

The Beginners Guide to Cigar Smoking

Revised 3/21/2001

Brought to you by:

<http://www.cheaphumidors.com>

If you find this eBook helpful, please tell others to download it at:

<http://www.cheaphumidors.com/book>

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Why You Should Smoke Cigars & Why You Shouldn't.....	4
Your Local Tobacconist – Your best friend	6
Shapes, Sizes and Shades, Making Sense of Them All.....	9
How to Choose a Cigar	15
Off With Its Cap – How to Cut a Cigar	18
The Art of Lighting a Cigar	21
Cigar Storage.....	23
Cigar Repair.....	29
Cigar Etiquette	31
Cigar Transportation	36
Glossary of Common Terms.....	38
In Closing	46

INTRODUCTION

Hi there! My name is David Sabot and I am the proprietor of **cheaphumidors.com**. Let me start off by saying that I am in no way a writer or author. In fact, I didn't do too well in school. What you will get from reading this eBook is a better understanding of cigars, how to store, repair, cut and light them as well as some other useful information along the way. I will present this information in as light hearted a way as possible so you will not only learn, but hopefully will have a laugh or two. You are not going to get a lot of filler copy just to make this eBook look bigger. It contains some really good information, condensed to be read in one or two sittings (depends on where you are sitting and for how long).

Let me tell you a little about myself. I have been selling cigar humidors for over four years on the Internet and I hear lots of questions. It is funny, but when I started my business, I never thought that I would be selling to so many first time smokers. As a result, I have been one of their main sources to obtain answers to all the common questions, as well as some of the rather unique ones.

After four years of fielding these questions, I figured it was time to put all this information into a resource that would be useful and easy to access. Just keep this one key fact in mind, **this isn't a secret society**. If you want to enjoy a fine cigar, you should be able to do so, without feeling like you are doing something wrong or breaking some unwritten rule of etiquette. After reading this eBook you will enjoy cigars more, feel more comfortable in front of others, and not act like a boob in front of your local tobacco retailer.

So, sit back, relax and light up a cigar. Don't worry, nobody is watching you -- yet. So go ahead and use that Zippo lighter to spark that baby up. After all, you'll soon learn why that is the worst thing to do.

WHY YOU SHOULD SMOKE CIGARS & WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

Don't worry, I won't be preaching to you in this section. What I really wanted to do was lay the groundwork on reasons people start to smoke cigars, and reasons they shouldn't. Kind of like the title of the chapter.

Cigar smoking is definitely something that you acquire, either through watching others, or reading about it or for some other reason. But the point is, cigar smoking is much, much different than smoking cigarettes. In fact, most people who smoke cigars, would never smoke a cigarette. Think about this. How many adults, in their 30s, pick up smoking cigarettes for the first time? Not many, huh? Big tobacco companies target teenagers, simply because that is who starts smoking. Now think about this, how many people in their 30s pick up cigar smoking for the first time? Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands.

Cigar smoking is a very social activity. You are sitting on your porch with a few friends and you all start to light up a cigar. Or perhaps you are playing a few rounds of golf and you all have cigars sparked during the game. Like fine wine, cigars all have different tastes, aromas, bodies, colors, etc. It is the perfect conversation piece. You can sit with a few friends and talk about the various attributes of this cigar, or that cigar. You can taste and test different ones. This is totally different than smoking a cigarette.

Like everything else, you should never start smoking cigars because you feel pressured into it by friends or other social influences. Regardless of what anybody says, you are introducing a foreign substance into your body, and the implications of that should be well thought out before you start truly enjoying cigars. You should start to smoke cigars because you want to learn about the differences in various cigars. Because you want to talk about these differences, and because you want to do something that relaxes you and makes you feel

good inside. I know this sounds silly, but coming home from a long day at work, opening a bottle of port, lighting up a nice cigar, sitting on the porch with the summer breeze in your face, and just relaxing, is one of the most enjoyable experiences you can imagine. So in short; you should start smoking cigars because you feel it is right for you and it is what you want to do. **Cigar smoking is a hobby, cigarette smoking is an addiction.**

YOUR LOCAL TOBACCONIST – YOUR BEST FRIEND

Ok, so you have decided that you really want to get into the hobby known as cigar smoking. No what? There are hundreds of brands of cigars available, each in different sizes, shapes, colors, etc. How is anybody supposed to know what to do or where to start?

