

THE CURTAIN COMES UP ON THE HABANOS FESTIVAL

- A new edition of the event celebrating the world's best tobacco
- Three new launches will be exclusively available for tasting by attendees: **Romeo y Julieta Gran Reserva Cosecha 2009**, **Montecristo 80 Aniversario** and the **La Gloria Cubana vitolas Pirámides and Robustos Extra**
- In 2014, the Habanos Group recorded a turnover 2014 of 439 million dollars

Havana, 23RD of February 2015.- The **XVII Habanos Festival opens its doors today**, ready to welcome lovers of this unique product, who travel to the island from every corner of the world. **Romeo y Julieta and Montecristo** are the brands taking centre stage at this edition and their *vitolas*, as well as the rest of the Habanos s.a. launches and new features for 2015, will be available for exclusive tasting by attendees. This journey to the home of a century-long tradition will continue until Friday 27th of February and includes new activities, as well as the traditional ones, relating to the Habano culture.

Today, the old **Almacén del Tabaco y la Madera** (Wood and Tobacco Warehouse), a unique enclave and part of Havana's industrial heritage, will for the first time become the setting for the **Welcome Evening**. The evening will be **dedicated to the first Gran Reserva from Romeo y Julieta in its Wide Churchills vitola** (ring gauge 55 x 130mm in length), which comes in a unique and exclusive edition of 5,000 numbered boxes. All the leaves that go into the **Romeo y Julieta Gran Reserva Cosecha 2009** have been carefully selected in *Vuelta Abajo** (Pinar del Río*) and subjected to a long and meticulous five-year ageing process. With its unique dimensions among standard Habanos *vitolas*, it is particularly attractive to smokers who enjoy thick gauge Habanos with a balanced and aromatic blend. The award-winning Cuban artist **Descemer Bueno** will bring the evening to a close with his greatest hits.

On **Wednesday 25th of February**, the Salón de Protocolo of El Laguito will host the **25th Anniversary of La Casa del Habano**, the prestigious network of franchises that has more than 140 Habanos points of sale throughout the world. During the evening, the limited edition commemorative Humidor will be presented. It has been created exclusively for the occasion and contains **30 Habanos from the La Gloria Cubana brand**, which are *Totalmente a Mano -Totally Handmade-* with leaves from *Vuelta Abajo** (Pinar del Río*). The *vitolas* chosen are exclusive to this case and cannot be found among the brand's standard *vitolas*: 15 Pirámides and 15 Robustos Extra. **One of these hand-crafted products will be raffled during the evening**. There will also be gastronomy from **Belgian chef Anne Marie Lauwers**, who will direct the menus for this dinner and the Gala Evening, fusing flavours from Asia, Europe, and Cuba for the delight of guests.

The **Gala Evening** will draw this edition of the event to a close on **Friday 27th of February**. The prestigious and renowned **Montecristo** brand will see the launch of its **special 80 Aniversario vitola** (ring gauge 55 x 165mm in length). This is a unique Habano whose blend, which has a special strength and is both balanced and intense, has been created to commemorate the establishment of the legendary brand in 1935. This commemorative edition of 30,000 units is presented in an exclusive box of unique design, with 20 Habanos bearing a band with gold finish, each *Totalmente a Mano con Tripa Larga -Totally Handmade with Long Filler-* using a selection of exquisite wrapper, filler, and binder leaves from the best fields in the *Vuelta Abajo** (Pinar del Río*). The evening will close with the **Habanos Awards**, celebrating their XIX edition, in the various categories -Production, Communication, and Business- and the customary **Humidors Auction**, the entire proceeds of which will go to the Cuban Public Health System. There will also be performances from prestigious artists.

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New activities

On **Wednesday 25th of February, Habanos will be paired with Chianti wines for the first time**, specifically two *vitolas* with four of the Italian wines. Luca A. Alves Franco, of the Consorzio Vino Chianti, will coordinate this alliance featuring the Chianti Superiore D.O.C.G. “Cerretello” (2011) and Chianti Rufina D.O.C.G. Riserva “Lastricato” (2010) wines from the Pieve De’ Pitti and Castello del Trebbio wineries, respectively, which will be tasted alongside Montecristo Open Eagle. The Chianti Colli Fiorentini D.O.C.G. “Il Castelvechchio” (2011), from the winery of the same name, and Chianti D.O.C.G. Riserva “Vigna 54” (2012) from the Azienda Agricola Pugliano winery, will be paired with Le Hoyo San Juan.

