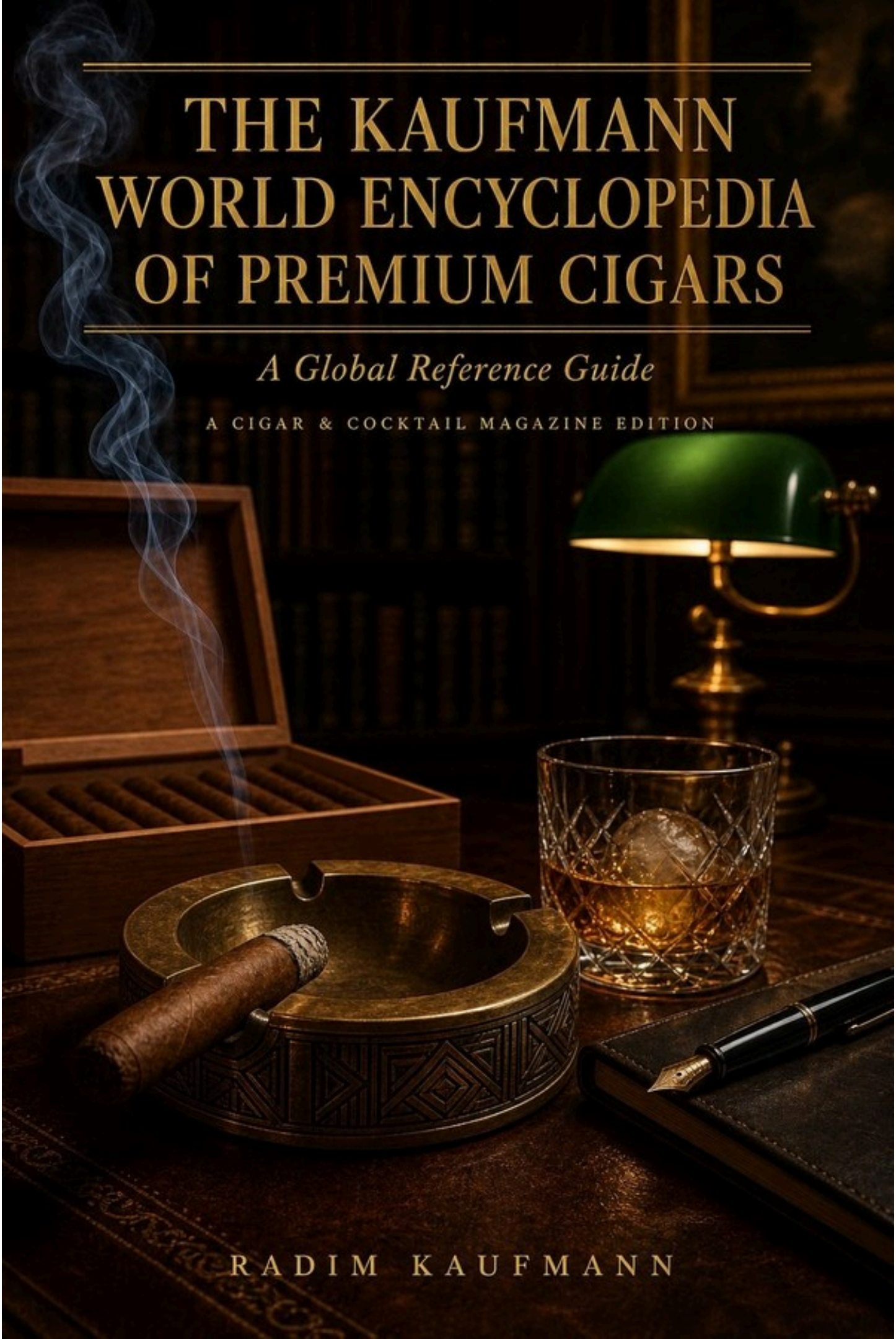
THE KAUFMANN WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PREMIUM CIGARS

A Global Reference Guide

A CIGAR & COCKTAIL MAGAZINE EDITION



RADIM KAUFMANN

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by

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Lente fumare est lente vivere.

— To smoke slowly is to live slowly.

