

## INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED FIGURES WILL BE ATTENDING THE XV HABANOS FESTIVAL, WHICH BEGINS IN 7 DAYS

- The tennis player **Boris Becker** will be one of the stars attending the various organised activities at the Festival
- Renowned Croat chefs will prepare exclusive dishes using Cuban tobacco as ingredient.
- The Alliance between Habanos and Rioja will be another highlight

**Havana, 19 February 2013.-** A number of international celebrities and notable global figures from various fields, including music, cinema, and gastronomy, will be honoured guests at Cuba's XV Habanos Festival, the esteemed annual meeting of enthusiasts of the best tobacco in the world, which will take place from Tuesday, 26 February until Saturday, 2 March.

Among them will be the German tennis player **Boris Becker**, a great Habano enthusiast, who will attend the tastings and dinners that will be held at the XV Festival. There will also be distinguished Croat chefs from the gastronomical institution *Gastronomadi*, who will exclusively prepare ground-breaking new **recipes using Cuban tobacco** as the main ingredient and garnished with salt smoked with tobacco from *Vuelta Abajo*\*. This will represent a landmark in international haute cuisine.

The youngest ever winner of Wimbledon, **Boris Becker**, has stated that the Habano is one of his great passions, and that it is an honour for him to be able to attend this event: "It will be my first time in Cuba, and I've heard some great things. I can't wait to truly get to know the great culture of the Cuban people. As a Habano aficionado, Montecristo and Partagás are among my favourites, since they are two brands that can be proud of their supreme quality".

A new feature of the XV Habanos Festival will be the **Cooking Show "Tobacco and Gastronomy"**, where famous Croat chefs **Grgur Baksic, Zoran Simunic and Pantelija Pekic** will prepare, in front of guests, radically new dishes, desserts, and sauces using Cuban tobacco from *Vuelta Abajo* as ingredient. Festival guests who are unable to attend the Cooking Show will have the chance to try some of these culinary delights at the *Vegueros* dinner on 28 February, as well as the Gala Dinner on 2 March.

Also, as part of the Habanos-led initiatives during the Festival, **Víctor F. Pascual**, President of the Regulatory Council for the **Rioja** Qualified Denomination of Origin, will be present at the pioneering Denomination of Origin Alliance that will take place between **Habanos and Rioja**. This Alliance will be a key moment at the XV Festival. They are two great and historic Denominations of Origin that are continually evolving. After an initial selection process that took place in Spain, the alliance will culminate at the *Palacio de Convenciones* in Havana with the selection of the two best pairings, chosen from the 12 Riojas and 2 vitolas that made it to the final.

Víctor F. Pascual, President of the Rioja Regulatory Council (D.O.Ca.), said: "We are very happy and proud that a product like the Habano, which is world renowned and has global appeal, wishes to be paired with Rioja wines, which share the same vocation". Reflecting the friendship and unique sensations behind this pairing, he added that "this can only be done with products whose origins are as special as those of Rioja wine and Habanos".

On 26 February, the opening day of the XV Habanos Festival, the full list of international celebrities will be made known. As huge fans of the grand traditions of Cuban tobacco, they will enjoy the full programme of activities on offer.

***Boris Becker*** (Germany 1967)

The former world number one tennis player is possibly one of the most high-profile sporting stars of modern times. He still holds the *Guinness World Record* for being the youngest ever winner on the grass courts of Wimbledon. With his stance against racism and intolerance, he is the symbol of the new Germany, outward-looking and cosmopolitan. Lastly, it should be mentioned that he was Olympic Champion (Barcelona 92, gold medal in doubles) and won more than 60 tournaments throughout his career, including 6 Grand Slams: three Wimbledon titles, two Australian Opens, and one US Open.

***Gastronomadi Team. Grgur Baksic, Zoran Simunic and Pantelija Pekic*** (Croatia)

Three standard bearers for the Balkans and the potential impact that the region can have on the world, these chefs have chosen to showcase Croatia's greatest treasure: The fusion of different cultures, resulting from Roman, Turkish, and Austro-Hungarian historical influences, which they adapt to their cooking. Together they formed Gastronomadi, a consultancy and community of highly-regarded gastronomic experts. It was created to promote the taste for simplicity and nature, rural surroundings and classic *savoir faire*. These pioneering chefs will be the main attraction at the Cooking Show "Tobacco and Gastronomy", during which they will, live and exclusively, prepare haute cuisine recipes using the world's best tobacco from Vuelta Abajo\*. There will also be an opportunity to try their dishes at the Vegueros Dinner on 28 February and the Gala Dinner on 2 March, which will be the climax to the XV Habanos Festival.

***Víctor F. Pascual*** (Spain, 1945)

Víctor Pascual Artacho, a winemaker with a wealth of experience, has been President of the Regulatory Council for the Rioja Qualified Denomination of Origin since March 2004, and is the first President of the Inter-trade Organisation for Rioja Wine since its Board of Directors was established in December 2003.

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

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