



## CHATEAU DIADEM

### "IF YOU CAN DREAM IT, YOU CAN DO IT"

THE MORNING AFTER THE GALA EVENING AT THE PROCIGAR FESTIVAL IN FEBRUARY WE MET THIERRY FARAH OF CHATEAU DIADEM. HE APOLOGIZED FOR THE ABSENCE OF HIS BUSINESS PARTNER AND COUSIN, EMILY SAHAKIAN, WITH WHOM HE FOUNDED THE COMPANY ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO. SHE HAD MISSED HER PLANE COMING FROM THE TOTAL PRODUCT EXPO (TPE) IN LAS VEGAS, WHERE SHE'D HAD A MEETING WITH A POTENTIAL US IMPORTER.

INTERVIEW: BEN VINKEN • PHOTOS: BEN VINKEN / HIRESTUDIO / CHATEAU DIADEM

But it's not a problem. In Thierry, who is a bit nervous because he has never given an interview before, we find a fluent interview partner. The Swiss cigar manufacturer speaks easily in both his native language, French, as well as in English.

#### ***Cigar Journal: How did you become interested in cigars?***

THIERRY FARAH: Our parents would throw lavish parties when we were kids, and my cousin and I would have our special moment when my father let us carry his humidor to the guests so they could choose a cigar. My father's favourite brand was the Romeo y Julieta Tubos. So I was around cigars during my entire youth.

#### ***Cigar Journal: And what made you want to become a producer?***

THIERRY FARAH: In 1992 I traveled to the United States and was fascinated by the local cigar scene. I wanted to be in this business. In my hometown of Geneva I started to sell cigars; I did this for more than 15 years. I convinced Emily to leave her job in New York City working for Veuve Clicquot and promised her equal rewards for working with a noble product.



"Diadem" refers to the crowning of the roller's work, when the cigar is wrapped with a beautiful band.

She built the business with me over five years and we even created a line of chocolates together that were especially crafted for cigar lovers. But in 2009, this ended with my decision to sell the business, something I regret to this day. Our ways parted; Emily went to work in branding and communication for luxury consumables, while I tried new ventures in real estate, cars, and cryptocurrencies.

But the passion for cigars always remained. You should see my collection of humidors! During the pandemic, Emily and I zoomed for hours, smoking hundreds of cigars together and midway through, we both set our minds straight: We decided to do it, to create our own cigar brand. And Chateau Diadem was born.

***Cigar Journal: What is the meaning of this brand? Where does the name come from?***

THIERRY FARAH: Using “Chateau” – here we were inspired by the legendary range of Davidoff cigars named after the great French wine castles. “Diadem” refers to the crowning of the roller’s work, when the cigar is wrapped with a beautiful band.

***Cigar Journal: How did you develop the cigars?***

THIERRY FARAH: For the blend we travelled to the Dominican Republic with a gourmet chef and cigar enthusiast friend. With our three distinct palates we had to come to an agreement. We set up our own little atelier in Navarrete – here in the Dominican Republic – with the leaves we bought, and after a year and a half, our blend came to life.

***Cigar Journal: How do you work together with your cousin?***

THIERRY FARAH: As a team, we’re very complementary, as Emily has a branding and marketing background in wine and food, and I have the entrepreneurial skills from my previous ventures. We’re both incredibly meticulous in our own way and we respect that about one another, as we agree that it’s the attention you give to the details that makes you stand out.

She designed the blue and red ring with the silver inscriptions of the chateau and the brand name, because she works on sales and marketing, and I focus on production and financials. We compromise on our taste in cigars and our sensitivity to design.

## ***PREMIUM-POSITIONING***

What Emily learned in her time working for the luxury brands is that it all comes down to the right positioning. The way she designed the packaging says everything.

The word “Conviction” underscores the brand; and the cigars are priced between EUR 12.00 and 15.00 apiece. The pair travels to conquer the world with what are currently six different vitolas. The first cigars were only launched at the last InterTabac Trade Fair in September 2022. They are now present in five countries, with another four on the burner.

During the Procigar Festival, Thierry contacted several importers and distributors, among them, for example, MaranCigars of Belgium. He knows it’s going to take time to get the business rolling, but so far, it is going in the right direction.

He hopes they will double the number of countries in which they’re represented by the end of this year. But one thing is certain: Together with his cousin, Thierry has realized the dream of what they’ve always wanted to do – have their own cigar compan

