

FOUNDATION CIGAR CO. UNVEILS ITS FIRST BRAND

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA

When *Cigar Insider* announced the formation of Nick Melillo's new Foundation Cigar Co. last month, there were no details about the company's brand. Now, Melillo has told *Insider* that the debut line is called El Güegüense, and it contains only Nicaraguan tobacco.

Pronounced "El-Wah-Wen-Say," the new El Güegüense cigars are being made at the TABSA factory in Nicaragua. The name is based on Nicaraguan folklore and, according to Melillo, is blended with vintage-specific tobacco.

"This brand encapsulates my twelve years of living in Estelí and my respect for all things Nicaragua," Melillo said.

The blend consists of a Corojo '99 wrapper and binder from Jalapa, though from different farms, while the filler is made up of Criollo and Corojo tobaccos from 2011 and 2012 crop years. (Note: Corojo '99 does not indicate harvest year, but seed variety.)

The El Güegüense cigars will be packaged in dress boxes of 25 and offered in five sizes: Robusto, 5 1/2 inches by 50 ring; Corona Gorda, 5 5/8 by 46; Toro Huaco, 6 by 56; Churchill, 7 by 48; and Torpedo, 6 1/4 by 52. They'll retail in the \$9 to \$13 range. Though debuting at the IPCPR trade show on July 18, the cigars will not appear on retail shelves until September.

Melillo formerly ran production at La Gran Fabrica Drew Estate in Nicaragua, where he worked for 11 years. The Connecticut-based Foundation Cigar Co. is his first cigar brand since departing Drew Estate in 2014.

For a tasting of El Güegüense, see an upcoming issue of *Cigar Insider*. ■

