

WEST END SCOTCH DRINKERS

The Companions of the Quaich is Ontario's largest scotch tasting society. Ed and Ann Patrick have over 600 members located in chapters like Toronto, Hamilton, Niagara on the Lake, Oakville, Ottawa, Elora/Fergus, Cornwall and Kincardine. There is even a small chapter here in Etobicoke. The Quaich hosts a number of scotch tastings throughout the year, the frequency of which depends on the size of each chapter. Tasting always include dinner, 3-4 whiskies, and the good old Scotch sense of Ed's humor. Not bad for \$50 (non-member price), while members pay even less. (Cigar Studio does a couple of cigar dinners with The Companions each year, the next one of which is posted in the Newsletter).

If you live in the west end and are interested in knowing about the Etobicoke tastings, give Ed a call at 416 9648180. Ask him to add you to his mailing list and/or give him your email address. You may even want to join the Companions. It is cheap to join, members can attend any tasting in any chapter at the member price, you have access to hard to find single malts, and the camaraderie of members is terrific. "Slainte Mhor."

New Cigar Aficionado in Store Now

The new issue of Cigar Aficionado is now in store and it is loaded. 4 out of the 9 cigars rated 90+ are from Cuba – further testimony to the increasing quality of Cuban cigars. This issue also features a great article on who really wields the power in the business of golf today – it's not Tiger. Editors discuss why the cigar

market is reviving again and heading to double-digit increases this year – a mini boom coming? Plus articles on the Indian Motorcycle, Michael Franzese, the newest cars from Lamborghini and the latest in electronic toys for boys. The cover story features Edgar Bronfman Jr and the billions the family lost over the past 2 years. Poor guy...



Above: Runner-up photo. 4-3-2-1 winners Ed Wojna & Dave Latorre. Sorry guys...



Centre: 5 of 47 guests who attended the Indian Tabac evening at Indian Motorcycle Café Feb. 10. Thanks to Rik and Indian's staff for for keeping the food & drinks flowing. Right: Dr. Tynio, Dr. Strain, George & Jimmy at the Padron dinner at Villa Trattoria on Feb. 19. Thanks Paul & George. We all had a great time and the food and service was awesome. Hats off to Joe Bondi - what's a better cigar for the money than Padron?

Business Hours

Mon – Wed: 10am – 7pm
 Thu – Fri: 10 am – 8pm
 Sat: 10am – 6pm
 Sun: Noon – 5pm

THE YELLOW GRIFFIN OPENS 2ND FLOOR

The Yellow Griffin will soon have opened up a new lounge on the 2nd floor of their current location. Maria, Oliver and the gang there have created a terrific environment with a brand new bar, pool table and seating in a big open room with vaulted ceiling. Full food service is available from their regular kitchen and of course the lounge is cigar friendly.

The Yellow Griffin is on the north side of Bloor, just east of Runnymede.

SPRING, 2003

NEWS

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS...

One of the toughest jobs within the publication industry has to be that of the Photo Editor. That's the person who needs to decide which picture or pictures make the cut for print/magazine/newspaper publications. Often done in conjunction with the Editor in Chief and/or with some committee input, the Photo Editor needs to balance a whole host of factors in choosing which pictures to use and which are appropriate for each issue. Their job gets even more challenging when deciding what to put on a front cover or on page 1 – especially when there are many worthy pictures for consideration.

The staff here at Cigar Studio shared the pain of Photo Editors everywhere in deciding on the picture we eventually put here on Page 1 of this newsletter. We had lots of pictures to choose from, but given our busy winter event schedule – which included 5 cigar events and our 6th Pool Tournament, the winners of which typically get to grace the front cover of this Spring Issue – the final choice came down to one of two pictures. We finally chose the picture you are currently looking at, given that the trip we made to Havana in February was a highlight of our winter season. This dancer from the Tropicana Nightclub helped define the fun, excitement, and tremendous hospitality we received from Habanos SA and Havana House during our 7 days there.



The runner-up photo is on page 4. I hope we made the right choice. Let us know if you disagree.

A GREAT WEEK IN HAVANA

The 7 days we spent in Havana was everything a cigar lover could possibly imagine. Within an hour of arriving in Old Havana, we were refreshing ourselves with freshly rolled \$3 cigars and Mojitos as served from the Hotel Tejadillo bar. That night, Habanos SA hosted the first of several receptions and dinners; the Tropicana was the venue for an evening of first class hospitality – great cigars, premium rum, great cigars, dinner, great cigars and the Tropicana Show. Did I mention great cigars?

The rest of the week included tours of several factories including the Cohiba factory and the brand new ICT factory, where all small format cigars are manufactured; a day in the country where we revisited the Robaina farm and walked through barns and fields of recently harvested tobacco; the first ever tasting of the new Cohiba Reserva line of cigars – a real coup for the Canadian delegation; production and quality seminars at the Trade Show and lots to eat, drink and smoke.