KAUFMANN EDITORIAL

Prague · Estelí · Santiago de los Caballeros

FIRST EDITION · 2026

The Kaufmann World Encyclopedia of Premium Cigars
A Global Reference Guide
A Cigar & Cocktail Magazine Edition

First Edition, 2026

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A Note on Fact-Checking and Errata. This volume has been compiled from twenty years of working notebooks and three years of editorial review. Despite extensive verification, errors of fact, attribution, or interpretation may persist. Errata are maintained at *cigarcocktailmag.com/errata* and incorporated into subsequent printings. Readers who discover errors are warmly invited to write to *errata@cigarcocktailmag.com*.

Dedication

For three friends, who have shared the long evenings, the slow burns, and the conversations worth the smoke:

- Robert Nosil
- Bernhard Mann
- Ammar Ali

— the chairs across from mine.

Radim Kaufmann

Lente fumare est lente vivere.
To smoke slowly is to live slowly.

— The Author's Motto, KCS v2.1

"*There are some things you cannot do quickly.*
The good cigar is one of them."

— José Padrón, in conversation, 2014

"*If smoking is not allowed in heaven, I shall*
not go."

— Mark Twain, attributed

PREFACE

A NOTE BEFORE THE BEGINNING



The editor's study at the moment before the work begins. The chair is empty, the cigar unlit, the notebook open mid-sentence. The reader enters here.

A reference volume on premium cigars in 2026 has to do something the field has not previously demanded: it has to be honest about the state of the world it documents.

For most of the twentieth century, a serious cigar reference book could limit itself to the Cuban industry, glance at the Dominican Republic, mention Honduras in passing, and treat Nicaragua as a curiosity. The Cuban product was the

standard against which all others were measured, and the others were generally found wanting. That world — the world of *Cigar Aficionado*'s first decade, of Min Ron Nee's encyclopedia, of Davidoff's classical writings — was not wrong. It was simply describing the cigar industry of its time.

The cigar industry of 2026 is not that industry. The Nicaraguan ascendancy of the past thirty years has produced cigars that compete with Cuban flagships on quality, sometimes exceed them, and often deliver a more reliable smoke. The Dominican Republic has consolidated into a mature production region with two distinct character signatures — the Davidoff school of restraint and the Fuente school of expression. Honduras has stabilized as a serious producer of the Corojo tradition. Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Cameroon, Indonesia, the Philippines, the United States, and increasingly Costa Rica and Panama all contribute tobacco to the global premium market. The Cuban industry, meanwhile, has spent the past four years navigating a structural pricing crisis, a generational transition in its rolling rooms, and a continuing gap between production and demand.

This encyclopedia attempts to document that complexity. It treats Nicaragua as a peer to Cuba, not as a junior partner. It scores brands on a single hundred-point scale regardless of country of origin. It records prices, where it records them, with full disclosure of source and date. It is willing to call a beloved cigar overrated, an overlooked cigar excellent, and a Cuban flagship undisciplined when the evidence supports the call.

This is not a book about Cuban cigars with a chapter on the New World. It is a book about premium cigars in which Cuba is one of several great producing traditions, treated with the seriousness it deserves and not with deference it has not earned by its current production standards alone.

The reader entering these pages with strong existing preferences may, occasionally, disagree with a score or a judgement. That disagreement is welcome. The methodology that produced the scores is fully documented in **Part III**; the underlying calibration sample is named; the dates and provenances of the cigars evaluated are recorded. Disagreements based on different palates are honest. Disagreements based on different evidence are productive. Disagreements based on the wish that the world were still 1995 are, in the author's view, the kind of nostalgia that a reference book should not encourage.

One personal disclosure is appropriate at this threshold. I have never smoked a cigarette in my life, and I do not consider cigar smoking a daily habit. Cigars, for me, are a deliberate occasional ceremony — the marking of a significant evening with friends, the celebration of a milestone in family or business, the contemplative hour after a meaningful conversation. The encyclopedia in your hands has been written from that perspective: not as a manual for everyday consumption, but as a reference for the moments when a serious cigar is the appropriate accompaniment to a serious occasion. The reader who shares that disposition — who reaches for the humidor only when the evening genuinely warrants it — will find this volume calibrated for that working frequency.

