

# Savoring the Flavored Cigar

Flavored cigars drifted into the American marketplace about ten years ago, with the intent of attracting more female cigar smokers. Flavors like vanilla and chocolate soon gave way to stronger varieties laced with bourbon, whiskey, crème de menthe and Grand Marnier, which drew attention from male cigar smokers as well. Today, flavored or infused cigars are becoming increasingly popular as the art of cigar smoking returns to the scene.

Back in 1996, **Cigar Connection** of Miami, introduced their *Cojimar* flavored cigar, a sugar-tipped vanilla job meant to draw attention of female cigar smokers. What they found was that just as many men were smoking them. Today they offer *Senoras* (ten flavors including honey, rum, Sambuca and Cognac) and *Senoritas* (twelve flavors like mango, peach, cinnamon and Amaretto). The *Torpedo* is the granddaddy of the *Cojimar* family, available in honey and vanilla flavors.

The newest addition to the *Cojimar* family, the *Exotic* line, is made by Drew Estate. These cigars are infused with exotic teas like White Sage, Black Vanilla, Orange Spice and Chai Tea and feature a unique sweet tip.

**Heaven Cigar Company** out of Naples, Florida, caters almost exclusively to the female market, with flavors like Grape Goddess, Chocolate Thunder, Orange Dreamsicle and Aphrodite's Amaretto. They also offer "The Ten Disciples" multi-packs featuring each of their ten flavors and 5 packs, which come in petite or *Corona* sizes.

Marshall Kirk, proprietor of the **Creole Cigar Factory** in downtown Lansing, Michigan, has partnered with **Black Star Farms Winery & Distillery** out of Suttons Bay, Michigan to create three unique cigars in Creole's multi-flavored *Esprit'* line. The *Sirius* Cherry Port, Apple Brandy and Blueberry Brandy cigars are made in the Lansing shop by Creole's own Cuban *torcedors*. These are not your typical flavored cigars...they are infused with spirits, which offers a more defined taste.



The multi-step infusion process is quite detailed. The tobacco leaves are spread out in a single layer and are sprayed with the 80-proof spirits. A second layer of leaves is added and the process repeats, several times. The leaves are then rolled up and marinated for 30 days before being rolled into individual cigars. Next, the spirit is injected into the ends of the cigars, which are then placed in a sealed container with more of the spirits, allowing the cigars to continue absorbing the flavors.

"The essence of the libation is captured during the production process," Kirk said. "When smoked, these cigars are enjoyed by all aficionados."

These "stogies" are particularly pleasurable as an after dinner-smoke, paired with a glass of the actual port or brandy. Black Star Farms makes and sells the Sirius Cherry Port and Apple Brandy at its Northern Michigan winery tasting room, along with the accompanying cigars. The Blueberry Brandy was made exclusively for Creole and it is not available to the general public.

Santiago Cigar Company began manufacturing its *Emigrante* premium handmade cigar in eleven flavors in 1996. Today, eight flavors are available including Amaretto brandy, black cherry, chocolate, cinnamon, hazelnut, rum, tequila and vanilla.

"The major market (for flavored cigars) is women, who like to smoke with their cigar-loving men; and new or casual smokers who appreciate the mild flavor," said Elie Hadden, president of Santiago in a 1999 interview. He reported that in 1999, Santiago's flavored cigars were outselling their regular cigars three-to-one.

"In 1995, the entire cigar market was new," said David Baker of Cuban Cigar Factory in San Diego, California. "Now that smokers' palates have matured, it's necessary to do something new to stay ahead of the market. We feel a cigar with both top quality flavoring and tobacco is the new trend."

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