

Altadis USA: A Cigar Market and Social Leader

More than a major maker of fine cigars, Altadis U.S.A. is an industry leader committed to bettering the lives of its employees and serving its local communities. >BY CRAIG WILLIAMSON

Altadis U.S.A., Inc. has been creating high quality premium cigars since 1918. Today, as part of Imperial Tobacco Group, the company is the largest manufacturer of premium, handmade cigars in the world.

Mention the great cigar brands, and you'll discover that many of them are made by Altadis. Any aficionado of fine

grown on company farms or by trusted vendors, tobacco is purchased only from growers who can guarantee a superior product, year after year. Cigars are meticulously tested for construction, consistency of blend, flavor, color, and smoothness of draw.

As an industry leader, Altadis U.S.A. takes seriously its responsibility to join

cigar smokers can buy, premium cigars. Most recently, Altadis has engaged with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other government agencies in seeking to exempt premium cigars from FDA regulation, or to ensure that any potential regulation reflects the unique nature of premium cigars.

Altadis is also active in a number of initiatives designed to improve the lives of its employees and serve the communities in which it operates.

Of primary concern to the company is the health and safety of its workers. In order to create a safe environment, the company provides employees with personal protective equipment and, to minimize accidents, thoroughly and continually trains them in the correct use of working tools. Altadis is proud of its excellent safety record.

Another company priority is developing its internal resources by providing its employees with the opportunity to advance their careers through both internal and external training programs. For example, the company recently instituted its Cigar Master Roller Program. This internal program enables employees to increase their knowledge and technical skills and gives them the opportunity to grow within the organization.

To create a "green" environment for its workers, the company is educating employees in ways to reduce waste. Through the Altadis Foundation and a local non-profit organization in La Romana, the company provided the

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smokes has undoubtedly experienced the pleasures of one of the company's cigars; its extensive portfolio includes the prestigious Montecristo, the top-selling Romeo y Julieta, the legendary H. Upmann, and such trusted and highly rated brands as Trinidad, VegaFina, Don Diego, Gispert, Saint Luis Rey, Juan Lopez, and Casa de Garcia among others.

Altadis employs many of the cigar industry's most experienced craftsmen. According to Javier Estades, General Manager for premium cigars at Altadis U.S.A., these artisans are "passionate about their craft and dedicated to creating nothing less than the 'ideal' cigar." Cigars are blended by a team of experts, the so-called "grupo de maestros," representing over 200 years of combined tobacco experience among them.

Altadis has a large international footprint, and has established relationships with growers around the world, sourcing over 30 types of premium quality tobacco from 17 countries. Whether

with other companies and defend the premium cigar industry against unwarranted and unjustified restrictions. In addition to its CAA membership, Altadis is proud to commit resources to other industry associations, and to work at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that retail tobacconists can sell, and adult



> The Altadis Foundation and Tabacalera de García, S.A.S—the cigar factory of Altadis U.S.A. located in La Romana, Dominican Republic—participate in the Dominican Republic's national literacy plan, Quisqueya Aprende Contigo, via the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Presidency's Special Program's Cabinet. In order to carry out this program, with its key aim of eradicating adult illiteracy in the city, municipality, and province of La Romana, 15 groups of 12 participants a year have been formed to receive literacy classes for a six-month period. Tabacalera de García's employees are actively participating in this project.



> In collaboration with the Lions Club of Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras, the Altadis Foundation is supporting the Colonia Villa Imperial project that aims to improve the living conditions of many families with limited economic resources that live in Santa Rosa de Copán by providing access to a proper home. This project has focused on the construction of 71 two- and three-bedroom homes, in accordance to the city's urban planning.

financial resources to build sanitary infrastructure, improving the lives of over 800 families.

Altadis has long been dedicated to giving back to the communities in

which it is located. In the Dominican Republic, the company sponsored 20 groups taking part in a literacy program and through this local government initiative, over 300 adults were taught to

read and write. In addition, Altadis supports employee participation in local events to serve the communities. Some examples include cleaning beaches in surrounding areas, volunteering at elder care centers, and supporting local sporting events.

In Honduras, where adequate housing is desperately needed, the company has invested in a number of new housing projects providing modern shelter for dozens of families.

Altadis values social responsibility as seriously as creating the finest cigars. "Our industry faces many challenges but also has many opportunities," Estades observes, adding, "By continuing to make a quality product and working with other stakeholders, we'll meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. I'm optimistic, and I believe there are bright days ahead for the premium cigar industry." **S**

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