This is the most common problem with new smokers. The easy answer to the problem is experimentation. You know, just like you used to do in college. Perhaps that is a different story. Regardless, you will never know what you like or dislike unless you try a variety of cigars. Don't be fooled into thinking that the more a cigar costs the better the cigar is. That is just hogwash. There are some fantastic cigars for \$5 that taste much better than \$25 cigars. Also, just because you like a certain brand of cigars, doesn't mean that you will enjoy all the sizes and shapes they make that cigar in. You really need to try before you make a large investment.

Speaking of investments, **never purchase a box of cigars until you know you truly enjoy that brand and until you have a decent place to store them.** We will get into storage a little further on, but there is nothing worse than buying a box of cigars and ruining them all because you didn't have a good storage area.

Now, how do you find the right cigars for you? There are hundreds of Internet sites that sell cigars, magazines that talk about cigars and a plethora of other information available. These resources are fantastic, but in my opinion, there is nothing better than the relationship you develop with your local tobacconist. This is a person who can recommend a great cigar based on what you like and what you dislike. They can reserve special stock for you if you are a regular customer, and at most tobacco shops, they even allow you to sit down and enjoy your cigar

in a nice lounge. Much more relaxing than getting yelled at for smoking in the house.

What I suggest you do, is tell your tobacconist that you are just starting to smoke cigars and would like some suggestions. The best idea is to start with a mild cigar and work your way up to more full bodied, richer cigars. Ask them to put together a little sampler for you and name a budget, say \$30 or so. They will walk around with you, pointing out different cigars, and explaining the difference between each one. This is the same experience as if you went to a wine store and asked for some nice red wines. Let them help you as much as possible. Don't go by the pretty labels or boxes that you see around you. That is all merchandising mumbo-jumbo. You can't tell the quality of a cigar by the colors on the label or the type of packaging, you can tell a lot by the wrapper however. Listen to what he has to say, and be sure to ask tons of questions. I suggest going to the store at an off time so he doesn't have to rush due to other customers.

Whether you smoke the cigars in the store or take them home, it is important to make notes about each one. You don't have to write a thesis, but a few short blurbs about the cigar will help you in the long run. There are some great computer programs that can help you organize your notes, or you can just take a notebook and jot your thoughts down. Take the ring off the cigar and paste it to the notebook for reference. Be sure to write the exact name of the cigar, the size, the color, the shape, the condition of the wrapper, etc. This will help you in the long run. Make notes of things like how well did it burn, did it draw well (was it easy to take in the smoke), was it bitter, was it fruity, was it woody, etc. Notice the ash. Was it white/gray and firm; the characteristics of a good cigar? There will be little differences, or sometimes big differences, between cigars that you can note. You aren't expected to be an expert and know all the characteristics of the cigar, but there will be some things you will notice. And for Gods sake, if you

start to smoke a cigar, and it just tastes awful to you, then put it out, mark it off your list and move on. There is no time to smoke dog rockets (terrible cigars).

Now of course, with this information in hand, you can go back to your local tobacconist and tell him that you enjoyed this and that cigar, or you hated this cigar and why. This information will allow them to pick out more cigars in your budget to try and test. You should continue this practice indefinitely since there are always new cigars coming onto the market. You will start to learn that you like specific sizes or mild or harsh cigars, etc. You eventually will get to the point where you can do some research on the Internet and find some cigars that you think you will like. When you are ready to purchase a larger quantity of cigars, I suggest you turn to the Internet and search online for retailers. You will almost always get the best deal on full boxes of cigars. Deal with reputable merchants who ship quickly and have a good return policy if the cigars arrive damaged, dry or full of tobacco beetles. But again, don't invest in a large quantity of cigars until you have the proper place to store them.

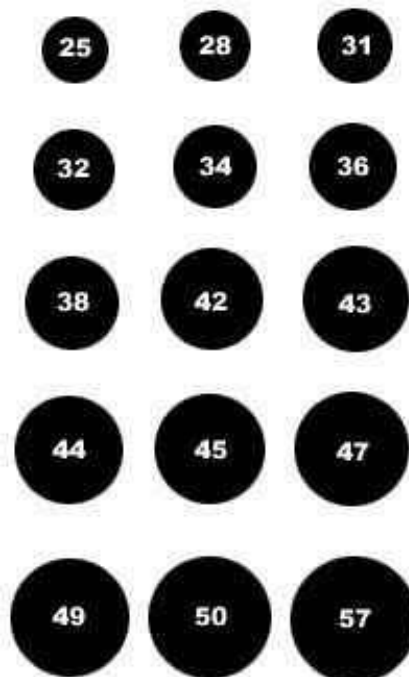
SHAPES, SIZES AND SHADES, MAKING SENSE OF THEM ALL

Why do some things have to be so difficult? I mean, isn't it hard enough that there are thousands of different cigars available. Now they have to throw in things like sizes, colors, shapes, etc. Believe me, this stuff wasn't created to confuse you, it just adds to the breadth and depth of what is available for you to enjoy. Like any hobby, you can start off doing things the easy way, then you can get more advanced the better you understand what is available.