There will also be a **special tasting of the new Habanos Añejados** line. Those participating in this activity will get an exclusive chance to taste these newly presented references from two of the most prestigious brands of Habano. **Romeo y Julieta Pirámides Añejados and Montecristo Churchills Añejados**. During the tasting on **Tuesday 24th of February**, there will be explanations from experts in aged tobacco, as well as pairings of Habanos with another product that is fundamental to Cuban cuisine and which also reaps the rewards of its own ageing process: rum.

The seventeenth edition of the International Seminar will include fascinating lectures on topics related to the Habano world. It will begin on Wednesday 25th of February with the Master Lecture from Dr Zoe Nocedo Primo, Director of the Museo del Tabaco (Tobacco Museum), entitled “**The cigar factory readers 150th Anniversary**”. On the same day, in the evening, there will be a talk on “**Diversification of the Habanos brands**”, from **Cruz Maritza Carrillo, Director of Brand Diversification at Habanos s.a.** On Thursday 26th, Antonio Fernández Seoane will speak to attendees on “**Habanos and the arts. Kiss of Fire, by David Kessell**”. Finally, on Friday 27, Festival participants will have the chance to attend the lecture entitled “**The Habanos brands: Montecristo on its 80th anniversary**”, by Roberto Delgado Pérez, International Market Supervisor for Habanos s.a.

The Habanos Festival will witness a new edition of the **longest ash competition on Thursday 26th of February**. Other interesting activities to participate in during the week include the Master Class “**How to make a Habano Totally by Hand**” and **pairings with other exclusive food products**, as well as the now customary visits to Habanos factories and plantations.

Habanos Group dates 2014

In 2014, the **Habanos Group**, which exclusively commercialises the 27 brands of Habanos throughout the world, all of which are *Totalmente a Mano (Totally Handmade)*, recorded a **turnover of 439 million dollars**, similar to the figure for 2013, with negative growth of 1% at a constant rate on the previous year. This demonstrates the strength of Habanos sales despite the difficulties experienced during the year.

“The quality and exclusivity of our products and our ability to innovate are the pillars of our project and the reason that we are market leaders. We should also remember our experience and vast knowledge of all the production phases of *Totalmente a Mano (Totally Handmade)* Premium cigars, where there is excellent collaboration with farming and industry”, said **Inocente Núñez Blanco, Co-President of Habanos s.a.**

Luis Sánchez-Harguindey, Co-President of Habanos s.a., added: “The results for the year are positive. We practically maintained the same level of sales as the previous year, despite the particularly difficult climate we have experienced over the past year. On a global level, we have ensured that our share remains above 70% (not including the US market), which is a real success. We will also continue to have a clear focus on the emerging markets, which are showing excellent sales growth, and where we are successfully spreading the Habano culture”.

* D.O.P. (Denominación de Origen Protegida - Protected Appellations of Origin).

** D.O.C.G. (Denominación de Origen Controlada y Garantizada - Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin).

Corporación Habanos s.a.

Corporación Habanos s.a is a world leader in the commercialisation of “Premium” cigars both in Cuba and across the world. It has a network of exclusive distributors in five continents and more than 150 countries. To find out more, visit www.habanos.com

Habanos s.a commercialises 27 *Premium* brands, all *Totalmente a Mano* (Totally hand made) and covered by the **Protected Appellations of Origin (P.A.O.)**, among which stand out **Cohiba, Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, Partagás, Hoyo de Monterrey and H. Upmann**, plus many more. Habanos are unique in that they continue to be *Totalmente a Mano* (Totally hand made) after more than 200 years, during which time the island's cigars have become a reference the world over.

For more information: www.habanos.com

For more press information:

Habanos s.a.: Daymi Difurniao (ddifurniao@habanos.cu +5352804869 / 5372040513 ext 565)

Ogilvy PR: Silvia Serrano (silvia.serrano@ogilvy.com +5352802251 / +34669767147)

Inmaculada Vela (inmaculada.vela@ogilvy.com +5352805015 / +34630568572)