

ENJOYING YOUR CIGAR

WHEN IT COMES TO LIGHTING UP, HERE ARE A FEW TIPS:

ASK FIRST Some people around you might not share your love of cigars, which is why it's recommended that you ask a simple "May I?" to anyone nearby before torching up that cigar. If it's an area where adults are already smoking, then just go ahead. **I'M WITH THE BAND** Should you remove a cigar's band, or let it stay? The short answer is yes. There is no correct protocol – but why not let that handsome Montecristo band stay? If you decide to remove the band, it's often a good idea to smoke

part of the cigar first. The process of smoking the cigar will warm the glue on the band, making it easier to slide off – otherwise you could damage the cigar. If you have a great cigar, you may want to smoke it down past the band – which does NOT taste good, so remove it well before you get there. **TO ASH IS NOT DIVINE** Most say to let the ash linger on the cigar until it falls on its own accord, rather than flicking or tapping it into an ashtray. Like the "legs" of great wine, ash that

holds tight to a cigar is recognized as a sign it's well made. A long ash will also help keep your cigar from burning too hot. Just be aware: unpredictable ash falls may increase your dry cleaning bills. **A DIGNIFIED END** Let your cigar rest in an ashtray and it will extinguish itself. Do not mash it out. Mashing cigars out can result in acrid odors, and few things scream novice more than this move.

THE 70/70 RULE

In general, cigars properly stored at the constant temperature of **70 degrees** and **70% humidity** can be kept indefinitely. Sometimes, if a cigar gets dried out, it can be restored by re-humidifying slowly for flavor and consistency. Note: if the humidity is too high, the cigar may swell, develop mold and be impossible to draw. Too low and the cigar will dry out and crack, making a draw that's too easy and a burn that's way too fast.

SOME CITIES THAT LOVE CIGARS.....and there are many...

Depending on the criteria for selection, three cities qualify to be the top cigar town in the United States. If you are looking for a cigar-friendly town where you can smoke and enjoy cigars while frolicking in the country's foremost adult playgrounds, the choice is obvious. If you are interested in cigar culture, only one U.S. city can compete. If you are searching for a taste of cigar history, yet another city immediately comes to mind. Therefore, we are not going to rank them, but simply refer. After all, we do know that all U.S. cities have their favorite cigar haunts.



Las Vegas, Nevada
In Nevada, anything goes. Smoking cigars in casinos is permitted. Las Vegas is the city selected by the Retail Tobacco Dealers of America for its annual conventions and trade shows. *Cigar Aficionado* magazine also hosts its annual Big Smoke Weekend in this fun city. Most casinos on the Strip provide free cocktails for their gambling patrons, and some also provide free cigars.

Miami, Florida
Besides having a rich cigar culture in areas such as South Beach, where premium cigars are sold at sidewalk cafes and hotels, the section known as Little Havana on Calle Ocho (or SW 8th St.) has deep roots in Cuban heritage. You will find great Cuban restaurants, stores, and more. Although the Cuban seed tobacco may now be grown in the Dominican Republic, the handmade cigars are probably the closest sticks to Cuban cigars available in the U.S. Retail smoke shops allow cigar smoking, and there are many to choose from in this tropical paradise.

Tampa, Florida
The Tampa area is famous for cigars, and there are many retailers popular with cigar smokers. If you are looking for a taste of cigar history, check out Ybor City near downtown Tampa, which in the 1800s was considered the cigar capital of the world. The old cigar factories have been transformed into dining, smoking, and retail establishments, and the area is now a popular entertainment district. The Annual Ybor City Heritage & Cigar Festival benefits the Ybor City Museum Society, and is one of the premier festivals in the Tampa Bay area.

"If I paid ten dollars for a cigar, first I'd make love to it, then I'd smoke it." George Burns

SWEATING THE SMALL STUFF

Improper fermentation can produce a cigar with a bitter, metallic taste. A cigar made without proper fermentation is difficult to keep lit, but the taste is so bad you'd be thankful for that.

It's imperative that the wrapper, binder and filler are properly processed before rolling a cigar. After the cigar is made, fermentation ceases.