SIZE

The size of a cigar, in name, is a nearly meaningless designation, the reason being that the size of a cigar, when determined by a name such as corona or robusto, is not a universal standard. In other words, one company's corona is another company's churchill even though both measure the exact same length and ring gauge. Once you understand this, most of the confusion regarding cigar size disappears.

There are, however, "classic" measurements for cigars that most cigar makers attempt to follow, But remember, just because a cigar is 7 inches in length with a 48 ring gauge doesn't necessarily mean that the manufacturer will designate that cigar as a churchill. All you really have to know is that cigars are categorized by length and ring gauge which is a fraction of an inch measured in 64ths. A cigar with a 52 ring gauge, for example, measures 52/64ths of an inch in diameter. Below is a ring gauge chart that will give you a good idea of the different gauges available in cigars:



Ring Gauge Guide

Go with the cigar you feel most comfortable holding. A 50- or 52-ring gauge cigar should offer the best balance of comfort, taste, and draw, but ultimately it's a question of personal style. As a rule of thumb, a larger ring gauge will generally give a fuller draw than a slimmer gauge. Large and unique shapes are harder to roll properly, therefore only the most experienced rollers are allowed to make them. Also, the larger shapes are more prone to construction flaws than the more easily rolled shapes. Most handmade cigar shapes can be put into two groups. Straight shapes are referred to as "parejos" and irregular shapes known as "figurados". Cigarillos, dry-cured, and most any other cigar with a ring gauge of 34 or less are referred to as generically as "small cigars".

SHAPE

As you have probably already figured out, cigars come in all sorts of shapes. The irregular shapes, or figurados, cover all out of the ordinary shaped cigars. Here we have listed and displayed six of the most popular figurados.



Diademas



Pyramid



Culebras



Belicoso



Perfecto

Diademas: This huge cigar, which measures 8 inches or longer has both of its ends closed. The ring gauge increases towards the foot.

Pyramid: This 6" cigar with a 40/52 ring gauge has a tapered head with an open foot.

Culebra: 3 panatelas braided together as one cigar which is smoked separately. This cigar measures 5" with a 38 ring gauge.

Belicoso: This cigar usually measures 5" with a ring gauge of 50 and has a rounded head rather than a point.

Perfecto: This cigar usually has a bulge in the middle and is closed on both ends.

Torpedo: A shape with a pointed head, a closed foot and a bulge in the middle.

And now the more common straight shaped cigars, or Parejos:

Panatela : (7x 38) or smaller, "pencils".

Corona: (6 x 43) - A standard which manufacturers measure other cigars.

Lonsdale: (6 3/4 x 42) - Said to be the easiest shape to roll.

Toro: (6 1/2 x 48) - Delivers a full draw, in a medium length.

Churchill: (7 x 47) - Larger sizes in general are referred to as Churchill sizes. However, this size categorization is very loose. For example the H. Upmann Churchill is much smaller than what most companies refer to as a Churchill size.

Double Corona: (7 1/2 x 49) - Larger variation of a Churchill.

Robusto: (5 x 50) - Full draw in a shorter cigar provides a rich in a less time-intensive smoke.

I suggest you start with a straight shaped cigar for your first few smoking experiences and leave the irregulars for a time when you want something a bit different. I would say the Corona and the Churchill are the most popular sizes of cigars and a good cigar size for the new smoker.

SHADE

As if the size and shape weren't enough to make your head spin, let's throw in the shade or color of the wrapper. There are six grades of wrappers commonly used today.

Double Claro - . A green shade of wrapper also known as "Candela" and sometimes referred to as "American Market Selection " or "AMS". This shade of wrapper is not as fully fermented as the darker shades. A heat curing process fixes the chlorophyll in the leaf and results in a somewhat grassy sweetness. It is generally a little harsher than a more thoroughly fermented and aged, darker wrapper. This shade is not common in premium handmade cigars, however, it is used on many of the inexpensive American machine-made cigars.

