

Perelman's Pocket Cyclopedia of Havana Cigars: 3rd edition

INTRODUCTION

It's been seven years since we completed the second edition of our *Perelman's Pocket Cyclopedia of Havana Cigars* and we were more than due for an update. The world of Havana cigars has become much more dynamic since the turn of the century and especially with the new energies brought by Altadis since its acquisition of a half-interest in Habanos S.A. in 2000.

Now, we see the same rush of new products and ideas as we see in the U.S. market as covered by our *Perelman's Pocket Cyclopedia of Cigars*.

So we have completely revised our third edition to resemble, more closely, our compendium for the American market:

- ▶ Brand listings identify individual cigars by their shape group rather than by factory codes or sizes. We have grouped the 96 current-production sizes into the familiar 18 size groups we use in our *Pocket Cyclopedia of Cigars*, adapted from Paul Garmirian's list in *The Gourmet Guide to Cigars*.
- ▶ We have added extensive notes for each brand, describing in detail the myriad of limited-edition, special-production and other kinds of cigars produced under each brand during the explosion of special products since 2000.
- ▶ We added a short almanac of the biggest-smallest-thickest-fattest cigars in section 2.

In addition, readers will find brands and factory sizes completely cross-referenced in our reformatted coverage of factory production, also in section 2. We also include lengthy recaps of collectible packaging – especially jars – and special production models.

However, we're not perfect. Sharp-eyed readers will zero in on seeming inconsistencies between historical lists of brands and sizes what we present here. Fortunately, our information is taken directly from Cuban trade catalogs. Unfortunately, some of this information is contradictory, unreconciled and is possibly wrong. But it is official and therefore given credence unless we know for certain that it is incorrect.

We did have the advantage, in compiling this edition, of three fabulous publications which helped us enormously. The most interesting was an actual price list of Cuban cigars with an effective date of January 1, 1959, the day that Revolutionary forces overthrew the existing government of Cuba. The roster of 140 brands actually for sale in that last pre-nationalization price list are included in section 4.

Equally fascinating is the impressive snapshot of the Cuban production roster in 2003 as chronicled in *The Complete Guide For Habanos' Enthusiasts*, produced by Habanos S.A. in coordination with Hunters & Frankau of London. This four-ring binder has leaflets illustrating every Havana brand and was an invaluable resource.

Then, of course, there is the massive *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Post-Revolution Havana Cigars* by Hong Kong collector Min Ron Nee, working in coordination with former Habanos

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executive Adriano Martinez. The latter's access to Cuban factory files makes this book a repository of information simply not available anywhere else.

I am often asked, "Are Havana cigars better than all others?" My answer is simple: "They are different." Just as it is hard to compare a Rolls-Royce automobile with a Lamborghini or a Lexus, it is difficult to make a direct comparison between Havana cigars and those of other nations. Both can be excellent and satisfying, but this is one instance where the advertising slogan is correct:

"Unicos desde 1492 - Unique since 1492"

Havana cigars are truly unique . . . but the proof is in the smoking. Enjoy!

In the preparation of this third edition, I want to acknowledge the essential assistance of our marketing director Pat Harris, the always-helpful Simon Chase of Hunters & Frankau in London and friends Kent Chung from Cigar Time (Hong Kong), J.J. Kaplan and Bruce Tenen for providing photographs.

We enjoyed putting this edition together and we are looking for even more information with which to entertain you in a fourth edition. If you have suggestions on how we can make this book better, we would be pleased to hear from you; visit us at www.CigarCyclopedia.com and use the "Contact Us" feature to let us know what you think!



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