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SPOTLIGHT: MAN OF THE YEAR- FRANCESCO MINETTI



Francesco Minetti is the President of two well-renowned organisations, The Italian Cigar Club Association and The Cigar Club Matelica, as well as the man behind the Encuentro Amigos de Partagas in Italy, now in its XII edition. This year at the 20th Habanos Festival, he was awarded the prestigious award of Hombre Habano for his efforts on making this event and these organisations what they are now. We caught up with him to find out how he felt about receiving this title and to find out what's next for him. Enjoy!

What is the Hombre Habano award and what does it mean to you?

The Hombre Habano award is the maximum recognition for an individual working in the cigar world and given by Habanos S.A themselves every year at the Habanos Festival in Cuba. For me, it is the highest honor and one that I would not have been able to attain if it wasn't for the whole team behind Encuentro and the Cigar Club Association. So in that sense, I do not consider myself the sole winner of the prize, but I believe everyone who has been a part of both organisations share the prize with me. To me, the Hombre Habano award represents a recognition to all of Italy and I'm immensely proud that I could bring that home for us. I began this journey with my dear friend Massimo de Giovanni and this

award is the crowning achievement of all that we've achieved over the years.

What do you receive in reward for your title as Hombre Habano of the Communications Category?

The winner receives two diplomas, the first for the nomination, and the second titling me as Hombre Habano of 2018. With the second diploma I received the all-silver statue which is hand-made by a Cuban silversmith. The value of this award is great, but its intrinsic value is greater. One that represents the cigars, the smokers and the cigar world, it is a very sentimental award. I imagine this is what it feels like to win an Oscar to an actor/actress, as I am still in shock and so surprised by this reward and the recognition of my work and still can not believe it has happened. The cigar business itself and particularly Italy will receive more recognition because of this reward, or at least that is what I am hoping for, as well as many more attendees at the Encuentro in the upcoming years.

As well as a profession in Cuban Cigars you are also an insurance broker, how did you make this crossover in your career?

I keep the the two things separate. The world of cigars has never influenced my work in the insurance industry. I never wanted my passion to become a job and I don't like it when jobs are influenced by one's passions. Also the two industries are so different that it is very hard for one to influence the other. The Hombre del Habano title will make no difference going forward in my career as an insurance broker. I have never sold insurance policies thanks to my prominence in the world of cigars, if anything we may have inadvertently promoted the world of cigars among the operators within the insurance industry.

You are president of two organisations, The Italian Cigar Club Association (CCA) and Cigar Club Metallica (CCM). Can you tell us what these organisations do and your role as president means?



Photo taken from Amigos De Partagas Official
Website: <http://www.amigosdepartagas.it/it/multimedia/0007>

These are cultural organisations. They are there to introduce people to and promote a world that is much more than the mere act of smoking cigars. Its a world of elegance, conviviality, bien vivre; where we share our passions in a completely spontaneous way. To attend our events, members invest a considerable amount of time and energy and they see great value in that. As the president I dont do too much, because I am lucky enough to have a fantastic group of people who work tirelessly on the many projects we undertake. I act as a putative father to the operations, but the activities are managed by an excellent team who are inventive with ideas and systematic in their approach, which makes sure that the CCA and CCM are always creating exciting events and things are always running smoothly.

Your event, Encuentro Amigos de Partagás, is regularly referred to as the second Habanos Festival. Can you tell us more about it and what sort of things happen over the four days of the festival?



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When Encuentro was born, it was born at the behest of the original event held in Cuba and our idea was to create an Italian, summer version, where friends and strangers could meet and talk about things theyre interested in. Over the four days, there are a number of different and exciting situations, from theme nights which try to convey the pleasure of sharing, through to the evenings which allow people to live and experience the passion of Cuban life. As well as these more relaxed activities, the festival brings together people from all over the world to Italy to hold seminars, master classes and performances which are both educative and enjoyable. This year we have invited 15 Cubans, four of whom are expert torcedors, the master ligador of the Partagas Factory, the directors of the Habano Houses of Habana, a director of the tobacco museum and many more. It's very exciting because our attendees will get to hear their stories first hand and learn about the culture and lifestyle they lead. Attendees will also take part in champagne, rum and cigar tasting seminars and enjoy live music and love shows. It is a truly opulent event, where friends can meet and enjoy four glorious days of pure pleasure.

What does Cigar Smoking mean to you?

Cigar smoking is dedicating a moment to yourself and fully enjoying the cigar that you are smoking, immersing yourself in the moment and reflecting on things, but it is also an opportunity to share with friends and learn more about the cigar and all of the work that goes into its being.

Do you remember your first Cuban Cigar, what was it and can you tell us about that moment?

The first time I smoked a Cuban Cigar was out of complete spontaneity. It was in 1986 when I had stopped smoking cigarettes and began smoking cigars, nothing special, mostly ignoble. Then, one evening at dinner someone offered me a Cohiba and this opened my eyes to the true taste of a Cuban Cigar. Ever so curious to find out more, Molinari and I visited the Habano home of Milan and this is when I realised my true passion lied in Cigars.

You must have an extensive collection of Cuban Cigars. Do you have a favourite Cuban Cigar or favourite brand?

I personally don't have a favorite brand, but there is a cigar that I religiously smoke on my birthday and only then. I recovered a Double Corona Box from Cohiba at a gala dinner in Cuba and since then have only smoked them on the same day every year, and it's become something I really look forward to. In fact, I only have a few left, so I suppose I'll have to find some others to replace them. As a very curious person I think the best cigar is yet to be smoked, but having been lucky enough to have smoked the Cuban Dunhill, I can honestly say that it is a brand that struck me the most, but could not possibly say that it is my favourite. I find it quite difficult to choose, saying that though I do have a penchant for Fundadores vitolas and always enjoy smoking these.

Can you recommend our readers a cigar and a spirit which you personally think go excellently together?



For cigars, I very much enjoy vitolas that are quite difficult to smoke and particularly like the strength in Regular Production cigars, like the Belicosos, Finos and Choix Supreme. As for the spirit (in the sense of mood) I recommend going in search of what you like and figuring it out yourself, because everybody's taste is different and certain cigars taste better with other beverages. What I can recommend is to avoid turning the cigar into an exhibition, don't focus on showing what you're smoking, or how you're smoking, instead focus on the real pleasure of smoking and enjoy that for what it is. In essence smoke consciously and discover what you like. Personally, I love smoking my cigars with spirits, Italian Grappa or Cuban Rum, but I also enjoy smoking them with champagne whilst with friends. I always look for elements of pleasure that compliments the other and enjoy them as best as I can.

We think that's pretty good advice and would definitely pair some of the cigars Francesco Minetti's mentions, such as the [Trinidad Fundadores Cigar](#) with a santiago rum. However, if you're ever unsure we think any of our Cohiba Cuban Cigars go with

Congratulations on your award Mintetti, we look forward to seeing you at this year's Encuentro Amigos de Partagas Festival. We'll be providing full coverage of the event, just like we did with the 20th Habanos Festival on our [Cuban Cigar Blog](#).

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