
Habanos Festival returns to celebrate Cuban cigar industry

19/02/2018



Cuba's annual celebration of its cigar-making industry, the Habanos Festival, will kick off on Feb. 26 in Havana, drawing cigar aficionados and buyers from around the globe.

The glamorous week-long festival features launchings of new premium brands, including this year's much-anticipated line of Cohiba Robusto Reserva, from the 2014 harvest.

Cuba's best-known brand, Cohiba was popularized by the legendary revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who was rarely seen without a cigar until he quit in his later years to encourage a healthier lifestyle among the people.

The festival, organized by Habanos S.A., a joint venture between state-owned Cubatabaco and Altadis, a French-German subsidiary of the British multinational Imperial Tobacco, which markets the cigars worldwide, also features gala dinners, tours of cigar factories and tobacco farms, and a renowned auction of custom-made humidors, with funds going to support the country's free healthcare system.

Habanos spokesperson Daymi Difurniao said this year participants will learn about the most diverse aspects of the cigar industry, and tour plantations in western

Cuba's Pinar del Rio province, home to the world's best tobacco leaf.

"It is an opportunity to appreciate the beautiful plantations in San Juan y Martinez, recognized as having the best soil for attaining the leaves used to make renowned Cuban cigars," said Difurniao.

San Juan y Martinez, along with San Luis, Guane and the city of Pinar del Rio, make up the region of Vueltaabajo, Cuba's prime tobacco-growing region.

In Vueltaabajo, some 18,000 hectares of different tobacco varieties are planted each year. This year, production is expected to surpass 20,000 tons of leaves, more than previous harvests.

Another festival highlight is the traditional Habanosommelier International Contest, a culinary event that pairs cigars with a gourmet dish or cocktail.

This year, organizers are introducing the first-ever Habanos World Challenge, where cigar lovers from around the world will compete to test their knowledge about the world of cigars.

There will also be an evening dedicated to the history and success of the festival, now in its 20th edition.

In the past, the Habanos Festival has been attended by celebrities such as the late author and Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez; American actor and politician Arnold Schwarzenegger; and British model Naomi Campbell, among others.
