

DORDOGNE AND PÉRIGORD, PARADISE OF THE TRUFFLE

epicure

PRIVATE PLEASURES, PUBLIC VIRTUES
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THE PLEASURE OF DRINKING

GLENFIDDICH 1937
THE MOST EXPENSIVE MALT
WHISKY IN THE WORLD

THE PLEASURE OF SMOKING

155 YEARS OF PARTAGAS
THE TRUE HISTORY OF
THE TOBACCO FACTORY

LA ESCOJIDA
THE TOBACCO ROUTE

THE PLEASURE OF LIVING

THE HORSES
OF THE ONE THOUSAND
AND ONE NIGHTS

Jack
Nicholson

AN EPICUREAN THROUGH AND THROUGH





José María Cases

The person who we are interviewing is one of the most well-known and appreciated personalities in the world of Habano. José María Cases, Andorran entrepreneur is the importer of Habanos in the small beautiful country in the Pyrenees, and one of the men who has most been concerned with the diffusion of Habano cigars.

Our interview is with José María Cases, lover of Habanos, who has worked more than 30 years in the sector. He has worked hard with the fundamental support of his family, and the award he has been presented with in Havana is for recognition of some day-to-day merits attained during these 30 years.

Question: How do you feel about being chosen Hombre Habano of the year for Business?

Answer: It has been a great honour to receive this award, because it represents many years work as a true professional of habanos, work that has been

very important for me. I feel proud that in the habano world they have thought that what I have done is also important for them, something that I appreciate greatly.

Q: What does your family think about it?

A: We are very pleased. We have a family company in which I have the fortune of support and help of my wife, María Asunta, and my children, Ricard, Marc and Laura, who work closely with me, especially my son Ricard, who runs the habanos issues. Only thanks to the collaboration of everyone, is one able to go forward every day.

Q: What importance do habanos have in Andorra?

A: The habano business is in a period of clear

growth world wide with the demand becoming greater day by day. In Andorra we have a notably superior selection of habanos to that which one can find in Spain and France (our neighbouring countries where we have a major proportion of our clients). Our shops sell products that cannot be found in their national markets; therefore it is clear that it involves a major market.

Q: Does a market without borders benefit you or badly effect you?

A: It is going to benefit us. In Andorra we have a well-established distribution. The issue of bringing down the borders does not affect us, Andorra is one of the few 'islands' that is not included in the European Community. I think that Andorra has a bright future, however we must always give the best service and guarantee the quality for our clients.

In the world of habano there are many specialized shops in Andorra, where they pay special attention to the relationship between them and the client: La Casa del

Habano, Cigar Shop, Comercial Pont, La Casa dels Tabacs, Royal Cigars (in Encamp), etc. In a few months we will be opening a new Casa del Habano in Pas de la Casa. In all these establishments they dedicate marvelous attention to the world of habano.

Q: What does it mean to the world of habano that Altadis SA has entered in Habanos SA?

A: I am very happy with this relationship. It is consolidation of the European market and gives a quality guarantee of habanos for the future. Altadis is going to contribute some important resources to Habanos as much economically, as in marketing and distribution; something that Habanos has needed in order to complete the vast work that has already been done. With respect to the European markets, it is also very important in the sense that in some way it should guarantee the supply to the European markets in the future, in addition to producing – in the relatively near future –

JOSÉ MARÍA CASES, IMPORTER OF HABANOS IN ANDORRA, HONORED AS "HOMBRE HABANO 2000" FOR BUSINESS







JOSÉ MARÍA CASES IS NOT A SMOKER OF LARGE FORMATS, ALTHOUGH HE ENJOYS MANY CLASSES OF HABANOS

an opening in the market of habanos in the United States. It is important that the European markets that have traditionally sampled the habano, especially in the difficult times, continue being the main defenders of the habano.

Q: What will happen when habanos are allowed to be sold in the United States?

A: It is difficult to sum up its importance. The American smoker is used to other products from the Caribbean. The importance of the opening in the market is possibly

being exaggerated, because one already knows that when something does not exist or is not on the market, it is the most sought-after thing, and now the Americans are asking for habanos. It is clear that the United States will be an important market, like it is for everything. However, as I have said earlier, I hope that Europe continues to fulfill its traditional role as the main leader of the habano market.

Q: Apart from being a habano importer, are you a smoker... Which is your favourite habano?

A: I am not a smoker of large formats. The cigar I like smoking most is the Laguito n° 2, both Cohiba and Montecristo. Another that I smoke with pleasure is the Punch from Punch, though I would not turn down a Trinidad, a Cohiba, the Lusitana from Partagás... They are all excellent.

Q: Which is the most sold habano in Andorra?

A: The same that is sold worldwide, the undisputable Montecristo n° 4. I can safely say that the Marevas are the most sought after formats in all the markets.

Q: What opinion do the new brands that have come on the market deserve?

A: Of the three that have recently been launched and we are marketing – Trinidad, Cuaba and Vegas Robaina – I believe that for the price and quality, the one that sells that most in volume will be Vegas Robaina. I am not yet able to give my opinion on the San Cristóbal de La Habana, because we are not marketing it, yet.

Q: Which drink best accompanies a habano?

A: I think a habano goes with just about any drink.

Q: Which projects are you working on at the moment?

A: We have the distribution of the Mir and Midis José L. Piedra made in Cuba in Mercosur, European Economic Community and Switzerland. We were also the first importers of the line of habanos José L. Piedra, which at that time were unknown outside Cuba. ♦