

## COOL NIGHTS IN HOT HAVANA

February 21 through to the 25 saw over 1,000 visitors attend "Festival del Habano" in Havana Cuba. This is the annual trade show for cigar industry representatives and their friends and customers. We were part of a group of 80 from Canada, which was the host and feature country for one of the most spectacular nights in the history of the festival.

We arrived on Sunday afternoon and after a few mojitas and cigars, spent a wonderful evening in the outdoor terrace of La Ferminia enjoying barbequed chicken, pork, beef and rum all night long. Cuban food is often criticized for being bland but if you stick to the basics of fire grilled pork and chicken, you won't be disappointed.

Monday saw us tour the old city before we headed to the Festival's Opening Night at the Art Museum. Cuban music, food, rum and cigars kept everyone swaying. On Tuesday we enjoyed a full day of hospitality from Havana House as we toured the new Jose Marti (Upmann) factory, and the Havana Club Rum factory. That evening Havana House booked a small club for their customers and we smoked some awesome cigars including the new Cohiba Sublimes before heading off to see the last show at the Cohiba Melia Hotel.

Without a doubt, the most spectacular evening of the festival was Wednesday, "Noche Canadiense." Featuring food, drink and music from Canada, all 500 tickets were snapped up weeks prior and everyone was buzzing about the night. Jamie Kennedy and several of his chefs imported and prepared the entire meal – lobster Caesar gazpacho, surf and turf of caribou and salmon, fusion pear and ermite cheese and warm chocolate cake with Ontario rum preserved fruit. Ontario wines flowed freely as we started with a Carley's Block 2002 Riesling, followed by a 2003 Pinot Noir from Malivoire



Guess who won our Pool Tournament? The runners-up point the way. More on page 4.

and finished with the award winning ice wine, 2002 Gold Oak Vidal from Inniskillin. Cigar tasting included the Petit Robusto from Hoyo de Monterrey and the Montecristo Edmundo. Juno nominated Jane Bonnet entertained us throughout as she was joined on stage by a variety of Canadian and Cuban musicians.

**Cuba did what??? Find out on page 2!**

## HOUSE OF HORVATH ANNOUNCES SWEEPING PRICE DECLINES

March 3 brought some great news to fans of Macanudo and Punch cigars. House of Horvath, the distributor of these and other premium brands, announced prices for 2005 and they are going one way – down. Jason McLeod, National Sales Manager of HoH, says this year the company plans to be very aggressive in the marketplace. "There is no doubt we wish to increase our share of the premium specialty tobacco business in Canada in 2005. We will promote and price much more aggressively." The strong Canadian dollar obviously helped Horvath in their decision. All of their premium brands have been priced significantly lower and are now down 15% - 20%.

In addition to Macanudo and Punch, other

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## HOUSE BRANDS DOMINATE OUR BEST SELLERS LIST

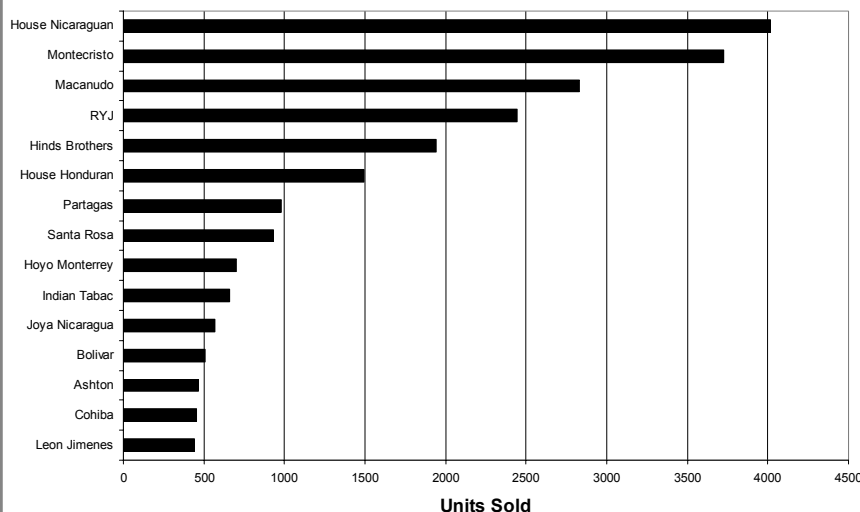
For regular readers of this page at this time of year, you are growing accustomed to seeing a familiar winner on our best sellers list. As it has for the past 8 years, our best sellers list continues to be dominated by our House Nicaraguan cigar. And so it should, given its price and consistent taste and performance.