— Radim Kaufmann, Prague
January 2026

A TWENTY-YEAR NOTEBOOK

FROM NOTEBOOK TO ENCYCLOPEDIA



Twenty leather notebooks, two decades of disciplined notes: the archive that produced this volume.

This encyclopedia did not begin as a book. It began as a notebook.

In the autumn of 2006, I bought my first leather-bound tasting notebook from a stationer in Prague — small enough to fit in a jacket pocket, with a brass-tipped fountain pen attached by a thin cord. I began that evening with a single Cohiba Robusto on a Saturday in October and wrote three lines about the cigar's first third. The lines were not particularly insightful. They were, however, the first deliberate written observation about a cigar that I had ever made, and they es-

tablished the practice that has continued, with various interruptions, for two decades.

By the early 2010s the notebooks had multiplied. A Saturday-evening cigar in Prague became, over the course of a decade, a Saturday-evening cigar in Havana, in Estelí, in Santiago de los Caballeros, in Geneva, in London, in Tampa, in Miami, in Tokyo, in Singapore. The notebooks accumulated in a dedicated bookshelf in my study; by 2024 there were twenty of them, ranging from the small pocket notebooks of the early years to the larger journals of the post-2015 period when factory visits and producer conversations expanded the scope of the project.

The encyclopedia in your hands is the synthesis of those twenty notebooks. Almost every score in Part V, every review in Appendix L, every editorial judgment about a marca's house style, every regional terroir characterization in Part IV traces back to specific entries in those volumes. The notebooks are the primary source; the encyclopedia is the synthesis.

Two observations about the twenty-year scope deserve placement here.

First, twenty years is, in the cigar industry's slow temporal frame, a meaningful but modest interval. The Cuban marcas treated in Part V are, almost without exception, older than my notebook collection by a hundred years or more. Habanos S.A. has been producing cigars longer than any individual aficionado's working life will permit them to study. The encyclopedia's ambition is to document a specific slice of the industry's continuing evolution — the period from roughly 2006 through 2026 — with the perspective that any honest student would acknowledge: my view is one view, my notebooks are one set of notebooks, and the judgments are judgments rather than pronouncements.

Second, twenty years is long enough to have observed the industry change. The Cuban industry I encountered in 2006 is not the Cuban industry of 2026; the Nicaraguan industry of that same year was a smaller, less prestige-oriented tradition than the Estelí industry that now competes with Cuba on every dimension. The brands documented in Part V have, in many cases, emerged or transformed within the span of my notebooks. The encyclopedia's perspective is, by necessity, the perspective of an aficionado who has watched these changes happen rather than inheriting them as settled history.

The notebooks themselves remain on the bookshelf. They are private documents — raw observations, private judgments, occasional corrections of previous entries. The encyclopedia is the public synthesis. The reader who works through the volume that follows is, in effect, consulting the condensed result of those twenty years rather than working through the raw notebooks themselves.

— Radim Kaufmann, Prague
2026

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

A TWENTY-YEAR NOTEBOOK

This book began as a private notebook and stayed one for nearly two decades before any thought was given to publishing it.

The first entries are dated 2006,[1] written in a small black Moleskine in a hotel bar in Geneva: the cigar, the room, the drink beside it, three lines of impressions, and a number out of a hundred that I had no business assigning at the time but assigned anyway. By 2010 the Moleskine was full and I had moved to a larger format. By 2015 I had filled six. By 2020 I had stopped counting them and started indexing them. By the time the question of a book seriously arose — some afternoon in the spring of 2024, on a terrace in Estelí,[2] with Don Pepín García's grandson laughing about something I have since forgotten — the notebooks numbered in the dozens and ran, in aggregate, to something close to a million words.

What you hold is not the notebooks. The notebooks were never meant to be read by anyone but their author, and they would not survive being read; too much of them is shorthand, contradiction, mood, and the same cigar evaluated four times in four different lights. What you hold is the structured argument that those notebooks made possible. Twenty years of paying attention to one narrow thing — the modern premium handmade cigar — produces, eventually, a method. The method is the Kaufmann Cigar Score.[3] The argument is that the cigar deserves the discipline.