Claro - A very light tan colored wrapper that is somewhat neutral in flavor. Much milder than a Double Claro wrapper. This grade is usually of the shade-grown varieties.

Colorado Claro - Golden brown to medium brown in color. Some companies refer to shades in this range as "English Market Selection" or "Natural". This is the most common grade among today's premium cigars. Most of this grade is from sun-grown varieties.

Colorado - Reddish brown wrapper that is medium to rich flavor and has a subtle aroma. Usually it is from the shade-grown varieties

Colorado Maduro - Dark brown in color, rich in flavor, this shade of wrapper is also from shade-grown varieties.

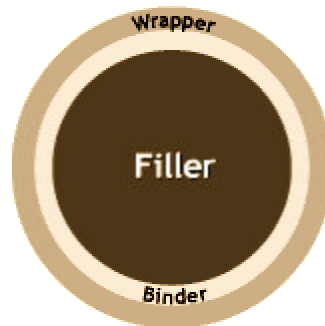
Maduro - From the Spanish word meaning ripe, this very dark brown leaf is the last to be harvested, is fermented longer and to allowed to reach higher temperatures during fermentation than the other grades of wrapper leaf. Sometimes, this darker color is produced by a "cooking" process. Often the resulting leaf can be rich in flavor and have a slightly sweet, roasted flavored. *Oscuro*, a.k.a. "Double Maduro", is an almost black variation of the this grade

But again, don't let all of this confuse you too much. Start slowly and you will eventually start to learn all the varieties available for your smoking pleasure.

HOW TO CHOOSE A CIGAR

Choosing a cigar that is perfect for you is a matter of personal preference. I am going to give you a few guidelines and a few pointers that are sure to help you out. But remember what I said before. The most valuable resource you have when you are starting out is your local tobacconist. Just give them a chance to help you and you will be thrilled with the outcome.

Before we choose a cigar, lets talk briefly about the anatomy of a cigar so you know what all this stuff means. Cigars are made up of essentially three components as illustrated below:



Wrapper: holds the cigar together, these leaves are beautiful and classify the cigar by its color.

Binder: holds the filler and acts as the structure of the cigar; the binder leaf has little flavor and is about 1-1/12 inches in width.

Filler: is the inside of the cigar, it is made of long or short cuts of Tobacco leaves; the leaves are blended for taste and burn.

COLOR

The color of the wrapper will effect the taste of the cigar. The darker the color, the stronger the taste. The lighter the color, the milder the taste. In the case of cigars, you can determine a book by its cover. At least somewhat. In this instance, the wrappers color can tell you a lot. **As a beginner I recommend that you choose a cigar that has a lighter wrapper.** As mentioned previously, don't get caught up in the merchandising of cigars. The color of the box, or the way the cigar is packaged is not important at all.

SIZE

The length of the cigar is going to determine how hot or cool the smoke is. The longer a cigar, the cooler the temperature will be. The shorter a cigar, the hotter the smoke will be. **For new smokers, I recommend you start with a longer cigar** so you can enjoy some of the flavors of the cigar by drawing in the cool smoke. It will also make the cigars less harsh. Harsh cigars are one of the main reasons that people do not enjoy smoking cigars. So work from the mild to the wild.

INSPECTION

When picking out cigars there are a few things you want to examine before you make your purchase.

1. You DO want to make sure the wrapper has a consistent look at feel to it
2. You DO want a shine on the wrapper which shows it has started to age
3. You DO want veins running the length of the wrapper
4. You DON'T blotches, nicks, tears or holes in the wrapper
5. You DO want to make sure the cigar is soft and supple, not hard and cracking

HOW IS IT MADE

There are three ways a cigar can be made:

Hand made- Made by human hands from start to finish.

Hand rolled- Machines bunched the filler and applied the binder, but human hands wrapped on the wrapper.

Machine made - You guessed it start to finish this cigar was high tech, and probably never saw a gentle hand until yours.

Since you will be purchasing your cigars from a tobacco shop, you won't have to worry about this too much as 99.99% of the cigars they sell are all Hand made and of the highest quality.

TIP

A lot of people roll cigars between their fingers to determine if the cigar has been stored properly. This will destroy your cigar. All cigars crackle when you squeeze them. If you have to man-handle your cigar before selecting it, pinch it slightly near the foot, it should give slightly and bounce back into place

OFF WITH ITS CAP – HOW TO CUT A CIGAR

Hand made premium cigars must obviously be cut before they are smoked.

