where Quesada and Fonseca cigars are made; or a tour of Corporación Cigar Export factory, the maker of Augusto Reyes and other cigars.

Thursday, guests will have the chance to hike through the tobacco fields of either General Cigar or Davidoff, before attending the festival's White Dinner at Monumento a Los Heroes de La Restauracion.

On the final day, Friday, the second ProCigar Charity Poker Tournament will be held to benefit the Hospicio San Vicente de Paul, a senior retirement home for low income elders, and the Voluntariado de Jesús con los Niños, a nonprofit organization for ill children. After the tournament, the festival concludes with a formal dinner in Centro Español.

ProCigar was formed in 1992 and consists of eight companies in the Dominican Republic that make cigars: General Cigar Co.; Tabacalera de Garcia Ltd.; Tabadom Holding Inc., the company that produces **Davidoff** and **Avo** cigars; Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia., maker of **Fuente** cigars; Manufactura de Tabacos S.A. (MATASA); La Aurora S.A.; Tabaquisa S.A. and Corporación Cigar Export. ■

GENERAL CIGAR BRINGS SIX-PACK OF PUNCH TO TAILGATE PARTY

BY G CLAY WHITTAKER

As football season continues to heat up, General Cigar Co. is tapping into the tailgate market offering half a dozen Honduran-made Punch cigars, along with a cigar cutter and bottle opener, all delivered in a package designed to look like a classic six-pack of beer. The pack retails for \$24.99 and includes these six smokes: Punch Champion, Punch Double Maduro Champion, Punch Rare Corojo Champion, Punch Grand Cru Maduro Robusto, Punch

Elite Robusto, and Punch Deluxe

From now until December 28 General will also be giving away one six-pack each day, plus a grand-prize winner will receive

five boxes of Punch cigars, a Char-Broil Grill2Go grill, gift cards to StubHub and the Chicago Steak Company, a tailgate lounger, a game table and a branded lighter and ashtray. Details are available on General's website.



November 9-11

LAS VEGAS • THE MIRAGE

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

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IN THE NEXT CIGAR INSIDER

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