The Magazine

The encyclopedia exists in the same household as *Cigar & Cocktail Magazine*,[4] the quarterly journal I founded and edit. The magazine is the rolling, changing, conversational face of the same project: each issue carries new reviews under the KCS, profiles of the people who make and pour and serve, dispatches from

the world's lounges, and the slow accretion of the same pleasures the encyclopedia attempts to fix on the page. The two volumes are designed to complement each other. The encyclopedia is the static spine; the magazine is the living supplement. Where the printed page in this book must be cautious about prices, availability, and the volatile parts of the business, the magazine carries the current numbers. Where the magazine must be brief, the encyclopedia goes deep.

If the encyclopedia is the cellar inventory of what I know, the magazine is the bottle being opened tonight.

Why Now

The premium cigar world has changed more in the past thirty years than in the previous three hundred.[5] The 1990s boom and its aftermath, the rise of Nicaragua as a serious peer to Cuba, the consolidation and re-fragmentation of the great houses, the global compliance environment, and the long-running crisis of the Cuban industry — all of these have unsettled the old certainties. The reference works that shaped my own education in this subject were written in different decades and assumed a world in which Habanos was unambiguously the standard, the Dominican Republic was a junior partner, and Nicaragua barely registered.[6] That world is gone. There has been, until now, no single reference volume that treats Nicaragua as a peer, scores cigars under a transparent published methodology, separates the brand mythology from the verifiable facts, and admits openly where the data is thin.

I have tried to write that book.

Limits

A few honest admissions belong here.

First, every reference volume is the world as one person sees it. I have done my best to score blind where I could, to pay for cigars at retail where I could, to disclose factory relationships where they exist, and to defer to people whose palates are better than mine where their judgement was on offer. None of that erases the fact that this is the Kaufmann encyclopedia and not the encyclopedia. A different writer would draw the boundaries differently. A different palate would score differently. The KCS is a discipline; it is not a denial that taste is partial.

Second, parts of this world are deliberately opaque. Cuban factory operations are notoriously hard to verify; counterfeit traffic is a moving target; certain regional industries publish almost nothing. Where I have had to rely on indirect sources, I say so. Where the source itself is the manufacturer's marketing department, I say so. Where I do not know, I say so.

Third, the cigar industry is a small world and most of the people in it are reachable. Several of them have read parts of this manuscript, corrected errors, supplied dates, and in two cases politely demanded the removal of a paragraph that they felt was unfair. In all but one of those cases I agreed with them. The disagreements are noted in the chapters where they belong.

How to Use What Follows

The Introduction immediately following this Foreword explains the structure of the book in some detail. Here it is enough to say that you can read the encyclopedia in any order. The Atlas reads forward, country by country. The Brand Profiles read sideways. The KCS chapters are the spine. Most readers will find the Pairing Matrix and the Reference Tables in Part VII to be the parts they consult most often once they have settled the volume on the shelf next to the humidor — which is, I respectfully suggest, the right shelf for it.

Settle in. Light something good. Begin where you like.

— Radim Kaufmann
Prague & the road, 2026

NOTES

1. The earliest surviving entry, dated 4 October 2006, records a Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 2 at the Bar des Bergues, Geneva. The numerical score assigned (88) has since been revised under KCS v2.1 to 91; the original notebook entry remains in the archive as written. ↩
2. Estelí, in northwestern Nicaragua, is the manufacturing center of the modern Nicaraguan premium cigar industry. See **Part IV, Chapter IV**. ↩
3. The Kaufmann Cigar Score is treated in full in **Part III**. The version in this volume is KCS v2.1, dated January 2026. ↩
4. *Cigar & Cocktail Magazine* launched its inaugural issue (Volume I, Issue 1) in Q1 2026, edited by the present author. See cigarcocktailmag.com. ↩

5. The thirty-year window 1995–2025 has produced more change in producer geography, blending convention, and ring-gauge norms than any equivalent period since the consolidation of the Cuban industry in the 1840s. ↩
6. Standard reference works of the older tradition include Zino Davidoff's *The Connoisseur's Book of the Cigar* (1967), Anwer Bati's *The Cigar Companion* (1993), and Min Ron Nee's *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Post-Revolution Havana Cigars* (2003). All remain valuable but predate the Nicaraguan ascendancy and the modern ring-gauge inflation. ↩

✺ Author's Note

The notebooks fill a shelf in my office in Prague. I have not opened the oldest of them in several years. They are not, in the end, the book; they are the compost from which the book grew. If you would like to know what was in any one of them on any given evening, the answer is almost always the same: a cigar, a drink, a conversation, an attempt at attention, and a number that I no longer trust but that I am fond of.