When cutting your cigars, it is important that the blade is very sharp. A dull blade will do nothing more than ruin your cigars. Your cigar should be held at eye level so you can ensure you are cutting a straight line. Many people ask if they should keep the plastic wrapper on the cigar when cutting. It really doesn't make a difference, but I have found that keeping it on eliminates the residue left on your cutter, which in time could increase its life.

Make sure when you start to cut your cigar that you do so with constant pressure in a quick manner. This will ensure that equal pressure is placed on all sides of the cigar, eliminating the risk of crushing the cigar while cutting. Here is a step-by-step guide on how to cut the perfect cigar:

1. A cigar has two ends - one cut already, the other sealed and uncut. You will be cutting the end that isn't already cut. This is called the head or cap.
2. With your cutter in your cutting hand, position the cutter between you and the cigar. The cigar should be pointing away from you, with the pre-opened end the farthest from you.
3. Locate the shoulder of the cigar. This is the point near the end where the curved end of the cigar starts to straighten out, typically between 1/2" and 1/16" in from the unopened end.
4. Position the cigar under the blade at the point where you want to cut it.
5. Bring the blade down gently onto your cigar at the right point and rest it there for a second (just enough to establish solid contact).
6. Without losing contact with the cigar, cut with one swift, decisive, surgical motion, applying even pressure. The cleaner you do this, the less chance you'll have of tearing the wrapper or crunching the tobacco.
7. Dispose of the small piece of cap you've just cut off.

8. You are now ready to light your cigar.

When cutting a cigar there are many choices of cutters. The most popular is the guillotine cutter pictured below.



The guillotine cutter comes in both the single-blade and the double-blade configuration. If possible, always use the double-blade as it cuts the cigar from both sides at once. These cutters are inexpensive, yet razor sharp to ensure a perfect cut.

Some people prefer to use a punch to put a small hole in the center of the cigar. I find that this type of cut produces a lot of residue near the cap and can effect the draw of the cigar. One popular type of punch is called a bullet cutter, pictured below.



The third type of cut is called the V cut. This isn't used very often and like the punch, tends to cause residue near the cap. Below are examples of what each cut looks like, starting from guillotine, to V cut to punch.



TIPS FOR THE PERFECT CUT

1. The object of the cut is to create an ample, smooth opening for smoking so you draw evenly and your cigar burns evenly. Do this without damaging the cigar's structure.
2. Keep your cigar cutting devices sharpened at all times. Don't let them get gummy or sticky with crud.
3. A good cutter is worth investing in. A few ruined cigars and you'll understand.

THE ART OF LIGHTING A CIGAR

Let me start off by saying that I know lighting a cigar is not hard, but I receive many requests from people on how to do it correctly, so I figured this is the best place to share the knowledge.

To light your cigar you need the correct lighter. Some cigar buffs use cedar strips for the job, but I find these hard to carry around. Most people prefer to use matches or a butane lighter. When using matches, wooden ones are the best because they look cool and they stay lit longer. Just be sure you let the sulfur burn off before you light the cigar. If you opt for a lighter, make sure it uses butane fuel. Why? Well, just about anything else that you could use to light the cigar will effect the cigar's taste. Regular fluid lighters have an odor that can be transferred to the cigar if the flame is allowed to touch the foot. This includes those Zippo lighters that you have been collecting since you were a little kid. So forget about it for lighting a cigar.



Take the cigar in your hand and light your flame source. Slowly rotate the cigar in your fingers as you lightly toast the tobacco on the foot of the cigar. Notice I didn't say to put the cigar in your mouth... Never let the flame touch the foot as you rotate the cigar in your fingers. Put the cigar in your mouth and continue to light as you rotate the cigar, gently puffing in every few seconds.

When the cigar is lit, remove it from your mouth and look at the foot to make sure it is burning evenly. If it isn't, you can gently blow on the foot causing it to ignite the tobacco which is not burning or you can apply a flame to that area. If you have an area which is burning faster than the other areas, simply wet your finger and apply under the quick burning area, this should slow it down.

A cigar that goes out completely, or one that burns unevenly down one side can indeed be relit with satisfactory results, if done right. The trick is to bring it to life again without poisoning it with that dead cigar-butt taste. To do so, you must heat the cold soot back up to temperature to drive off the volatile, evil-tasting components in it.