While there were a number of announcements at the show, big trade buzz in Cuba centered around,

- Continued investment in technology and training to improve quality control in their cigar manufacturing processes.
- The initial release of the new Reserva line of product. These cigars will be positioned as their "best" and be priced above the current and very successful Edicion Limitada cigars.
- A huge commitment to the small format sizes. For years Habanos has been very underdeveloped in this category – typically dominated by Dutch and German cigarillos. However given the huge growth in this category over the past several years, and the fact that this size is the most popular in most of Europe, Habanos has invested millions into production, sales and marketing of their mini, club and purito sizes.

Thanks to Roberto, Roger, Alberto and Shyaan from Havana House for playing such great hosts while we were there. To see a little more of what we saw, go to www.cigarstudio.com and click on the Cuban Trip icon.

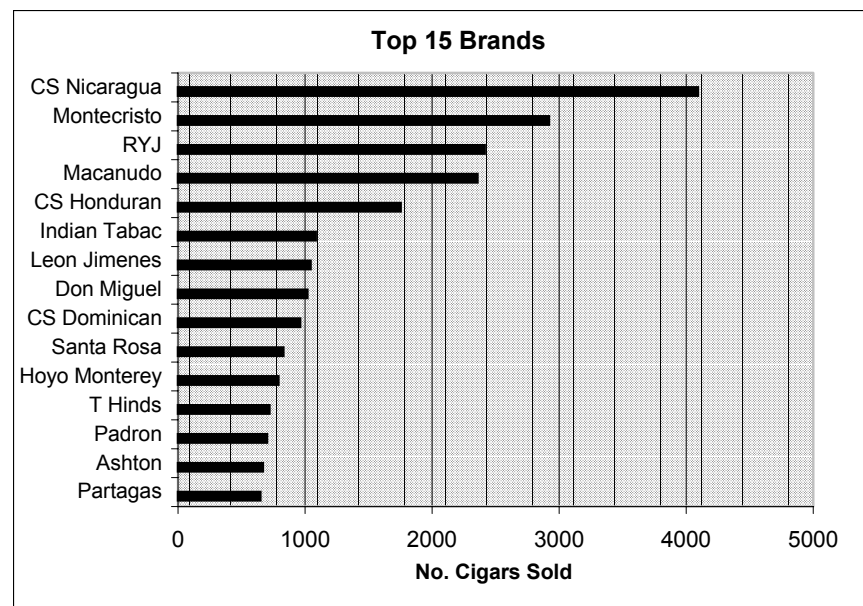
There is talk of a quick Thursday - Sunday trip to Havana at the end of October. If you are interested, give us a call.

OUR BEST SELLING BRANDS

Before you peek at the accompanying chart, guess what is the Best Selling brand of cigars in our store. If you guessed our House Brand Nicaraguan you are right.

The cold and quiet winter is when we review the business and sales trends of the prior year, and put are plans together for the upcoming season. We take a look at what sold well and what did not. What sells very, very well are our House Cigars. By a long shot, our Nicaraguan cigars take #1 spot. They are followed by Montecristo (last year's #1), Romeo Y Julieta, Macanudo and another House cigar – our Hondurans – to round out the first 5. Similar to years gone by, all our House brands make the Top 15 list as our Dominican ranked #9.

The chart is a snapshot of the preferences of Cigar Studio customers. The cigars reflect these different strengths – from mild cigars like Macanudo, Leon Jimenes, Santa Rosa and Ashton, to stronger brands like Partagas, Padron, Indian Tabac and Montecristo. It also confirms a trend that we have seen for years – a customer who may prefer mild cigars, smokes a variety of price choices that can include those brands offering best value (Dominican House Cigar) to best quality/price (Macanudo).



With the passing of the first quarter, 2003 trends are developing.... Stay tuned.

4-3-2-1 UNPLUGGED A SUCCESS

Congratulations to Team Che, Ed Wojna and Dave Latorre. On Tuesday March 4, they successfully won the 4-3-2-1 Pool Tournament Championship by beating out 30 other Teams, each vying for trophy bragging rights. Runners-up were Team Sunnylea Bulldogs – John Baird and partner Rick Gawlik. The Consolation stream was won by Team X, aka Brian Herbst and Eric Kay.

This was the 6th anniversary of the Tournament as it returned to its original roots of the regulars drinking beer, playing pool with their friends while enjoying cigars. Thanks to Joe Bondi at Bondele Cigar and all the staff at the Crooked Cue for helping to make the night a big success.

This tournament is always held on the 1st Tuesday of March. It is a wide open tournament in that no team has ever won it twice, so you can start practicing now...

