TASTE

BEER & CIGARS

IT'S ALWAYS A CELEBRATION WHEN YOU UNWRAP A SAVORY CIGAR AND POP OPEN AN ELEGANT BEER.

BY KENT OSWALD



Cigar: Rocky Patel Vintage 1990 Beer: Sierra Nevada Porter

This pairing of strong tastes will please a mature palate most. Wrapped in 10-year-old, sun-grown Ecuadorian tobacco, Rocky Patel has bold, earthy flavors that include coffee and cedar. It produces a strong, sophisticated smoke, but the creamy-headed Sierra Nevada holds its own with a mouthful of flavors: You'll detect chocolaty and malt notes with hints of caramel and citrus fruit from the hops.

Also Try: Complementing the sweetness and maltiness of the Rocky Patel are the heavier-tasting Samuel Smith Oatmeal Stout as well as the lighter Saranac Black and Tan.



Cigar: Ashton VSG Sorcerer Beer: Ommegang Three Philosophers

Year's end is a natural time to reflect and seek out the earth, air, fire and water balance a cigar and beer can provide. Discover that elemental combination by pairing the smooth-drawing Ashton and its flickers of cherry and mocha with Three Philosophers counterbalance of the sweet roasted malts and intense yeast. Let both age a year or two before marrying them, and the strong, mature tastes will provide an even more sophisticated and thought-provoking blend. Also Try: Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout and Highland Black Mocha Stout offer additional opportunities for chocoholics rejoicing at holiday time.





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Cigar: Romeo y Julieta Reserve Maduro Beer: Dogfish Head Immort Ale

The dark Connecticut broadleaf wrapper may suggest the longer nights of winter, but the dry, somewhat spicy blend of Dominican, Nicaraguan and Peruvian tobaccos offers the more sensual experience of holiday celebrations. This full-bodied, somewhat spicy smoke leaves your palate rather dry and ready for the complementing tastes of Dogfish's oak-aged quaff, with its complex mix of juniper berry, vanilla and maple syrup flavors.

Also Try: Delirium Tremens and Rochefort Trappist 8 offer different but equally intricate taste experiences (alone and enhanced) when paired with the Romeo y Julieta Reserve Maduro.

Cigar: Kinky Cristo Beer: Guinness Draught

This newly introduced line of cigars (profits from which support Kinky Friedman's Utopia Animal Rescue Ranch in Medina, Texas) offers just a hint of spiciness at first, then builds into a rich smoke that leaves notes of coffee on your tongue from its blend of Honduran and Nicaraguan tobaccos. Friedman, a singer, mystery writer and recent Texas gubernatorial candidate (who used to be all Cubans all the time), recommends pairing this new favorite with the black-pouring Guinness and its malt-filled taste accented with notes of chocolate and coffee. Also Try: Two other high-headed, near-black beers whose tastes include moderate bitterness wed to cocoa notes

are Deschutes Obsidian Stout and Rogues

Ale Brewery Shakespeare Stout.



Cigar: Don Pepin Garcia Black Label 1979 Beer: Pete's Wicked Ale

While the traditional pairing of this wondrously flavorful Don Pepin-with Nicaraguan notes of cedar, coffee, bittersweet cocoa, nuts and black pepperis a stronger beer with a high alcohol content, it also plays nicely off something lighter. Pouring a draft of Pete's standard-bearer, with its lighter spice and fruitiness, to match up to this robust Cuban classic is a strategy for success. Also Try: Deschutes Inversion IPA and Dogfish Head 90 Minute IPA will both be solid matches with hoppy kicks that pair well with the dry boldness of the Pepin.