Don't put a light to it and puff it to life, for the reasons in the previous section. Instead, coax all the loose ash out and heat the wrapper rim until the gray ring tells you it's lit all around. Remember, a cigar dies at its periphery first - often, the center of the filler is still burning. You want to slowly heat the binder back to ignition again. Thus, the fire will burn inward, merging with the live central coal, and you can resume smoking. But like the initial cigar lighting, don't hurry the process.

A cigar that continues to burn down one side and which requires frequent relighting, was rolled improperly and can't be saved. Likewise, don't bother to relight a cigar that has been out for an hour or longer. Sometimes nothing can resurrect the dead.

TIP

If you're smoking your favorite cigar, and it starts to burn hot, try this little tip. Gently blow through the cigar to blow out all the smoke in the cigar, then set the cigar down for a minute, then smoke as usual! It works!

CIGAR STORAGE

Ok, so now you know how to choose a cigar, how to light and cut a cigar and what the difference is between a dark and light colored wrapper.

Congratulations, you are on your way to becoming an expert. Or at least enjoying your hobby more. As with any hobby, there are tons of accoutrements that you can purchase to enhance your experience. There really is something for every budget. One of the most important tools you will purchase or perhaps build is a place to store your cigars.

Cigar storage devices are known as humidors. Humidors come in all shapes and sizes and price ranges, but they are all essentially the same. A place to store your cigars where they will remain humid enough to ensure the cigar doesn't get dry. That is basically it. Everything else is fluff as far as I am concerned. Just like a car, a Mercedes will get you to the same place that a Yugo will get you. One gets you there in style, the other lets you buy \$55,000 in gas with your savings. Well you get the point.



Like I mentioned, humidors come in all shapes and sizes. The most popular is the rectangular box that you have probably seen everywhere. As a new smoker,

a smaller humidor is probably the best bet. I would not recommend anything smaller than a 50 cigar humidor. This will allow you to store a full box of cigars and some extras and fits nicely into a beginners budget. As you progress in your hobby, you can purchase 150 cigar humidors or even table humidors that can store several boxes. Heck, some people even convert rooms into walk in humidors.

Whatever humidor you choose, make sure of a few simple things. First, you want to **make sure the humidor you purchase has a good seal**. The seal is what is going to keep the humidity inside your humidor instead of letting it all escape. Humidors need to be in the 65-75% humidity range. Anything less will cause your cigars to dry out, and anything more will cause mold. A humidor with a good seal will ensure this range is maintained and not cause you to have to constantly monitor the levels. To check the seal, open the lid of a humidor and close it from about 3 inches. It should make a whooshing noise. If it bangs down then move on. That is not a humidor that you want to put your cigars in. If you are purchasing a humidor online, deal with a reputable merchant. Ask them if their humidors whoosh when closed and what kind of guarantee they have regarding the craftsmanship.

Secondly, **make sure your humidor is lined with Spanish Cedar**. Spanish Cedar is used in humidors because it is a wood that takes well to high humidity without causing the wood to warp. It also has a nice light aroma that adds to the flavor of cigars. You want to make sure that the humidor uses dried cedar as this prevents sapping. If your humidor is sapping, this will get all over your cigars and cause problems.

The third thing to look for is construction. You will be opening the lid of your humidor thousands of times during its use. Are the hinges solid? Are they going to last? I suggest you buy a humidor with quadrant hinges as they are not only attractive but built to last.

With these things in mind, you are all set to purchase a humidor. Again, make sure it will be big enough for your collection of cigars. You can't store too few cigars in a humidor. In other words, if you have a 150 cigar humidor, it is perfectly ok to put 25 cigars in it. Nothing bad will happen. Just make sure you monitor the humidity levels and all will be fine. On the flip side, you really should not put more cigars in a humidor than it is rated for. This is bad as it will prevent air circulation from occurring in your humidor, which is essential for proper storage.

Many humidors on the market today come with either trays or dividers or both. The purpose of these devices is to separate certain cigars so they do not mix flavors as well as provide some organization within a humidor. Humidors with trays or dividers are not better than those without them. It is really a matter of how you like to store and organize your cigars.

A humidor will come with at least a humidifier. Some even have hygrometers. A humidifier is a device that is used to introduce humidity into your humidor. Hygrometers are used to measure the amount of humidity that is presently in a humidor.

