

By: Vish Vishwanathan

Daru aur Dhuan – the perfect combination for being inebriated, whether it be a cigarette, *beedi*, pipe or the *maharaja* of all smokes, a **Cigar**. Since Rocky Patel is featured in this issue, I wanted to talk about drinks that go well with cigars.

Now, there is no straightforward answer to the question of what you should drink with a cigar. A lot of it comes down to personal preference. You should drink what you feel comfortable with. After all, smoking a cigar is a very personal thing, and everything about the ritual should contribute to the enjoyment. To drink something purely because it seems to be the done thing, is to miss the point of smoking the cigar.

Many factors contribute to the decision of picking a drink with your cigar. The time of day for example - a cigar smoked after dinner will require a different drink than a cigar smoked in the morning. It is an inexact science. The problem of what to drink with a cigar can often seem like an insurmountable obstacle for the novice cigar smoker.

Striking A Balance When selecting a good drink to go with your cigar, in general, you should try to match relative flavors and weights. A full-bodied cigar calls for a full-bodied drink, while more delicate drinks such as champagne, while they may still work, call for a far lighter cigar.

According to *Jack Bettridge* at Cigar Aficionado, there are two main problems with this rule - as a generalization, it is not always true, and it is a rule that is more useful in avoiding mistakes than for discovering sublime new marriages of drink and cigar.



Truly great pairings come when complex flavors within a cigar and a spirit create synergy. A dull cigar suddenly smacks of cocoa and whiskey tastes of orange peel. A spicy, salty cigar might soar when paired with a sweeter spirit because the tastes complement and create overtones of toast or nuts.

With that in mind, it becomes simply a matter of testing different combinations until you find the one that suits you. Some people still enjoy the traditional accompaniments of cognac or port, while others prefer single-malt scotch or rum.

Even non-alcoholic drinks such as coffee have been found to go well with cigars. In fact, it turns out that almost any drink with a complex enough

flavor can be a good match to a fine cigar.

Here is a short guide to some of the more common drinks, in order to simplify the situation.

COGNAC

Cognac is the traditional, almost clichéd drink to have with cigars. This is largely because it is usually taken after meals. Arguably, there is no better drink to combine with a cigar after a meal.

When buying cognac, pay attention to the age designation of the bottle. *VS* (Very Special) is the lowest category of age, and should generally be ignored for pairing with cigars. The middle age bracket is designated *VSOP* (Very Special Old Pale), and indicates ageing of at least four and a half years. Mild and medium-bodied cigars go particularly well with this age of cognac. The highest age bracket is *XO*, standing for Extra Old, and has a minimum ageing requirement of six and a half years, although older brandies can sometimes be part of the blend.



Contd. on Page 34

Restaurant Review: Punjab Indian Restaurant

By: Team Masala



Jarnail Singh, Karnail Singh and Gurmail Singh opened **Punjab Indian Restaurant** in 1988 on International Drive in Orlando. Continuing their family business from back home in Punjab, India, they have been around for 20 years. Karnail Singh also had a restaurant in Ft. Lauderdale which he opened in 1982.

Nama Singh, Gurmail Singh's wife says, "we decided on International Drive because of the location - we get a very good mix of Indian and non-Indian clientele and our food is loved by everyone."

The restaurant opened after a few renovations in 1988 and has never looked back. They expanded the restaurant in order to accommodate their increasing client base in 1995 from a seating of 60 to about 95.

Punjab Indian Restaurant is one of the very few Indian restaurants that is invited to cater for Disney Hotels. They also cater for events in Hilton, Orlando, Hyatt Regency Airport, Florida Mall Hotel, the Adams Mark hotel, Tampa Ritz Carlton, Tampa Fort Harrison, Tampa Marriot amongst many others.

The quality of their food is maintained strictly by the Singh family. All of their chefs are from India and are trained to follow the recipes that have been created by the family who believes in staying true to their 'home-grown' recipes to maintain authen-



tic Punjabi Indian cuisine. They make their own *paneer*, all the desserts are made on the premises and are never store bought as are their *chutneys* such as mango, mint and tamarind.

Their most popular vegetarian dishes are the *Paneer Masala*, *Mater Methi Malai* and *Chili Paneer*. The non-vegetarian dishes such as the *Chicken Tikka Masala* and the *Butter Chicken* do extremely well because their base sauce is made with fresh tomatoes. Their *Chicken 65*, *Chicken Methi Malai* and *Chicken Jalfrezi* are also in high demand.

Nama Singh says that their *naans* are so popular that they sometimes get orders for more than a 100 at a time. Again, all the bread is also made in the restaurant.

Punjab Indian Restaurant is understandably asked to cater all over Florida and have provided their delicious food starting from Jacksonville all the way down to Ft. Lauderdale. If you would like to get more information in getting your next event catered by them, call Gurmail Singh at 321-278-7780.

The lunch buffet at the restaurant is \$8.95 and includes appetizers, 4 vegetarian dishes, 3 non-vegetarian dishes, fresh *naan*, desserts and various condiments. The buffet is available from 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM. The restaurant is open from 11:30 AM until 11:00 PM, Tuesdays through Sundays and from 5 PM until 11 PM on Mondays.

The restaurant is located at 7451 International Dr. Orlando FL 32819 and can be contacted at 407-352-7887. Website is www.punjabindianrestaurant.com.

Punjab Indian Restaurant opened a second location in Tallahassee in August of 2006 called **Essence of India** which received a 4 star rating. For more information on this restaurant, call Lalli at 850-656-7200.



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Contd. From Page 31

SCOTCH

Scotch, especially single-malt, is another good drink to have with cigars. Taken on the rocks, or straight up, scotch will not be overpowered by even a strong cigar, and unlike cognac, you can drink scotch at any time of the day. There are hundreds of different blends of scotch available today and you will never have time to taste every cigar with every scotch. In many cases, the differences are so subtle that it is difficult to recommend a particular pairing of cigar and scotch. The sheer variety available means that you will be able to continue experimenting for years to find an inspiring match for your chosen cigar.



RUM

Traditionally, rum and cigars come from a similar geographical area. Whether we are talking Cuba or the Caribbean, the people who make cigars have also made rum. For this reason, the two comple-

ment each other very well. The cigar makers make their cigars to go with the drink they know. This has changed somewhat in the modern world. Cigar makers are not necessarily limited to only drinking rum, and thus the cigars they produce might be better suited to other drinks. Rum in its cheapest and most basic form can ruin even the best cigar, accentuating any roughness of the smoke until all pleasure is lost completely. However, if you buy carefully, the right rum can be a perfect complement to a good cigar.

COCKTAILS

There are several types of cocktails that can accompany a cigar. A mixture of crème-de-menthe

and brandy is considered by some to be a classic. A variation of the recipe uses vodka instead of brandy. This cocktail is served with cigars at several hot spots in New York and elsewhere.

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Believe it or not, it is possible to drink non-alcoholic drinks with cigars. As long as you are careful about which drinks you choose, a non-alcoholic drink can be just as pleasurable as a good cognac or single-malt scotch. One of the best non-alcoholic choices is coffee, particularly espresso, as it has strong, complex flavors, which complement the taste of a good cigar.

Hopefully, the next time you light up a stogie, you will know what to drink and will enjoy both, the cigar and the drink.

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