

SPRING

NEWS

2008

What? You thought our cover picture for the first Newsletter of 2008 would be a tobacco plant or something when I could show off Miss Dominican Republic? She was one of many highlights we saw during our visit to the first Pro Cigar Festival in Santiago in March.

As this brutal winter comes to a close and our thoughts shift to golf and the ability to enjoy cigars outdoors, we are pleased to bring you an update on the following;

- Pro Cigar Festival
- Bill 164 Update
- May is Macanudo Month
- Boat Cruise
- Just Greek
- Masters Golf Pool
- Indoor Smoking Event!

Happy Spring Everyone!



WHAT'S NEW

- A brand new house cigar – the Cigar Studio Forte Honduran for those of you who want a little more flavor and strength. \$8.90 for both the torpedo and corona grande.
- New Fragrances from Lampe Berge including Lemon Flower, Jasmine, Fig, and Absynth. \$24
- Triumph Torch Lighter from Blazer. \$69
- The Jogger by Forchino, \$149

But our favorite new item is 3 feet tall, carry's a 7 iron, and eats bananas. Drop in to have a look.

PRO CIGAR FESTIVAL

Yes they borrowed heavily from ideas used at the Habanos Festival held in Cuba each year. And no, the first Pro Cigar Cigar Festival was not as large as its Cuban counterpart.

But having gone to the Cuban festival for the past 5 years, I committed to attend the inaugural event put on by Pro Cigar, the Dominican Cigar Association. And without question, it was the most organized, and most informative cigar event I have attended.

I am not trying to take anything away from the from the Cuban event, and I heard this year it was a great success, but did the Pro Cigar organizers ever show off. Lasting 3 days and nights and held in Santiago, the main features of this event were extremely detailed tours and presentations by the big DR cigar manufacturers. And one of the biggest cigar companies in the world, who put on the most enjoyable day, was General Cigar Company, manufacturers of our best selling brand, Macanudo.

Daniel Nunez, President of General Cigar, was our tour guide and teacher. He started in tobacco 50 years ago and I have never met a man so passionate about the tobacco leaf. His care and commitment to the unique requirements for growing tobacco is incredible. He is more comfortable walking tobacco fields and talking to farmers

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MACANUDO PRICE DOWN 10%

One of our best selling brands just got better!!

Effective March 3, prices across the entire Macanudo brand were lowered in our store by an average of 10%. The stronger Canadian dollar combined with more aggressive marketing by the wholesaler and General Cigar in the US, provided this relief. This is a permanent price drop. Ya baby.

And just in time for our May is Macanudo event.

BILL 164 - THE FINAL CHAPTER

For the past several years we have devoted a lot of content in our Newsletter and web site to keeping you all up to date about Ontario's Smoke Free Policies. Up until now, our focus in this editorial has been about the (almost impossible) smoking ban in public places. Since that awesome last night on May 31, 2006, (remember the party at the Drake?), Ontario has banned indoor smoking in all bars, restaurants and clubs. Yes you can smoke in the government's casino smoking shelters, and yes you can book and smoke in some hotel rooms (the smoking rooms at the Royal York Hotel for example). But pretty well across the province, there is almost 100% compliance with Bill 164.

The government's next step to reduce smoking in the province comes into effect on May 31, 2008. Consumers will no longer be able to "see" any tobacco on the shelves of any convenience stores, gas stations, or grocery stores. Basically Ontario is "going dark" on tobacco sales. Understand that their main policy objective here is to reduce teenage smoking and they feel if kids can't see it, they won't smoke it. They obviously have never had teenagers, but don't get me started.

Our industry was (partially) successful at making sure the government understands that the market and business of specialty tobacco is very different than that of cigarettes and as a result, we were granted an exemption to the display ban; all stores in Ontario that generate at least 50% of their sales in tobacco, excluding cigarettes, was granted this exemption. Currently 58 stores in Ontario, like Cigar Studio, have been classified as specialty tobacco stores; fyi there are over 5000 convenience stores, grocery stores and gas stations that sell cigarettes. The dark curtain and closet business in Ontario is about to boom!!

I say we were partially successful as our industry is still frustrated that the government refuses to sit down and discuss cigar bars, or smoking in cigar shops – both of which are legal in Quebec and New York State for example. The fact that you can smoke in certain rooms in the Royal York Hotel but not in a cigar shop is really quite bizarre.

Stay tuned for more in the Land of Oz...



Daniel Nunez (above) gave us an awesome tour of the General Cigar facilities in the DR. The pictures here and in this Newsletter are all from the festival. For more see www.cigarstudio.com

MAY MEANS MACANUDO

Since we opened in 1996, Macanudo has consistently been one of our best selling brands. And why not as this great cigar is a product of some of the best tobacco, cigar production and quality control in the DR. Many of you know this, as you have helped make Cigar Studio Canada's largest single seller of the Macanudo brand.

A huge part of the support this brand receives is due to our May is Macanudo event. May is when we carry our largest assortment of these cigars and we load up on Café, Maduro, Robust, Vintage and all their Special Selection sizes, plus we are given lots of swag to give away. But what is really good news for those of you who stock up for golf season is that this May will be the cheapest this brand has ever been. In March, Macanudo prices were lowed a permanent 10%, and when we lay on another "May Only Price", it just makes sense to put a box in your humidor.