— Radim Kaufmann

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEBTS OF GRATITUDE



Two glasses, two cigars, a list of names: the acknowledgment scene composed for shared evenings rather than solitary work.

A reference volume of this length is, despite the singular byline on the cover, the work of many people. The author wishes to acknowledge the following debts.

To the Producers

The cigar industry is a small world, and most of its serious actors have been generous with their time over twenty years of conversations, factory tours, lounge dinners, and patient answers to specific technical questions. In particular, the late José Padrón, whose conversations in the 2010s shaped the author's understanding of what aging discipline looks like in practice; Jorge Padrón, his son, who has continued the family's openness; Pepín García and his family at My Father Cigars, whose Estelí visits have been formative; the late Carlos Fuente Sr., whose 2011 conversation about wrappers contributed the epigraph to **Part I, Chapter II**; Carlos Fuente Jr., who has continued his father's openness; the Plasencia family; the Aganorsa Leaf team; and Henke Kelner at Davidoff, whose Dominican blending discipline is one of the encyclopedia's reference points. The Cuban industry's representatives, including the Tabacuba research team and the export operations of Habanos S.A., have been less directly accessible but have responded generously when contacted through proper channels.

To the Critics and Writers

Min Ron Nee's *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Post-Revolution Havana Cigars* (2003) is the modern reference against which any serious cigar volume must measure itself. The encyclopedia's debt to Min Ron Nee is structural. James Suckling's tasting notes, the Cigar Aficionado tasting panel's quarterly evaluations, and Charlie Minato's halfwheel.com analyses have all influenced the encyclopedia's methodology and informed specific judgements. The author has disagreed with each of them on occasion and acknowledges that the disagreements are themselves a form of debt.

To the Editorial Team

This volume has benefited from the editorial review of three readers who saw the manuscript in stages. Their corrections and challenges shaped the final text. Specific factual errors caught by their review are too numerous to list; the encyclopedia is more accurate for their work, and any remaining errors are the author's alone.

