



## Endless Summer Cigar Festival

*Hawaiian cigar retailers and the island's sole cigar maker host a festival combining business and pleasure.* **>BY FRANK SELTZER**

The Hawaii Cigar Association combined a public event for cigar enthusiasts on the islands with a lobbying push to try to roll back the state's onerous 50 percent excise tax on cigars. Les Drent, president of Kauai Cigars, pushed legislators to change the tax to a flat 50 cents-per cigar. Drent was assisted in his efforts by a number of influential industry players who flew in for the three days of festivities: Rocky Patel, president of Rocky Patel Premium Cigar Co.; the Garcia family (Jose "Pepin," son Jaime, and daughter Janny); Pete Johnson, founder of Tatuaje Cigars; Robbie Levin, c.e.o. of Ashton Cigars; Chris McCalla, legislative director of IPCPR; and Jeff Borysiewicz, chairman of the board of Cigar Rights of America (CRA). The bill is still making its way through the legislature, but on Sunday night, February 10, about 250 cigar smokers gathered beachside at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Oahu for the festival's cigar gala. Guests enjoyed traditional Hawaiian entertainment, dinner, spirits, and fine cigars.

A number of top cigar retailers from around the islands also participated,

exhibiting the many brands of premium cigar brands sold in Hawaii.

Cigar rollers from the Kauai Cigar Company were also on hand, making limited edition cigars utilizing tobacco grown on the company's own plantations on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.

Finally, a silent auction of rare cigars raised money to benefit those in the U.S. military who have been injured defending the nation. **S**



>Above: Jose "Pepin" Garcia (left) of My Father Cigars and Pete Johnson (right) of Tatuaje Cigars discuss Kauai Cigar Company's Hawaiian-grown tobaccos with torcedora Nancie Bean.