By the time you get this we should have details of our first "official" cigar event for 2008 and Macanudo will be the feature brand. Details in store.

ANNUAL BOAT CRUISE

I apologize for the confusion in last months Bulletin about the date that was posted for our annual boat cruise. Poor proofreading on our part.

It is Tuesday August 12 and we are heading back onto the Mariposa Belle. We will have specific menu and cigar details, as we get closer to that date. But we know the cost will be the same as the past 3 years - \$99 – and we know that will include 3 premium cigars, your dinner, 2 drinks and 4 hours cruising the Toronto harbor.

JUST GREEK

Shawn's favorite after work hangout, just got a lot better. They clipped a lot of coupons but what a renovation as they totally gutted the place. Just Greek is the latest of a number of new restaurants along Bloor. We are big fans of Bob and all the guys there, and thrilled to see so many great new items and wine on the new menu. Try it soon and ask for Shawn's special.

ISLINGTON GOLF CLUB

Islington Golf Club is repeating its successful trial program again this year. ICG is a Stanley Thompson designed course where members have been playing since 1923. This summer, the Club will host the 2008 Ontario Amateur Championships. ICG is a total gem, with the friendliest members in town, the best patio in the City (absolutely no exaggeration), the Club is just seconds away and unlike all the other local courses, Islington is an equity club!

If you have ever entertained the idea of joining a private golf club, why not consider Islington? The 2008 Trial Program is the best way to enjoy all the privileges of membership on a trial basis, without paying the initiation. Simply pay your golf dues, play golf all summer and fall, enjoy all the food and beverage facilities (and yes we smoke cigars on the patio!) and see how you enjoy it. If you want to join at anytime, great – and the Club is offering some excellent incentives to join. But if you don't, no problem. It is a risk free way to play a Stanley Thomson course all year long. Call me if you need more details or an introduction to the Membership Secretary.

LAMPE BERGE FOR MOTHERS DAY

Ok guys, how can you not have bought her a lamp yet? They purify the air in the home, they destroy odors, they provide a lasting fragrance in the home and they look great on her coffee table.

We have lots of lamps in the \$40 to \$80 range. We also have some fragrance gifts packs that Lampe has supplied us with – they are 40% off regular price. And if you really want to spoil her, take a look at the new 2008 collection.

Gentlemen, now is the time to jump on one of these.



MASTERS POOL

Other than my hole in one in 2003, I would rate the Masters Tournament, golf's greatest spectacle. And since Masters weekend is just around the corner, why not join our Masters Pool.

The pool is about as simple as you get; pay \$20 to pick a team of 10 golfers whom you think will win the most money over the Masters weekend. If your team's winnings are higher than everybody else's team in the pool, you win! We pay 1st, 2nd, 3rd highest totals @ 60%, 30% and 10% of all the entry fees. Last year we had 98 teams entered and the winner took home \$1,175. So start thinking about a) which eligible PGA players will make the cut and be playing on Saturday and Sunday and b) which of those players will earn a Top 10 finish and win you a slice of our prize pot. Masters Weekend is April 10 - 13 and we need all Teams in by Wednesday April 9th. Enter as many teams as you like. Each entry is \$20. Good luck.

Pro Cigar Festival cont'd from page 1...

than he is talking to Wall Street analysts and offering guidance. And this was the biggest take away for me; this company is full of people totally passionate about growing, aging and fermenting tobacco. You could see it and sense it everywhere we went. In storage room after storage room, we saw hundreds of bales of tobacco, each carefully labeled and designated for wrapper, or binder or filler. And Nunez could talk for hours about each bale and what made it different from others.

I have never seen a production complex like that of General Cigar. They certainly have technology and system benefits over their Cuba counterparts. Quality of cigar production and manufacturing is what sets Macanudo and other General brands apart from their competition. They test and do a lot of R&D; some of the factories we toured were more like modern agri-laboratories. (The Davidoff factory was quite high tech). Both countries make great cigars, and as you know, CA magazine has been blown away by the taste and flavor of Cuba product. I guess what I saw just exceeded all my expectations about tobacco growing and cigar manufacturing since I had been very accustomed to the Cuba process.

The cultural and culinary traditions of the Dominican Republic were equally promoted. Each night of the festival, we were treated to gala dinners and hospitality, featuring the best of the best of Dominican cigars, food and beverages. Hey I even met Miss Dominican Republic.

This year the Habanos Festival was the week before Pro Cigar. Not sure what to do next year if they are on the same week. Maybe flip a coin with Shawn?

VIRGIL CIGAR EXPO

Yes, you can smoke indoors but unfortunately not in Ontario. Our good friends Bob and Barry of Virgil Tobacconist are hosting a Big Smoke and Cigar Expo at the Seneca Niagara Casino in Niagara Falls, NY on April 12. They have put together a great program featuring cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, single malt scotch and micro brewing samples, dinner, **plus 20 premium cigars!!** All for \$125. . A bunch of us from the store are all heading down so why not join us – the more the merrier.

We are coordinating a large ticket order in early April so if you are interested, give us a call. We are also going to organize some transportation to get down there.

