

CUBA PAYS HOMAGE TO THE GROWERS OF THE BEST TOBACCO IN THE WORLD

- The Habanos Festival dedicated one night to **Vegueros**, the guardians of the century-long tradition of the Cuban fields
- During the night, this Habanos brand was re-launched. Attendees were able to sample three new vitolas and enjoy an avant-garde gastronomy which uses Cuban tobacco as an ingredient
- The Gala Evening will be held tomorrow and will be attended by tennis player **Boris Becker** who will give the Habanos Award in the Communication Category; other celebrities will also attend the event who will celebrate a XV Anniversary full of surprises

Havana, 1 March 2013 – Habanos, their origin, and the wonderful dedication of the growers of what is regarded as the best tobacco in the world, were the central topic of the **Vegueros Night**, a very special celebration which was held yesterday as part of the XV Habanos Festival. The El Laguito Protocol Hall hosted this event, in which 550 attendees were able to enjoy the new vitolas in the re-launch of the Vegueros brand. **Tapados, Entretiempo, and Mañanitas**. All of them are manufactured *Totalmente a Mano Tripa Larga* –Totally hand made, Long Filler–. They are designed for a more accessible segment and have a Medium to Full flavour. The Habanos Hoyos de Monterrey Grand Epicure Edición Limitada 2013 were also sampled.

The Night was also a party which brought Cuban tobacco together with high gastronomy. The Croatian chefs **Grgur Baksic, Zoran Simunic and Pantelija Pekic**, designed the main dinner dish, made with Vuelta Abajo Cuban tobacco. *"We had the ambitious idea of turning the smoke of Cuban tobacco, the best in the world, into aroma and flavour, something which we managed to do after years of research"*, said Grgur Baksic.

The famous tennis player **Boris Becker** is now in Havana where he has just visited the historic El Laguito Cohiba factory where he could learn about the craftsmanship of this unique product. Becker has confirmed that he will star one of the main moments of the awaited **Gala Evening**, dedicated to the Partagás brand which this year is presenting its **first Gran Reserva**. The German tennis player will be on stage to give the **Habanos Award 2012 in the Communication Category**. Other personalities will be also at the event such as Italian tenor **Dario Balzanelli**, who will sing the famous Cuban song 'La Comparsa' and the great legend of Cuban music, **Omara Portuondo**, who will sing with Maestro Patterson's orchestra and Maestro Santiago Alfonso's dance troupe. The Gala will offer surprises and special prizes which will be made known over the night and which will pay homage to the Festival in its XV Anniversary.

The **Welcoming Evening** which opened this XV Habanos Festival was held on Tuesday in the beautiful stage that is the Morro Fortress. The audience was able to enjoy a unique event that included a spectacular mapping of the Montecristo brand over the bay Lighthouse, as well as sample the two new launches of the Montecristo brand. **Double Edmundo and Petit No.2**.

The Alliance between the **Denominations of Origin Habanos (D.O.P.) and Rioja (D.O.Ca.)** was another high point of this Festival. The audience witnessed the alliance of two historical Denominations of Origin, which are references in their categories. In the final stage the audience enjoyed the two selected pairings. **In the Light to Medium flavour category the chosen pairing was Beronia 2008 and H. Upmann No. 2, and in the Medium to Full flavour category, the selected pairing was Montecristo No. 2 and Dominio de Campo Viejo 2007**. The President of the Regulatory Council for the Rioja Qualified Denomination of Origin, Víctor Pascual, thanked Habanos s.a. for the chance of taking part in the Habanos Festival, and he stressed the similarities between both Denominations of Origin, which bet on quality and constant innovation from tradition. *"I hope that this marriage will last for many years"*, said Pascual.

Pedro Tejada Torres, from Cuba, José Gregorio Pereira, from Venezuela, and the United Kingdom representative, Peter Dobroni Marie, are the three finalists of the renowned **Habanosommelier International**

Contest, which is held every year during the Habanos Festival, and which is in its XII year now. Next Saturday, one of them will be acclaimed as the winner of a consolidated award which is increasingly prestigious, thanks to the growing demand for advice from these professionals in the best restaurants in the world.

1500 participants from all over the world, together with a wide representation from the media - 273 journalists from 30 countries - visited the **Vuelta Abajo*** plantations in **Pinar del Río*** as well as the **Habanos factories**, where this unique product is created in a fully manual process with more than 500 stages. **The rolling master class**, in which the audience can acquire practical knowledge of how a Habano is made, *Totalmente a Mano – Totally hand made–*, dealt this year with the making of a Petit Edmundo.

The Habanos Festival also included its usual interesting **Lectures**, given this year by Messrs **Fernando Domínguez Valdés-Hevia**, who talked about " Present and the Future of Premium Tobacco", and **Simon Chase**, who talked about the "The Battle of Cuba's Independent Brands and the First Habanos Book". Tomorrow will be the turn of Mr **Eumelio Espino**, who will give the lecture "More than 500 steps from seed to smoke".

As for the participants in **International Contest Habanos in Images**, focusing, on its second year, on photography, they will have to wait until Saturday to find who the winners are.

***(D.O.P.) Protected Denominations of Origin.**

About Corporación Habanos s.a.

Corporación Habanos is the world leader in the Premium cigar market (Hand made cigars). Habanos s.a. sells Habanos in both Cuba and the rest of the world. To this end it has an exclusive distribution network, with presence in more than 150 countries across the five continents. For more information, visit www.habanos.com.

Habanos s.a. currently distributes all 27 Cuban brands that belong to the **Habanos* (D.O.P) Protected Denomination of Origin** made with the process *Totalmente a Mano- Totally hand made-*, (a process only applied in Cuba today, that was used for the first time almost 3 centuries ago in the island). Some of the most important Habanos brands are **Cohiba, Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, Partagás, Hoyo de Monterrey, H. Upmann, Punch, San Cristóbal de la Habana, Trinidad and Bolívar**. For more information, visit www.habanos.com.

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All the activities in this XV Habanos Festival can be followed on social networks in the following addresses:

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Festival-Habano>

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