To the Family

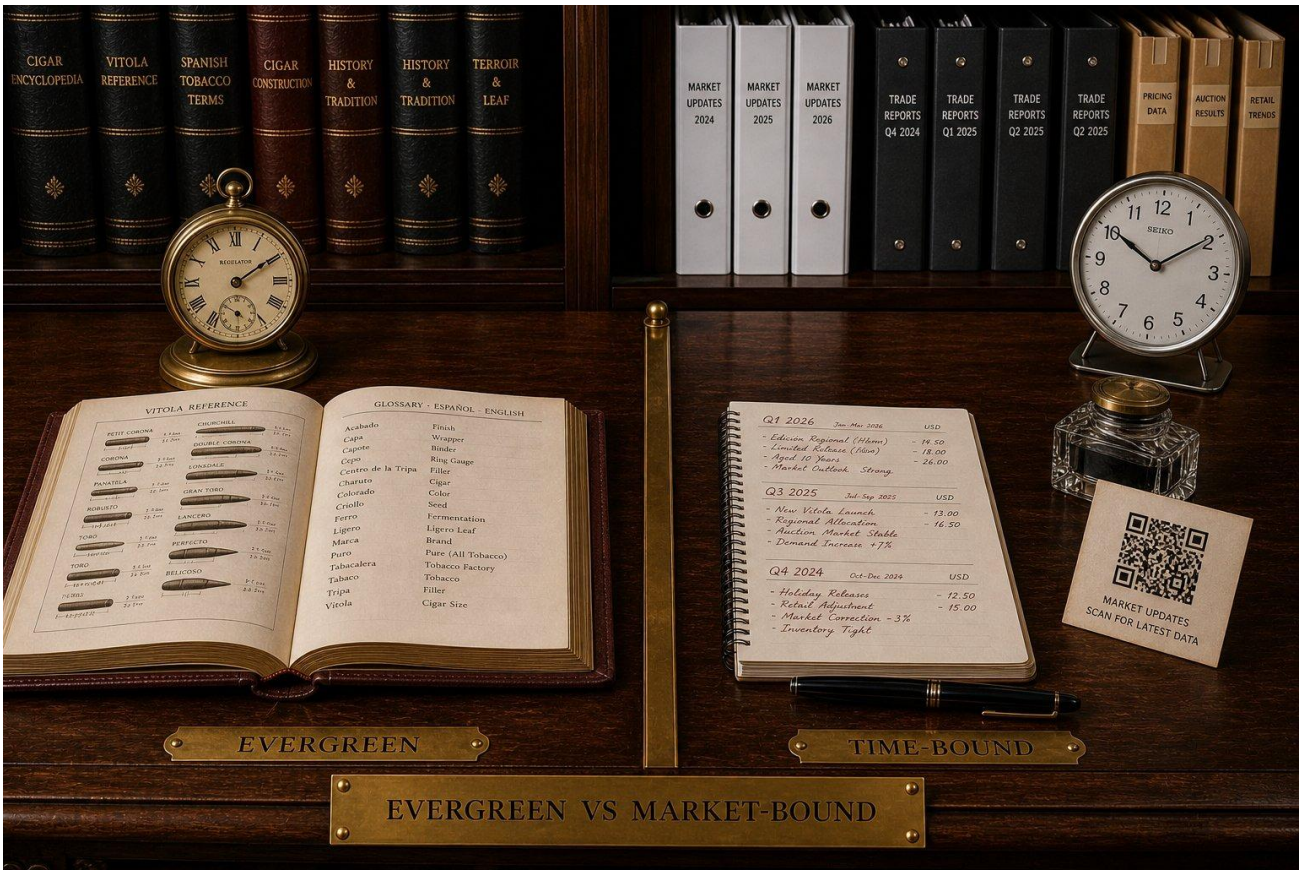
To my wife, who has tolerated twenty years of cigar smoke in the right rooms of our houses, the books on the shelves, the boxes in the humidors, the trips to Cuba and Estelí and Santiago, and the long evenings during which I was visibly working but obviously enjoying it. The encyclopedia is dedicated to three friends, but it could not have been written without her.

A Final Word

This volume is a snapshot of a moving target. The cigar industry of 2030 will not be the cigar industry of 2026; some of the brands profiled here will have changed ownership, some of the country chapters will have rebalanced, some of the prices in **Appendix O** will be unrecognizable. The encyclopedia accepts that condition openly and points the reader to the rolling supplements at *cigarcocktailmag.com* for current information. What it offers is the static spine, as accurate as the author and his editors could make it, dated and signed.

— Radim Kaufmann

HOW THIS BOOK AGES: EVERGREEN KNOWLEDGE VS MARKET UPDATES



Two reference systems in one volume: the timeless apparatus on the left, the time-bound market data on the right.

A premium cigar encyclopedia faces a challenge that a wine reference does not have to the same degree: the cigar market changes faster than the underlying agriculture and craft. Limited editions sell out, regional editions vanish, brands change ownership, factories restructure, and the country of a wrapper leaf can shift from one harvest to the next.

This encyclopedia is therefore organized in two layers.

The Evergreen Layer

Tobacco botany, terroir, fermentation chemistry, anatomy, vitolas, wrapper colors, the language of tasting, the structure of the Kaufmann Cigar Score, the principles of pairing, the principles of storage, and the historical and cultural geography of producing countries — all these change slowly if at all. They form the permanent reference body of the book.

The Market Layer

Limited editions, current production lines, distribution availability, lounge directories, and price-tier observations are time-sensitive. The book records them as of its production date and points to the QR Companion Page for ongoing updates. The intent is not to be a buyer's catalog of *this season's* cigars but to teach the reader how to *evaluate* any cigar that crosses their humidor — including ones that did not exist when this book was printed.