Tobacco fermentation involves laying the leaves into huge "bunks," in which the centers develop heat. The heat in the center of a bulk should not be allowed to exceed about 115–130° Fahrenheit (otherwise the tobacco will be ruined or "burned out"). The bulk gets turned inside out several times, and the heat build up (fermentation) begins again.



When the heat levels off, the fermentation is complete. This could occur after four to eight turns, referred to as "sweats." Over-fermentation will ruin the leaf, causing it to lose its flavor and aroma.

After fermentation, further aging in bales helps to settle the leaf and enhance flavor and burning quality. Manufacturers who can't afford to

wait—or who just don't care to wait—produce inferior cigars.

If you find the following telltale signs when smoking your cigars, chances are the leaf has not been fully fermented or aged: Harshness or bitterness on the tongue, lips or mouth • A feeling like heartburn in the chest cavity • A cigar that tends to go out too easily.

If these problems happen with a few cigars in your box, the manufacturer was not consistent in the use of its tobaccos. If it happens with a majority, the maker was not investing in fully aged leaf or may be using tobacco before it's ready.

CIGAR-STORE INDIANS

Because American Indians introduced Christopher Columbus and his entourage to tobacco, the Indian figure became the standard smoke-shop symbol.

A century ago, these life-sized sidewalk figures were wordless signposts meant to capture people's attention and say, "Tobacco sold here." Since many Americans in the late 1800s couldn't read, the ubiquitous cigar-store indian was vital for business.

The first cigar-store indian was placed outside a Boston tobacco shop in 1730. The earliest figures looked more like white men in native garb or black men wearing tobacco leaf headdresses. The facial features probably resembled the carver's family members more than any particular American Indian tribe.

Many of the sculptors had begun as carvers, making ship figureheads, but when steamships replaced wooden vessels, they took their skills to the streets, making wooden tobacco icons.

Since the carvers were competing for tobacconists' business, each tried to outdo the other. Well-known artists like John Cromwell,

Thomas Brooks and Samuel Robb had shops with numerous carvers and painters on staff.

Around 1868, William Demuth started making figures cast in zinc. They were more durable in all kinds of weather, and less vulnerable to being "abducted." At the time, the metal figures cost as much as \$175, with the wooden ones around \$125.

Nowadays, the wooden sculptures are more desirable, going for as much as \$200,000.

Why are they so rare when there were once thousands of these figures? After the First World War, production stopped, and because of a new 1910 sidewalk-obstruction law, countless Indians were burned as firewood.



Thomas V. Brooks, *Leaner*
Carved, painted wood
6' 8" H x 25" D x 25 1/2" W
Outsider Folk Art Gallery
Reading, PA

"Eating and sleeping are the only activities that should be allowed to interrupt a man's enjoyment of his cigar." Mark Twain

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: Tobacco Smoke Increases The Risk Of Lung Cancer And Heart Disease Even In Non-Smokers.



CIGAR TRIVIA FACTS HISTORY ETIQUETTE

THE ALTADIS U.S.A. CIGAR READER

Altadis USA
Maker of Fine Cigars

“ I promised myself that if ever I had some money that I would savor a cigar each day after lunch and dinner. This is the only resolution of my youth that I have kept, and the only realized ambition which has not brought disillusion.” **W. Somerset Maugham**

YOU BET YOUR SWEET ASH

How do you tell if your cigar is of the highest quality? Check the ashtray: the ashes can speak volumes about your cigar.

Note how fast your cigar burns. If it burns too quickly or ashes break apart easily, it may be of lower quality. If the ashes seem messy and sparse, this can also indicate a poorer-quality cigar. In higher quality, well-made cigars, you get a slow burn and nice, solid ash.

A long, clean ash is a sign of a well-made cigar. In fact, the ash on a truly great cigar can linger at two to three inches long without falling off. Next time you smoke an **H. Upmann 1844 Reserve**, take note of its even burn and classic ash.

THE ASH END Quality leaves produce a nice inch-long column of ash that cools your smoke for a more pleasant experience. Once the ash does fall off, notice that the end of your cigar will have a particular shape.