The next 3 top brands have also been the same since we opened in 1997, as we are sure you are very familiar with Montecristo, Macanudo, and Romeo Y Julieta. However there are a couple of interesting trends that emerge from the chart.

- The improved quality of Cuban cigars has not gone un-noticed by consumers as Cuban brands take 6 of the top spots. The significant price drop in Cuban product at the start of 2004 was also very helpful in improving sales for their cigars throughout the country. Last year the blend of Cuban product in Cigar Studio was the highest it has been since we opened in 1996.
- New brands, and older brands that have been blended with more flavor, can quickly emerge as consumer favorites as witnessed by Joya de Nicaragua and Indian Tabac. The former initially launched with the “Antano” series and later with “Celebracion”; this brand is one of several coming from Nicaragua that have put up huge numbers both in terms of sales and ratings. Indian Tabac has seen some huge successes in North America primarily on the strength of the Rocky Patel Vintage Series with its pressed oily wrapper.

As we completed line reviews for 2004 and enter “cigar season”, we will all be interested to see which trends develop for this year. Stay tuned.

2004 Cigar Studio Top 15 Hand Made Cigar Brands



## FESTIVAL POST SCRIPT: CUBA DID WHAT?

This falls under the “what are they thinking?” category.

The past 4 months has seen the Cuba government implement a number of curious new rules.

- In November, Cuba outlawed the use of the US Dollar, in an attempt to – we are not sure. (It had legalized its use in 1993 to help accelerate tourism following the collapse of its main “banker”, the USSR). This was certainly an unpopular move among Cuban citizens who used the currency to buy and sell goods and services necessary to improve their daily lives under a very restrictive socialist system. Canadian traveling to Cuba must now exchange their CDN dollars with convertible pesos, which have no value outside the country.

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*(Horvath continued from page 1)*

brands that saw big declines include Aurora, Leon Jimenes, Flor Del Caribe, Don Sebastian, and Excaliber. While there were some increases on their price list, most of these were limited to European cigarrillos where the strong Euro has made these imports more expensive.

Cigar Studio moved immediately and effective March 3, our prices on all HoH premium products were lowered to reflect these lower costs. And just in time as isn’t “May is Macanudo Month” coming up around here...?

## SANTA ROSA - GREAT VALUE IN AN OVERLOOKED CIGAR

There is a reason why Santa Rosa makes our Best Sellers list year after year. A firm commitment to quality combines with flavor and burn usefully found in cigars costing twice as much. And the good news is that their outstanding value just got better.

Deep in the heart of Honduras is the Flor de Copan cigar factory, one of the largest Altadis operations in the country. First made in 1964, Santa Rosa cigars feature a mild, nutty body and very smooth taste, which is provided by the Connecticut grown wrapper it uses. These cigars are

ideal for the smoker who enjoys a fine cigar without being overwhelmed by taste that lingers hours past the smoke. A #4, a Robusto, a Torpedo and a Churchill provide a great size range for any length of smoke desired. And 2005 sees the prices going down - again - given favorable currency conditions and better buying.

For those who have not tried a Santa Rosa and enjoy a smooth, mild smoke, do not overlook this brand anymore. And for those who have put Santa Rosa on our best sellers list, enjoy the new lower prices.