Updates and Corrections

The QR Companion Page links to the online update system, where revised lounge directories, vintage notes, brand changes, and reader corrections are maintained between editions.

KCS METHODOLOGY — VERSION 2.1 / 2026



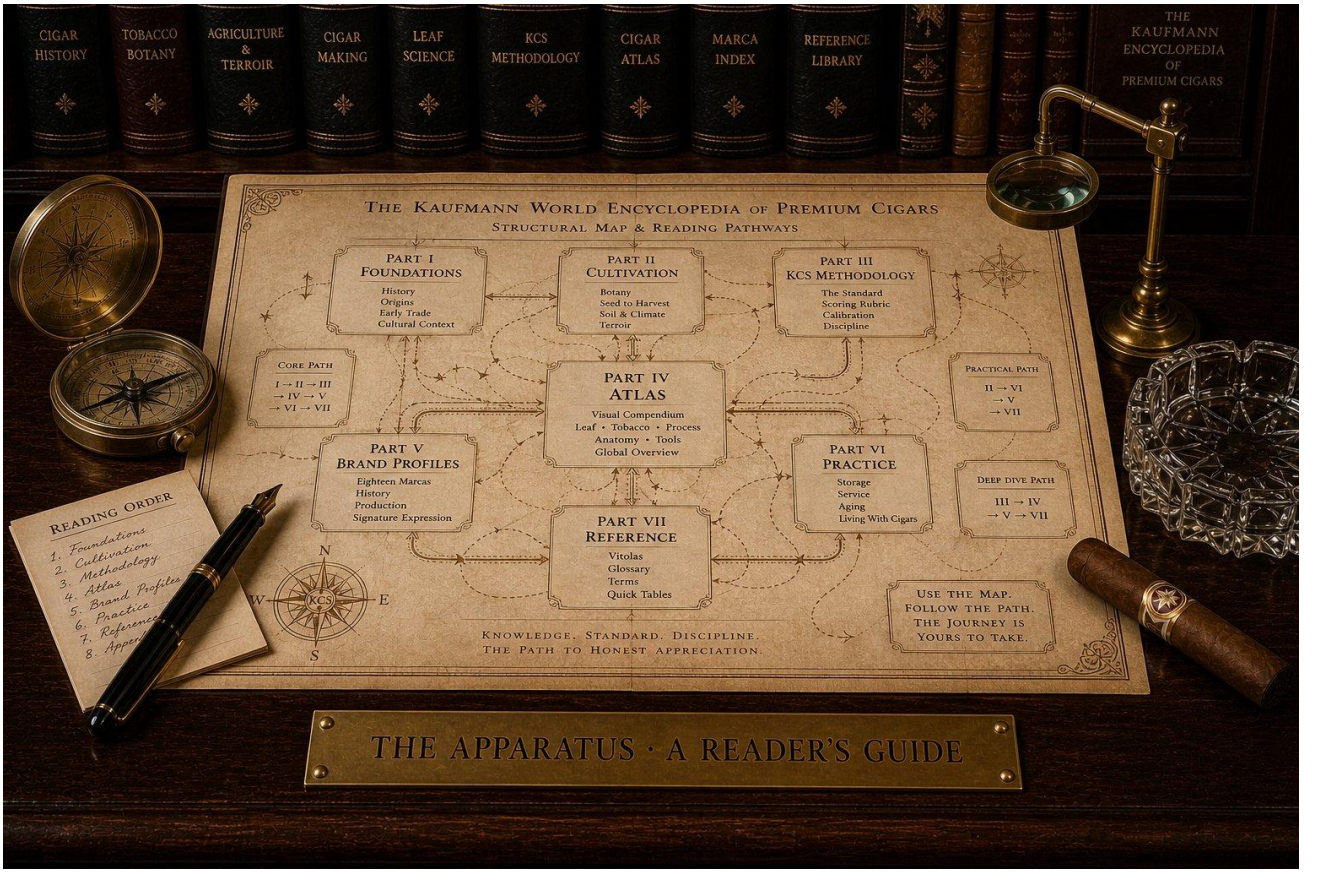
The KCS rubric on calibration display: six dimensions, one hundred points, version history visible.

