



H. Upmann Noellas

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I would like to try to contextualize the smoke that I will tell you about in this essay. We are almost in mid-April 2020, a strange period that will mark our conscience and will remain etched in our memories for a long time. What I hope for me and for us is that we will treasure this bad situation in order to better exploit the time we have left, fully enjoying every little nuance that existence gives us.

Now, however, I must concentrate and try to enjoy this "forced relaxation" by observing and listening better to the cigar I am smoking: H. Upmann's Noellas. My research must necessarily start by looking for the roots and history of this glorious brand.

176 years have passed since the first Upmann cigar was created; 1844 is in fact the year that is thought of when identifying the birth of this brand.

The name immediately recalls sounds that are of little concern to Latin America and the Spanish world, in fact the founder Hermann Dietrich Upmann

was a German banker, among the first Germans to root his trade in Cuba. There are many primacies and excellences linked to this brand which has existed for four generations and which has always maintained a constant production, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, at very high levels. Hermann Upmann took root and dedicated himself as a passionate businessman, always tied to the world of banking and commerce, bringing many innovations in the production process linked to cigars.

May 1866 is an important date because Upmann admits in his factory what will later become Cuba's cultural heritage: the presence of readers. Among the first to do so since in 2015 the 150th anniversary of this custom was celebrated which created a mythical halo around the world of Cuban cigars. One of those things that even non-experts often know, together with many other legends or historical truths related to this world.

Something that it is historically recognized, with certainty, as an innovation brought by the founder of

Upmann was precisely that of the use of "cajas de cedro" (cedar boxes) to preserve, refine and transport the precious cigars produced.

The history of the brand continues in the hands of the Upmann family until the economic crisis following the First World War of 1922. It is here that Menéndez y Garcia takes control of this historic brand. The brand has an exponential growth in its production, if you think that in 1958 Menéndez y Garcia had the highest production of any other tobacco factory: 21.296.000 million units produced, equal to 5.6% of global production. Almost four times the volume produced by Romeo Y Julieta.

The history of this brand is very articulated and interesting and every time we happen to smoke an Upmann cigar we will add more information. Now, carried by the blue smoke of the cigar, I would like to talk about this specimen.

The Noellas was a cigar created and distributed as a regular production until the 1980s, when it disappeared. Until 2009, the year in which 5000 jars of 25 cigars were produced, an air conditioning system already used in the regular series until the 1980s. Available on the market since 2010, therefore, they began to come back into vogue, finding the favor of many fans. A jar that has always been characterized by a more affordable price than other products, with a cigar of the measures that I would define as a good link between the "old world" and the "new world" of vitola and the fashions of the formats.

The Cosacos, as it is called the Vitola de Galera, measures 42 x 135 making this splendid cigar return to the world of

the Coronas. The only survivor with this format, the Noellas, has cousins of equal size in the vitolary of the past and among the special editions such as those contained in the XXI Millenium Humidor with the Montecristo B, the Tapados de La Gloria Cubana and the Astorias of Partagas.

The Noellas shares format and conditioning with another famous Upmann: the Cristales. Time has changed these jars, reviewing the closure system passed from the three-pin system from top to bottom to the current two-pin system from bottom to top. However, only some specimens of the Cristales, remain among the collections of the largest aficionados.

By making my thoughts fly to other moments when I smoked this cigar, I remember a barbecue with friends on a cold day. We smoked these Noellas many years ago, in another life, with people I no longer have close to me and I remember very clearly that we were all impressed by the goodness, immediacy and complex aromas. The weather conditions weren't the best, it was a cold day, one that forces you to smoke with a heavy jacket. Normally the cold has a "sedative" effect on us but also on our cigars and yet the explosion of aromas and flavors that it transmitted to me was great; that was when I decided that the Noellas would be among my favorite cigars.

What I smoke it is now part of the first batch produced, that of that famous 2010 in which it was put on the market. Many underestimated this issue which, in my opinion, was not adequately publicized. This is an edition designed for the Casa del Habano which had

already begun to appear in the Habanos market a few years earlier. On the cold draw we have a well-built cigar with the scents of earth, wood and good tobacco.

Once the cigar is lighted this product brings with it a slight salty flavor in the mouth and aromas of wood and tobacco with some deviations on more fruity aromas. The roundness of its aromatic structure is a clear indicator of how well they are aged, especially in jar. The paper that wraps around the central cigar is slightly soaked with the oils and substances present on wrapper. This is a small method to understand and recognize how and how much the aging occurred.

The first third gives pleasant and delicate aromas, the fruit notes immediately appear. Minerality is hardly mentioned. The notes of a song accompanied the first cigar puffs, in a functional melody: "Strange" by Celeste.

It is the second third, however, that opens the dance with a blaze of well-balanced aromas: the aroma of wood surprises me with its elegance, being the background for all the rest of the smoke. Smoking at home and in the full relaxation of a family atmosphere I matched a song of a group that normally gives energy but, as happens in many cases with rock bands, creates great ballads: "Home" by Foo Fighters is the song that acts as a soundtrack while the sun warms me.

Finally, the last third concludes the experience with an enrichment of each aroma and overall intensity.

Persistence is good, leaving a pleasant and prolonged taste in my mouth. The end of the cigar is marked by the sweet

melody of "Mrs. Cold" by Kings of Convenience

The light and pleasant minerality that is perceived emphasizes the notes of the matured woods that peep out at each puff. The most suitable combination with this cigar is that of a white wine, an equally mineral champagne. The citric notes of a Blanc de blancs marry very well in a combination that amplifies each other's characteristics. But this is a cigar that is born ideologically on the sly and that surprises for its eclectism; perfect to be smoked in a carefree way but also reflecting and paying more attention. Easy to combine, even with simpler and easier drinks.

If it were not yet clear, this cigar taken from this jar, like his brothers before it, represent a real experience and if it is true that "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" this is certainly not the case.

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