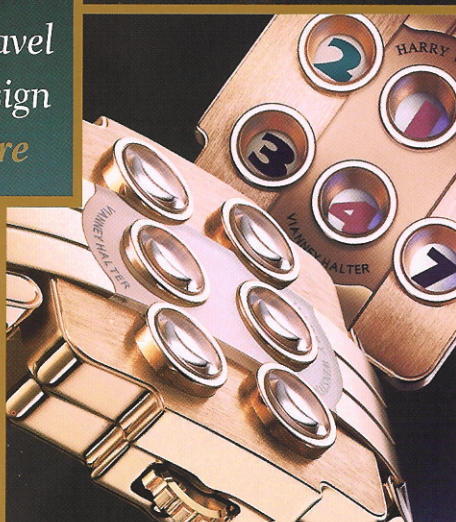


Robb Report

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Cigars



GRAYCLIFF ESPRESSO

The Bahamian company takes a shot, scores.

It stands to reason that Graycliff owner Enrico Garzaroli would create a cigar worthy of the acclaimed cuisine and wine cellar at his Nassau, Bahamas, resort. The Graycliff Espresso is the ultimate power smoke in more ways than one. While stronger-tasting cigars have become increasingly popular over the past few years, many manufacturers have sacrificed finesse in favor of potency. Given the vagaries of the volatile tobaccos used in developing these powerhouse cigars, it is a difficult balance to strike. Nevertheless, Garzaroli has managed to do so with the Espresso, sharing the credit with Graycliff's Cuban master blender, Avelino Lara, who previously created cigars for Fidel Castro.

The Espresso has a Costa Rican wrapper, a leaf that is rough to the touch and coarse on the palate, and therefore not typically found in the smoothest-tasting cigars. "This is definitely not your typical Costa

Rican-tasting tobacco," says Garzaroli. In a research center near his Costa Rican farms, Garzaroli worked with Lara to develop a sterile and stronger hybrid of the legendary Cuban *corojo* seed. They combined this seed with a re-engineered Cuban Cameroon leaf, an Ecuadorian-grown *ligero*, and a Nicaraguan tobacco aged for six years. This hefty combination has been tempered by a flavorful touch of Philippine Simaba added to the filler.

The cigar, which is priced from \$19 for a robusto (50 x 5¼) to \$23 for a President (48 x 7¼) or a Pirate (52 x 6), can be likened to polished steel—refined yet sturdy. The flavor is pungent and chocolaty, with an added boost of caffeine. This is not a cigar for the uninitiated, but like its namesake, the Espresso is a sophisticated and powerful way to end the evening.

—RICHARD CARLETON HACKER

Graycliff, www.graycliff.com