THE GOOD LEAF In a well-made cigar, once the ash falls off, you'll often find the hot end is actually cone-shaped, because the center leaf in a cigar burns longer than the outer edges.

FINE WORKMANSHIP. If your cigar is made up of long, quality leaves, it will create a neat column of ash. When it falls off, it won't crumble.

SMOOTH MOVES The shape of your ash says a lot about how you smoke. Try to inhale lightly and evenly. If you don't, even the best leaves and workmanship can fall to ruin. Stay calm with smooth, easy gestures and you'll keep that ash in nice shape. Treat it like the delicate beauty it is.



COLOR TELLS THE TALE. The shade of your ash reveals your cigar's origin. Every cigar-growing region has its own soil and mineral signature. White and gray ash indicate a quality cigar from rich soils such as those in the Dominican Republic. Black ash, on the other hand, is a bad sign and means the cigar came from an area poor in minerals. Even worse, it also means an unpleasant smell and taste.

THE FASCINATING WORLD OF CIGARS

Sherlock Holmes was an expert on cigar ash and could identify any brand of cigar by examining its ash • In the early 1600s, Italian, Spanish and Austrian priests typically smoked cigars while celebrating Mass • In 1850 *The New York Times* wrote that more money was spent every day on cigars than on bread • The 1923 Mercedes Roadster featured the first automobile cigar lighter on its dashboard • More than forty thousand tobacco seeds are contained in a single pod; it takes one hundred thousand seeds to fill a thimble



BUYING A CIGAR

Having a good cigar with friends is one of life's great joys. For that hour, you have fellowship with kindred spirits and a common bond. Even if you know nothing about cigars, these simple tips can help you pick something special for friends and relatives.

When you find something to your liking, start by gently squeezing the cigar, looking for it to give a little. It should feel firm, with no soft spots. Be careful not to damage the cigar by squeezing too hard; it's the sign of an amateur. Note also that some cigars, especially dark maduros, may be naturally hard and unyielding until they are lit and properly "warmed up."

Smell the cigar at the end and along the length. You should be able to detect any mold or stale odors. If it has mold, you can usually see it as a greenish growth. The white spots of "bloom/plume" on the wrapper are easy to brush off, and the crystallization is an example of a well-aged cigar. Experienced cigar buyers will seek these out. In either case, tell the shop owner what you noticed so they can correct it, if necessary.

Examine the wrapper. Make sure that the color is even throughout the length of the cigar. If you notice any dryness or discoloration, move on. Also, check the end and look at the tobacco: it should be an even shade and packed tightly.

If you're not sure what size to get, consider a longer cigar, which usually has a cooler, mellower smoke. If the gift recipient is an expert or regular smoker, pick something with a thicker diameter to impart the rich flavor appreciated by cigar aficionados. An exception to this is for those experienced smokers who prefer a lancero or corona due to the ratio of wrapper to filler and consistency of blend. Another consideration is how much time they want to spend smoking the premium cigar. Relighting a cigar is possible, but definitely not preferred.

“ I drink a great deal. I sleep a little, and I smoke cigar after cigar. That is why I am in 200% form.”

Winston Churchill

TOTALLY TUBULAR

Cigars that come in cedar-lined tubes (which were invented by H. Upmann), are convenient to carry and, if the seal is not yet broken, can last for years with proper humidification. The Romeo y Julieta Churchill comes in a tube, making it convenient to take along if you're going out for the night.

~ The Zen of Smoking ~

Before you light up, close your eyes. Pass that magnificent stick of rolled leaves under your nose and breathe deeply. Let your mind visit the place the tobacco came from. Smell the earth, the soil. Hear the pulse of tropical

rhythms. Now light it and listen to the leaves come alive. Watch the smoke dance in the air around you as you release it from your mouth. Let every nuance linger. This is your moment, your hour. This is your cigar.

“If I cannot smoke cigars in heaven, I shall not go.”