All cigar scores in this encyclopedia were assigned using the Kaufmann Cigar Score, version 2.1 (2026 edition). The full methodology is set out in Part III. Earlier KCS versions (1.x) used different category weightings; legacy scores under 1.x are not directly comparable to v2.1 figures and are not used in this volume.

The methodology may be revised in future editions. Each future edition will state its KCS version explicitly so readers can track methodology changes between volumes.

EDITORIAL APPARATUS

A READER'S GUIDE TO THE APPARATUS



The structural map of the volume: parts, paths, and the navigation that connects them.

This encyclopedia uses several conventions that the reader will encounter throughout the text. They are documented here so that the reader does not have to deduce them from context.

Footnotes

Each chapter carries numbered footnotes, gathered in a *Notes* section at the end of the chapter. Footnote markers in the body text appear as small

superscript numbers in gold (e.g., a sample claim[1]). Each marker links to the corresponding note at the end of the chapter; each note carries a small return-arrow that links back to the body text. The footnotes carry secondary detail, technical asides, source citations, and cross-references to other chapters where the topic is treated at greater length.

Cross-References

Cross-references to other chapters of this volume appear in the form: **Part IV, Chapter II**, or **Part VI, Chapter VIII**. The reader can locate any cross-referenced chapter via the Contents at the front of the volume or the Index at the back.

Spanish and Cuban Trade Vocabulary

The cigar industry's vocabulary is heavily Spanish-derived, with specific Cuban-Spanish usages that have spread to all major Latin American producing countries. The encyclopedia uses Spanish terms where they are the standard trade vocabulary (*vitola*, *marca*, *torcedor*, *chaveta*, *tripa*, *capa*) and provides English glosses on first appearance. The Glossary in **Part VII, Chapter V** collects all Spanish trade vocabulary used in the volume with full definitions.

Currency, Measurement, and Date Conventions

Prices, where given, are stated in U.S. dollars (USD) at the rate prevailing at the date of evaluation, with the EUR equivalent for European-market data. Conversions use the rate prevailing in late January 2026 unless otherwise specified.

Cigar dimensions are given in the trade-standard format: length in inches followed by ring gauge. **5×50** means five inches in length, ring gauge fifty. The metric equivalent in millimeters is provided where relevant. Ring gauge is measured in 64ths of an inch (a 50 ring gauge cigar is fifty 64ths of an inch in diameter, or about 19.8 mm).

Dates of evaluation, where given for a specific cigar review, follow the format Month Year (e.g., March 2024). Where the date matters for reproducibility — price snapshots, regulatory citations — the full date is given.

The Kaufmann Cigar Score (KCS)

Every numerical cigar evaluation in this volume uses the Kaufmann Cigar Score, version 2.1 (KCS v2.1), dated January 2026. The KCS is a hundred-point scoring system across six dimensions: construction, draw, flavor, balance, evolution, and value. The methodology is documented in full in **Part III**. Where a score appears in the text, it should be read as *under KCS v2.1* unless explicitly noted otherwise.

The Author's Note

Every chapter closes with a boxed callout titled **Author's Note — Radim Kaufmann**. These are personal observations — an anecdote, a confession, an opinion, occasionally a citation of a torcedor or producer — that fall outside the encyclopedic register of the chapter proper but contribute, the author hopes, to the volume's character. They are clearly demarcated and the reader who prefers a strict reference register can skip them without losing the encyclopedia's argument.

Editorial Plates

Each chapter opens with a full-width landscape illustration documenting the chapter's subject. The plates are commissioned editorial photographs, deliberately consistent in visual register across the volume. Where a chapter's plate is not yet finalized in this edition, a placeholder appears with a note to that effect; the next edition will replace placeholders with their final versions. A complete *List of Plates* appears at the front of the volume.

Tables

Reference tables appear throughout the volume in a consistent design: deep burgundy header rows with gold accent rules, cream interior, monospaced numerical columns where applicable. KCS scoring tables use a separate variant in which the score column is set in gold serif type (**92**/100). A complete *List of Tables* appears at the front of the volume.

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