

“8 Scotch and Cigar Pairings for the True Cigar Enthusiast” by Taylor Bush

It's Saturday night, you're out at an upscale bar with some friends and you're smoking your favorite cigar. The lights are bright, the mood's good, but something's missing: a good drink to go with your smoke. The drink menu comes and it's time to order your favorite scotch.

Scotch has the elegance, the refinement, the accumulation of flavor that mirrors the meticulous properties of the best cigars. With scotch you know you're getting a product that, much like premium cigars, has been patiently cultivated in order to access its finest qualities. Both scotch and cigars are created from ingredients typically taken from the ground and have compositions that absorb materials in the atmosphere. These shared traits are part of the reason why so many people pair them together.

I recently embarked on an extensive research mission to find the best scotch/cigar combinations. After meeting with a syndicate of seasoned whiskey-drinking cigar connoisseurs, I've compiled the following list of the most indulgent combinations of scotch and cigar brands.

Ashton VSG – Lagavulin 16

Distilled on the Islay, Lagavulin 16 is a pungent scotch that tastes like band-aids and baby-back ribs to its detractors, but the finest ambrosia to its cult fans. It's a dry tackle of smoke and brine with lots of maritime textures to it. We paired it with Ashton VSG, a strong powerhouse in a similar value stratum as Lagavulin. The huskiness of the scotch draws out the notes of earth, cedar and spice VSG generates and gives them fuller exposure to your palate. Whenever I indulge in these two behemoths, I find myself reliving the aftertaste for hours afterwards.

Padron 1926 Series – Springbank 15

Springbank 15 is made on the coast of Campeltown and, much like Highland Park, contains textures of brine and peat. Springbank 15 is more intense than Highland Park though, with less sherry characteristics. It goes great with the world-class Padron 1926 Series. Both have refined price points and full bodies. They also create a great syncopation of dried fruits and nuts that we can't get enough of. If you just received your annual work bonus and want to celebrate all the hard work you've done over the past year, we think Springbank and Padron 1926 Series deserve your attention.

San Cristobal – Talisker Storm

Talisker Storm is a Viking maelstrom of spice and smoke distilled on the Isle of Skye. This is an intense scotch with big, bold flavors of oak and peat. If you are taking a dive into this dense drink, we suggest taking San Cristobal along as your scuba partner. The cigar is full-bodied, but rife with pleasant notes of coffee and cherry that sandbag the fervor of Talisker Storm. San Cristobal also contains flavors of wood and leather that grow more pronounced with the peaty zest that emanates from the scotch.

Oliva Master Blends – Glenlivet Nadurra Oloroso

Glenlivet Nadurra Oloroso has been heavily aged in first-fill oloroso sherry casks, imbuing the unadulterated whiskey with a heavy sherry influence. When paired with Oliva Master Blend, the fruity voltage of Glenlivet catalyzes the more latent, peaty characteristics of Oliva to come out to play. Both are rich, full-bodied experiences, and when consumed together they create a spicy amalgam that really awakens the senses. Add a bite of high-quality dark chocolate to the mix for an added layer of rich, disarming taste.

La Aroma de Cuba Noblesse – Macallan 18

Macallan 18 is a representative of the famous Speyside distillery aged in selected Sherry oak casks from Spain. A glass of the scotch provides a jamboree of smoke, autumn fruit and spice on the tongue. We paired it with the equally illustrious La Aroma de Cuba Noblesse, whose Nicaraguan tobaccos get a boost of flavor when paired with the buttery profile of the scotch. The syrupy notes of apple strudel and gingerbread in Macallan elevate the creamy textures of chocolate and almonds Noblesse possesses.

Rocky Patel Decade – Dalmore 12

Dalmore 12 is fully aged for nine years in American white oak, ex-bourbon casks. Then, half of it is taken to age in ex-oloroso sherry casks for the next three years. It's sweet, but not peaty, and robust with a slight sherry influence. This is a good cigar scotch, and we've paired it with Rocky Patel Decade for its rich, dynamic transitions of flavor. They both contain lots of taste. Notes of marzipan and citrus in the scotch balance the flavors of almonds, black cherries and spices Rocky Patel Decade exudes. The smooth profile of Dalmore eases snugly into the cool, spicy draws Decade furnishes.

My Father Le Bijou 1922 – Bowmore 15

Bowmore 15 is made near Loch Indaal in the famous Islay distillery and aged in Oloroso sherry casks, which gives the scotch a rev of syrup and apricot. There's also a potent note of gingerbread spice. We smoked it with My Father Le Bijou 1922. Among Pepin Garcia's most forward blends, Le Bijou 1922 is known for generating powerful waves of black pepper, coffee beans and spices that maneuver smoothly under the pronounced imprint of Bowmore. Peated notes of black licorice and cinnamon from Bowmore edge into the ferocious and polarizing richness of a lustrous Nicaraguan Oscuro wrapper leaf on Le Bijou 1922.

Fuente Fuente Opus X – Oban 18

Fuente Fuente Opus X is a supremely rare, legendary smoke known for its boldness. A focus on potent Ligerito tobaccos from the Dominican Republic characterizes Opus X with a profound spice and a chewy, savory finish. If you're going to drink something with it, you definitely want something with some backbone. Oban 18 gets the job done. It projects wafts of sea air and toffee that tether the profusion of spice Opus X is notorious for. Oban 18 supplies buttery notes of vanilla and wild berries that rest nicely on the tongue with the rich signature of dried fruit, figs and black

pepper that define Opus X. Be warned: this pairing isn't for the faint of heart. But for those adventurous enough to try, you'll be rewarded with a luxurious fusion of well-balanced profiles you'll want to savor endlessly.

What are some of your favorite cigar and scotch pairings? Share in the comments below.