*(Cuba continued from page 2)*

- In January, Cuba announced a number of measures to restrict smoking in enclosed places – including some bars – as part of the introduction of anti-tobacco rules. In a land where enjoying a cigar anywhere is a key part of their history (and why millions of tourists visit the country every year) this was indeed a strange move. Cuba receives millions of dollars in “free” health care services and medicines and the introduction of tobacco restriction may have been tied to continuing these subsidies.
- In February, Cuba made their strangest announcement yet as they outlawed their tourist workers from accepting tips and gratuities. Since tips provide a main source of currency for hundreds of thousands workers on the island, this move will reduce service incentives for hotel, bar and resort staff. The question is why implement a law, which can only hurt tourism and the daily lives of Cuban citizens? The question that remains is of the issue of enforcement of this new law.

This defense of socialism and its attempt to further control and command the economy will only hurt the Cuban people. We have made 9 trips there in the past 3 years and we ask ourselves “what are they thinking?” Our advice– **tip away!**

### UPCOMING EVENTS: MACANUDO'S IN MAY

Happy Hour and Pub Night - May has always meant that two things start booming around here: the golf season and cigar season. And since 1997 we have launched the cigar season with our Macanudo's in May event. We will be featuring the brand all month long with the largest assortment of Macanudo cigars in the City.

**Put** Happy Hour, Wednesday May 4 in your calendar as we take over the upstairs bar at the Yellow Griffin (north side of Bloor, just west of Runnymede). We have the entire upstairs starting from 6PM. As you may remember, The Yellow Griffin used to be one of our large “cigar friendly” bars. While they do not permit cigars on an ongoing basis, the private nature of our event allows us to launch Macanudo's in May with a good old fashion pub night. This is our “best value” night of the year as the cost is only \$50 for 3 Macanudo Hyde Park cigars (1 from each blend), 2 drinks and a light dinner. House of Horvath is donating some great door prizes. Hey, you can't beat the price and is there a better way to start cigar season?

**Reservations in advance only at (416) 237-9470.**

## DOUBLE K WINS AGAIN!

Our Annual 4-3-2-1 Pool Tournament saw a previous winning team come out on top again. Ken Shaw Jr. and his son Kenny reclaimed the trophy they first won in 2002 as they defeated Ed Wojna and Dave Latorre in a thrilling final match that kept the rest of the field in awe. These four guys know how to play pool as they split the first two games before taking a half hour on their last match, which ended at 11PM.

Consolation Stream winners were the Jacks 'R' Better team of Jack Brown and Jack Criger. They won the inaugural tournament in 1998 but had basically been shut out

for the past 6 years as their 3<sup>rd</sup> partner, Jack Daniels, was apparently too dominating....

Joe Bondi of Bondele Cigar has been with us since 1998 and his cigars were a hit. Thanks Joe. And similar to last year, **Ken Shaw Lexus Toyota** sponsored the ride home as they bought taxi cabs for everyone. A very classy and responsible move. The Fan at Jane and Bloor was tournament host again and a big thank you to Dan, Alex, and Gail who looked after us for the evening. The food was awesome and their DSR is the best in the city.



**Left:** Sarah and Denise (of Cigar Bodega in Unionville) and I at Canada Night in Havana. The rest of the photos can be viewed at [cigarstudio.com](http://cigarstudio.com).

## PETERSON PIPE SALE

While April should see some warmer weather around here, the Peterson Pipe Sale is guaranteed to be boiling. We have brought in over 50 Peterson pipes and for the entire month of April, every one of them will be on sale. Styles include Pipes of the Year, Sherlock Holmes, Domed and Walnut Spigots, Classic Racing Greens and Silver Caps with the majority of them at 50% off.

If you always wanted a Peterson Pipe, there is no better time to add one to your collection than April. No foolin'!

## CATEGORY 301: BIGGER, BETTER, AND IN COLOUR

Category 301 is the name of our non-tobacco department. Given the size of the store - and the name over the door - we limit this area to a selected number of items that meet quality and style requirements for customers who need a non-tobacco gift item. We have showed these in black and white in this Newsletter in the past but this time we thought a color insert would do them more justice.

Since these items look better up close and personal, have a look next time you are in the store.

## Business Hours

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

[WWW.CIGARSTUDIO.COM](http://WWW.CIGARSTUDIO.COM)



Even our website is *smokin'*.