SETTING UP YOUR NEW HUMIDOR

When most people get their new humidor home, they are anxious to fill it up with their collection of smokes. If you do this without first re-humidifying the wood, you may ruin your cigars. Why? The wood has not had a chance to reach its equilibrium. So when you put your cigars in, the wood will absorb their moisture and you will be left with dry useless cigars. Not exactly the reason you bought a humidor, huh? To solve this problem, all humidors should be re-humidified before their first use.

Re-humidifying your humidor is easy, just follow these simple steps:

- ?? Place a shallow container filled with distilled water in the humidor
- ?? Place a calibrated hygrometer inside humidor
- ?? Charge your humidification device
- ?? Place humidification device inside humidor

You have to check the relative humidity every day. Depending on a number of factors this can take a few days to a few weeks. When you get in the 70% range it is safe to store your smokes inside. As long as you constantly recharge your humidification device you will never have to wait to store your cigars again.

HYGROMETER CALIBRATION

To calibrate your hygrometer you will need table salt, a see through container such as a Ziplock baggie, and a small shallow open container, like a bottle cap.

Place a teaspoon or so of salt in the shallow container and add a few drops of water to get it wet. You don't want to dissolve it, just get a good damp pile of salt in your container. Remember, you don't want a salt water solution, just damp salt. Place the shallow container in the baggie along with the hygrometer.

Seal the baggie with some air trapped inside (so it is not tight against the hygrometer) and let it sit. Allow this to stabilize for at least 6 hours (don't rush it). After it has stabilized, check the hygrometer reading without opening up the baggie. It should be exactly 75%. If not, you can simply adjust the reading by turning the dial on the back of the hygrometer with a small screwdriver if it is so equipped. If not, then you have to remember how off the reading is.

HUMIDIFIER CHARGING

To fill or charge your humidifier, you should remove it from the humidor and dampen the humidifier in a 50/50 solution of **distilled water** and **propylene**

glycol (PG), usually referred to as activator solution. You are not looking to soak the humidifier, just get it damp, usually a few squirts of activator solution will be enough to keep it charged for a few months.

This procedure should be repeated when your cigars start to get dry or when your hygrometer reads the humidity as being lower than you prefer.

Simply, PG is a hygroscopic substance. It absorbs moisture from the environment (like a salt shaker does in humid weather). The distilled water evaporates until the ambient humidity approaches 70%. At that point the PG won't allow any more moisture in the air. Conversely, if there is too much moisture in the air, the PG solution absorbs the excess, bringing the system down to 70% as well.

Some people figure that instead of buying distilled water, they will simply use tap water, or even filtered water. Filtered tap water is full of all the dissolved minerals which will ultimately plug your humidifier. The PH is balanced in tap water with chemicals which may interfere with the PG and cause variations in your humidity.

POOR MANS GUIDE TO STORAGE

Maybe you are on a budget or on the road and can't use your prized humidor that is sitting at home. There are a few things you can do to ensure that your cigars will stay fresh. The two most common quick fixes are either Ziplock bags or Tupperware containers. In either case, you need a sponge and some distilled water as well.

Setting up your cheap humidor is pretty easy. If you are using a Ziplock bag it is best to have two of them. Take 1 bag and punch dozens of holes in. Place your cigars inside. Then place the bag inside another Ziplock bag. Take a sponge and get it wet with distilled water. Wring it out so it is damp, not soaking wet and place inside the larger bag. Seal both bags and you have short term storage.

You can also get a piece of Tupperware and place your cigars inside. Then put the sponge in next to the cigars. Be sure the sponge never touches the cigars or they will be ruined. It is advisable that you open the lid for a few minutes each day to purge the excess humidity and gasses that the cigars give off. And there you have it, instant, cheap cigar storage.

TIPS

- ?? Make sure you don't put too many cigars in a humidor
- ?? Keep your humidor in a cool dry place
- ?? Don't wet the inside of the humidor with any water or solutions as it will cause the wood to warp
- ?? Don't leave your humidor lid open too long. Take a cigar out and close it.
- ?? Don't get crazy with humidity levels, if it is in the zone then you are ok.
- ?? Don't store cigars in the fridge or freezer. Most refrigerators dehumidify the air which will cause your cigars to get dry.
- ?? Never use tap water or bottled water. Only use distilled water or activator solution.

CIGAR REPAIR

It happens to the best of us. No matter how hard you try to keep your precious little cigars in good condition, sooner or later the wrapper on one will tear or one will get all dried up. There are some things you can do to save even the most damaged cigars, and in some cases you will be glad you did. But if the damage is severe then sometimes you will have to cut your losses and learn your lesson.

