



Cigar review - La Palina 'Alison'

December 18th, 2010

Resurrected after an over 80 year absence from the market, La Palina has found its ways into the humidors of retailers across the country since formally debuting at the IPCPR trade show in August.

The cigar is the product of William S. Paley, Jr., grandson of the cigar's inventor, Samuel Paley, founder of the Congress Cigar Company in the late 1800s. When Samuel retired in 1926, the cigar went with him, not to be revived until Paley wanted to create a cigar for the family's retreat house in the Bahamas. That led him to Avelino Lara, the famed Cuban cigar maker who created the Cohiba brand for Fidel Castro but had since gone to work for Graycliff after fleeing his homeland. Paley and Lara created the reborn La Palina, and while Lara passed away in October 2009, the cigars were able to be taken to production under the guidance of his son Abel and the team at Graycliff in the Bahamas.

La Palina's standard line is offered in four vitolas - the Pasha, a 7.5" x 50 ring gauge with a shaggy foot and named for Paley's father, William S. Paley; the Babe, a 5.25" x 50 named for his mother; the Alison, a 6" x 52 torpedo named for his sister; and a 4.5" x 52 perfecto named the Little Bill, Paley's nickname that is used to distinguish him from his father.

The Babe and Pasha each have wrappers of Costa Rican capa, and is a mild-to-medium bodied cigar that aims for a light, creamy smoke with hints of both spice and sweetness. The Alison and Little Bill have an Ecuadorian wrapper and feature aged ligero filler that creates a medium-bodied smoke with some smooth, spicy notes. The fillers on each cigar come from Honduras and Nicaragua with the binder hailing from Costa Rica.

There is also a 4.75" x 52 robusto dubbed the Limited Edition 1896 Robusto, which has an Ecuadorian wrapper, binder from Costa Rica and filler from Honduras and Nicaragua. It is designed to be a medium-body cigar that has a hint of sweetness against a spicy background.

Joining in this review are Bill Niederer, owner of Mojito Cigar Lounge in Cave Creek, and Jason Scott, one of the managers at Mojito Cigar Lounge.

Three of the Alison vitolas were selected from the humidor at Mojito Cigar Lounge, partially because Niederer is a fan of fuller bodied cigars and wanted to see if the cigar would deliver the added kick as advertised by the second band advertising its ligero contents. Two were fairly soft to the touch, while two were categorized as being firm without being rock hard. A medium dark brown color dominated the wrapper, with some darker spots varying on the cigar.

Prior to lighting, the cigar's aroma shows consistent notes of hay, and while wheat was considered to be present, it didn't seem to have the roundedness that wheat usually presents. Each picked up a bit of bark and woodsiness -- Bill noted maple or cedar, while Jason picked up California redwood. The wrapper is a bit irregular both in color and texture, showing some textural changes that are highlighted by veins.

The cold draw was perfect on each cigar, with some notes of white and earl grey tea coming through.

Once lit, the La Palina gave a little kick thanks to the Ecuadorian wrapper and ligero. The woody notes are also present early on, and seemed to give each smoker a preview that there should be some intensifying flavors and the cigar progressed. In the aroma of the smoke, some notes of sawdust and mulling spices came through.

The cigar also gave off a bit of dry mouth early on, with a bit of back of the throat tingle that lingered while the cigar rested. It's tough to say if the ligero is working its magic or if the cigar could use a bit more age to smooth out the smoke. Either way, the cigar presents a mouth full of flavor with a bit of a punch being felt in the stomach, though certainly not an overpowering one.

Through the first third, Jason started to pick out more pronounced notes of thyme on his palate.

Moving to the midway point, the spice and pepper became much more prevalent, particularly through the nose. The La Palina didn't seem to do much for the palate, choosing to tingle the nostrils more than the tongue.

One thing that varied from each cigar was the ash color -- some stayed fairly white, while others turned more of a salt-and-pepper color. Each cigar developed challenges maintaining a straight burn line, and while each reviewer fought the urge to touch it up, felt compelled to before reaching the midway point.

Each reviewer commented on the cigar's aroma once lit -- the notes of wood and a bit of citrus merge together to form a pleasing aroma that gently wafts into your nose with a satisfying reaction, similar to the smell of hot apple cider on a cold day. There's also a bit of clove that seems to be present, giving just a bit of edge to the smoke.

Jason noted the cigar developed in intensity and richness of flavors as he approached the center of it, proving the early prediction wasn't too far off. Bill readily agreed, adding the development of flavor as he took the bands off his cigar. "It started out as a medium, but took that next step to medium-full," he noted.

Once the band comes off, the wheat notes started to emerge again, but the flavor also intensified as the La Palina looked to impart one parting shot before it would be time to put the cigar down for good.

The La Palina isn't for those afraid of flavor and want something that will stay with them the whole way through. In terms of full bodied, it falls well beyond medium but stays shy of being

what many aficionados would describe as a full-bodied heavyweight. Niederer noted that this could be a great cigar for someone looking to move towards a medium bodied cigar and have their first introduction to what ligero does and tastes like.

Final smoking time was right around an hour and 45 minutes.

Without taking the price into consideration, the La Palina 'Alison' gets a favorable review from each of the three reviewers. The aroma was one of the more notable bright spots, while the development of complexity and flavor throughout the cigar also was noteworthy. While it never put the flavor into high gear, it also never backed down or had any lulls. Jason appreciated both the nuances that the cigar showed, as well as the balance and well-roundedness.

Considering the price, it seems to fall in line with other cigars in terms of value and delivery of flavor. The \$20 price tag can be a bit tough to swallow without knowing how the cigar will taste, but for each reviewer, it didn't leave much on the table in terms of flavor, strength, balance or performance. As Bill noted, "if you're the kind of smoker who regularly has cigars in that price range, it's one to add to

The La Palina is available at [cigar stores across the country](#), including [Mojito Cigar Lounge](#) in Cave Creek, AZ. Suggested retail price is around \$22 for the Alison, with the rest of the line coming in near the \$20 range.