PRIVATE LABEL CIGARS

Looking for an idea to extend the hospitality of your next company event, golf tournament or sales evening? How about a cigar with your company name on it?

Now is the time to have us get your labels printed. All we need is your company's artwork or text that you wish to appear on the label. We do the rest. We will even lend you a large humidor for the event. Costs vary from \$6 - \$8/cigar, depending on volume and the size of the cigar you choose. Give us a call or drop in and we'll take you through the details.

PIPE NEWS

The pipe and pipe tobacco business continues to be a tremendous growth category nationally within the specialty tobacco industry. Pipe clubs are popping up everywhere, "Granddad's" old pipes are being cleaned up and resold, and the variety of tobacco available today is mind-boggling. The Kingsway Pipe Club is over a year old and boasts almost 100 members. We continue to get a regular turnout at our monthly get-togethers at the Crooked Cue the first Saturday of every month. (12:30PM – 3:30PM if you ever want to drop by and have a pipe on us).

There are a couple of newsworthy pipe events to let you know about.

The Golden Horseshoe Pipe Show - The largest assortment of pipes, tobacco and pipe accessories in Canada will be on display Saturday, April 12. That is the day the Burlington Pipe Club is organizing the first Pipe Show of its kind in Canada. This show is for the pipe consumer and both novice and experienced smokers will find lots to look at. All the major pipe and tobacco suppliers in Canada will have the wares available for you to browse and purchase if you wish. The show is at the Black Bull in Burlington, just off Guelph Line north of the QEW. Doors open at 10AM. You must have a ticket to get into the show. Tickets are free if you pick them up in advance at Cigar Studio (or any other tobacco shop), but there is a charge if you get a ticket at the show. Maps and directions to the show are on the ticket and are now available here at the store.

www.mac-baren.com - MacBaren Tobacco in Copenhagen has recently revamped their web site. For pipe enthusiasts, it is probably one of the best sites out there. Besides providing viewers with an incredible amount of useful information, you can sign up for their Explorers Club. This club provides members with access to free offers, tasting notes, invitations to pipe shows, and members only tobacco tours. They also send out a regular Members Magazine. The Explorers Club is free! So check it out today.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our event schedule is as busy as ever. This past winter we ran a host of successful cigar themed evenings and as we move into the spring, we have several more on tap.

Ashton Cigars at the Old Mill

On Tuesday April 8 at 6:30PM, we are returning to one of our customer's favourite cigar bars as we feature Ashton cigars at the Home Smith Lounge in the Old Mill. Guests will receive 3 Ashton cigars – the VSG Robusto, the powerhouse of the brand lineup and one of the highest rated cigars last year in Cigar Aficionado; the Ashton Corona and its light, smooth, and creamy finish; and the Ashton Seniorita, one of their smaller format sizes. In addition, Gilles and Joseph and staff will be serving appetizers and wines from the Washington State Vineyard, Covey Run. And to top it all off, Jamie Gallant of Oysterboat will be returning and providing fresh shucked oysters to guests. Tickets all-inclusive are \$60 and available in advance only at Cigar Studio.

Vegas Robaina Cigars and Single Malt Whiskies

Wednesday May 7, The Ontario Club - The Vegas Robaina brand was launched in Cuba just over 6 years ago to celebrate the life and expertise of one of Cuba's most famous tobacco growers, Don Alejandro Robaina. Last October and again during our February trip, we visited his farm and in spite of the Fall hurricane damage, his crops were harvested without issue over this winter, (the tobacco from which will be in cigars 2-3 years hence). The Robaina brand has become a benchmark for the excellent cigars arriving from the Pinar del Rio region of Cuba. On May 7, we will enjoy three Robaina cigars – the Unicos, the Famosa and the Familiar. In addition, guests will enjoy three single malts from the lockers of the Companions of the Quaich and dinner. Roberto Pelaya, General Manager of Havana House will be making a repeat visit and bringing everyone up to date on "what's up" in the Cuban cigar industry.

The Ontario Club is on the 5th Floor of Commerce Court South. The night starts at 6:30PM. Tickets for this event are \$75, all inclusive, and are available in advance only at Cigar Studio.

Annual Golf Day and Tournament

Wednesday May 21, Glen Eagle Golf Club. Toronto area tobacco shops held this tournament last year (a Cigar Studio Team won) and given its success, it is on again this year. Glen Eagle is the track as both low and high handicappers slug it out in a good old fashioned Texas Scramble. All net proceeds for the Tournament are being donated to Hospice Vaughn. Tickets are \$125 each or \$500 foursome and include lunch, 18 holes golf/cart, full dinner, and cigars. We are putting several foursomes together, so if you are interested in playing, drop by the store. Registration and lunch at 11:30AM, shotgun start @ 1PM.