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# tasting highlights

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It's not every day that an inexpensive, relatively unknown cigar brand outscores such legendary names as Fuente, Montecristo, Padrón and Cohiba, so it's quite notable that our top scorer out of this blind tasting of 77 cigars is the Oliva "O" Olé. This reasonably priced Nicaraguan *puro*—it retails for \$5.74—is made by the Oliva Cigar Co., which has been producing cigars in Nicaragua for ten years. A survivor of the cigar-boom shakeout, Oliva is now coming into its own. It was the star performer in a very strong robusto category, which had four 90s.



**TOP ROBUSTO**  
**OLIVA "O" OLÉ**

**NICARAGUA**

92

Oliva just turned 10 years old, and the cigars it's making today are superior to the ones it made at its inception. The company's original brand was Gilberto Oliva, made from a blend of tobaccos from several countries. These Olivas are Nicaraguan *puros*, and they are rich and flavorful, indicative of the fine cigars being made today with Nicaraguan tobacco.



**TOP CHURCHILL**  
**BOLIVAR CORONA GIGANTE**

**CUBA**

90

This is the best score for the Bolivar Corona Gigante in two years. The rich cigar tied with the H. Upmann Sir Winston, another Cuban Churchill, and the Joya de Nicaragua Antaño 1970 Churchill for the best smoke in this category.



**TOP FIGURADO**  
**FUENTE FUENTE OPUSX SUPER BELICOSO**

**DOM. REP.**

90

One of the newer sizes added to Fuente's most prized line, the Fuente Fuente OpusX Super Belicoso is rich and decadent. It has been a top scorer for this brand of late, having recently scored 91 points in *Cigar Insider*, CIGAR AFICIONADO's sister publication. The OpusX tied with two Cubans, including the benchmark Montecristo No. 2, for top figurado.



**TOP CORONA GORDA**  
**PADRÓN 5000**

**NICARAGUA**

89

The Padrón family excels at the art of cigar-making, and while it's best known for its anniversary smokes, its core line also scores well, as seen here. A model of consistency, the 5000 scored the same 89 points the last time it was rated, in our April 2004 issue.



**TOP DOUBLE CORONA**  
**ZINO PLATINUM CROWN SERIES DOUBLE GRANDE**

**DOM. REP.**

89

The Zino brand was limping along until Davidoff of Geneva joined with the Arnell Group to re-create it as the Zino Platinum Crown Series. The cigars are expensive and very good, as seen by this 89-point rating. The Zino tied with the inexpensive Padrón Executive to lead this category.



**TOP LONSDALE**  
**ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN ILLUSION**

**DOM. REP.**

88

For the spicy, leathery cigar fan, it's hard to beat an Ashton Virgin Sun Grown, or VSG. They rank among the highest-octane smokes made by Tabacalera A. Fuente. The VSG tied with a Partagas Spanish Rosado to lead the lonsdale category, a size that has become fairly unpopular in the United States.