Mark Twain



BLOW LIKE A PRO

HOW TO BLOW A PERFECT MONTECRISTO SMOKE RING:

1. **Keep your tongue flat at the bottom of your mouth, but pull it back slightly to prepare**
2. **Draw in a dense puff of smoke and hold it**
3. **Open your mouth and jaw, shaping your lips into a rounded 'O'**
4. **Curl your tongue down and use it to push the smoke out of your mouth in short bursts, followed by a slight recoil.**

Practice this technique in private, as it's possible to look quite foolish until you master it.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

MONTECRISTO

In old Havana, cigar rollers enjoyed having books read to them as they worked. In this case, the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, by Alexandre Dumas, inspired the Montecristo brand name. In the story, about a man imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, a dying man reveals the location of a hidden treasure. Once released, the hero finds the treasure, adopts a new identity and plots his revenge. The **Montecristo No. 2** is an iconic shape and enjoyed by cigar lovers worldwide.

ROMEO Y JULIETA

In one of the most moving love stories of all time, William Shakespeare pairs two innocent lovers against impossible odds. Fortunately, the **Romeo y Julieta** cigar marque fared much better. Between 1885 and 1900, the brand won awards at different tasting exhibitions (evidenced by the gold medals on the logo). The brand became exceptionally popular around the world, with Sir Winston Churchill as perhaps the brand's most famous devotee. The flagship vitola was named in his honor. Officially, this cigar is **Romeo y Julieta No. 2**, popularly referred to as a **Churchill**.

H. UPMANN

The H. Upmann brand is among the oldest in the cigar industry. In 1840 banker Herman Upmann opened an office in Havana, which enabled him to send cigars back home to Europe. In 1844 he invested in a cigar factory and launched the H. Upmann brand. Upmann is credited with the idea of packing cigars in cedar boxes to absorb humidity and provide perfect conditions for cigar storage. Throughout the late 1800s, the **H. Upmann** brand won seven gold medals for quality in seven international exhibitions.

TRY THIS ON FOR SIZE

There is a language that belongs to cigars, and it speaks volumes about size. For example, the diameter is called the "ring gauge," which is the diameter of the cigar expressed in 1/64ths of an inch. Coronas will have a smaller ring gauge than robustos, which are typically 50+. Length is measured in inches. For example, a robusto is typically five inches long. As a rule of thumb, keep in mind that a cigar that's one inch in diameter has a ring gauge of 64. This basic reference can make it easier to estimate cigar sizes visually and make you sound like a pro.

IT'S IN THE CLIP

Examine the mouth end of the cigar to determine where the cap is: you'll see a faint line where a separate tobacco leaf was used to close the head. Don't cut past the end of this cap or your cigar will unravel and become a mess to smoke. Use a quality cutter to ensure a clean cut and not cause damage to the cigar.

A fine cutter takes a precise notch out of the end of your cigar to concentrate the smoke on the center of the palate.

Above: Montecristo™ Signature Contour Cutters



SMOKING IN SATIN

British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli loved cigars and smoked everywhere—during meetings, at home in his library, even walking down the street. By the end of the day, his clothes were often covered in ashes. Rather than curb his cigar enthusiasm, Disraeli ordered his tailor to design a suit with satin lapels that would enable him to brush off the ashes without a trace. The tailor did such a fine job that the suave **smoking jacket** became quite fashionable, even for non-smokers.

- Watching Opening Day at home
- On the golf course after your birdie or before that eagle
- When you reach the top of the mountain
- Once you've settled into the leather chair at your favorite smoking lounge
- While grilling up some sirloins on the barbecue
- After a day of surfing
- When you hit the jackpot in Vegas
- While contemplating the scenery by the pool
- In salute to Hemingway while deep-sea fishing
- While strolling the boardwalk at the shore



- While enjoying the jazz genius of John Coltrane
- During that long-anticipated college reunion
- After getting that well-deserved promotion
- On a summer night in the backyard, while appreciating a cigar's natural ability to repel insects
- After the end of a trying week at the office
- Sitting on your back porch, watching the sun set
- During an outdoor concert by your favorite music group
- On a camping trip
- Just because you feel like it

GREAT CIGAR MOMENTS