

SMOKESHOP REVIEWS

Cohibar

By Samuel Spurr

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A cool autumn Friday night finds party goers and casual strollers enjoying the bright lights, crisp air and dizzying high life. The after work crowd has quickly descended to their night time playground, glamorous couples on glamorous got-to-impress dates file past. Perched with a perfect view of surrounding Sydney, Cohibar is the perfect place to see and be seen in Sydney.

I meet with manager Laurence Appleton, busy behind the bar, before ascending to Cohibar's loft, where guests host private functions and soak in the view of the greatest harbour in the world. "We had cigar appreciation nights up here where we would recommend whiskies and bourbons to go with each cigar." Laurence informs me. After stogies, Cohibar's largest market is cocktails. "We have about 100 recipes on the menu." Laurence reveals. "Therefore we have a well established clientele because of our cocktails. Most of the recipes have been created by our bartenders and whilst we are always adding to it, we maintain the classics because that's what people are coming back for. We get a lot of opposition from customers when we try to change the menu too much!"

Cohibar has been enjoyed by smokers for approximately five years and is one of only a handful of places where you can actually sit down and enjoy a cigar. As with most cigar lounges in the western world, the watchful eye of government will effect the establishment soon. "As of July, we will have to have a designated smoking area, which will more than likely be the loft." For this reason refurbishments are planned for an extension of the luxurious smoking hideaway. Asked if any famous clientele have enjoyed a smoke or drink here, Laurence replies, "Some politicians (which may or may not be a good thing) as well as Sports Illustrated models come through here often" When asked what makes Cohibar the place to be, I'm quickly and simply told "Atmosphere, service and the view!"

We head downstairs as a function is due to begin any minute. In doing so, the club opens up to us after a few short steps. To my left, the bar, where Jo 'she makes the best cocktails here' is busy shaking up one of Cohibar's famous creations in a flurry of liquor, juice and ice. The patron's patience is not tested as the service is far from being on Cuban time. The humidor, stocked with a wide, inviting range of Cohibas, Montecristos, Romeo y Julietas and Partagas is neatly presented within the adjacent wall. Curving around to the right is a candle lit, lounge area where a group enjoy cocktails and the comfort of sleek ottomans. A French couple immerse themselves in a deep, soulful conversation. Past the bar and lounge is the greatest asset besides the cocktails, cigars and beautiful people. The open air deck, filled with after-fivers, casual acquaintances and those seeking a flirtatious evening enjoy the uninterrupted view of the city skyline. A sultrily dressed siren and her beau arrive and head up to the loft. J. Lo-esque femme fatales saunter inside to the bar after perusing the cocktail menu. Shouts of 'another Caipirinha' are heard from a group of mates busily attempting to impress members of the fairer sex.



Jo mixing drinks

As a cool breeze is picking up, I choose to stay indoors, easing into the smooth leather lounges with a Scotch, Dry and a twist of lime coupled with a Partagas Deluxe. I take in the indulgent surroundings, the waitress replaces the ashtray seconds after the glowing embers fall from my smoke.

Damn it feels good to be alive! I wouldn't be dead for quids.