FIXING A TORN WRAPPER

Probably the easiest thing to fix is a torn wrapper on a cigar. For very minor tears, a little saliva on your finger can be used to press the wrapper back into position. If this doesn't work then head to the grocery store.

While in the grocery store pick up some pectin. Pectin is an all-natural substance that is used to make jams and jellies. A package costs less than \$1 and will last you and all your friends 10 lifetimes. In other words, a little goes a long, long way. What you do is mix a little pectin with some water to create a paste. Some varieties of pectin come pre-mixed which is even better. Place a small drop, and I mean a small drop on the damaged area. Using your finger, smooth out the wrapper until it looks perfect. Let it dry for a few minutes and the wrapper will be as good as new.

SAVING A DRIED UP CIGAR

To restore a dried cigar, remove them from their tubes or wrappers, place them into a ziplock bag and seal it. Then puncture the bag with the many little holes. After that, place the first bag (with cigars) into a second, larger ziplock bag containing a sponge moistened with distilled water. Seal the second bag. Remove the cigars from the bag after 5 days or so. Rotate the cigars 25% every

2-3 days, until each cigar has been rotated twice (about 3 weeks). Once the cigars have regained their normal sponginess, they can be returned to the humidor. The cigars should sit in a humidor for another 9-12 months to allow enough time for the tobaccos to reach their proper equilibrium.

WHITE SPOTS ON YOUR CIGAR

These are known as bloom and plume. They are the result of long term storage and are actually desired as they show your cigars are aging properly. They are harmless and can easily be removed. Lightly brush off the bloom with your finger or blow it off using your mouth.

BLUE SPOTS ON YOUR CIGAR

This is known as mold and is often the result of an over humidified humidor. The only cure to this problem is to check your humidor and fix the problem and toss the cigars with the mold on them. But be careful that you are not throwing away cigars with bloom as those are still good.

CIGAR ETIQUETTE

No matter if you're projecting power or wealth, being sexy or just one of the gang, manners are still a dominant part of your personal image. Cigar smoking brings with it a whole different sense of etiquette and rules of common courtesy. Some are common sense, some are just learned class.

HOLDING A CIGAR

As a general rule, unless you're European, don't hold your cigar like a cigarette. Hold it between your second and third fingers, letting the cigar rest on the back of your third finger.



If you're in an informal group and doing some bonding, it's acceptable to hold your cigar between your thumb and all the rest of your fingers.

Hold the cigar in your hand between puffs rather than holding it in your mouth. Take leisurely puffs, holding the smoke briefly, then exhaling slowly. Never have the cigar in your mouth other than to puff on it. It's not polite to eat with food in your mouth and no matter how stimulating the conversation, don't talk with your cigar hanging from your lips. Exhale completely before speaking, that's a good boy.

And if you're not holding the cigar, put it down in an ashtray, or at least control the hand that's holding the cigar. It is incredibly rude to talk and make wild gestures with your hand when your cigar's still in it. No one wants to be sprayed by your ashes or embers. Put the stogie down, then you're free to talk with your hands.

In the U.S., it's okay to leave the band on the cigar. Europeans, however, take the band off, as they feel that leaving the band on is a sign of pomposity. They look at it in the same vein as leaving the tags on your clothes. The Americans, used to wearing designer's logos plastered all over their clothes, don't share this hang-up. Do as you wish in the U.S., it's a judgment call. But it does say something about you, so make the choice consciously.

If you're going to remove the band, there's no set way to do this. Tear it with your fingers or peel it apart with your nails, it's up to you. Some people claim that it's best to do it after lighting the cigar because the warmth will soften things up and lead to a lessened likelihood of damaging the cigar when you remove the band. My experience is different, though. I always have a tougher time of it after the cigar's been lit. I find that as the cigar warms, it expands, following the laws of natural physics, which makes the band tighter. It's easier to simply slip it off before you light it, or if it's a stubborn band, tear, cut, or peel it apart.

Just remember which end you removed it from. You'll want to light the opposite end. Cigars are intentionally rolled and crafted in careful layers that assure a one-directional flow of smoke from the opposite end of where the band is to your mouth.

LIGHTING A CIGAR

A man should never light another man's cigar because it is a very personal experience, however it is acceptable for a man to light a woman's cigar only if it is

one of the smaller type cigars, otherwise it is not permitted. As for the women libbers, it is not acceptable for a woman to light a man's cigar.

Never light someone else's cigar; instead, offer your lighter or matches. The smoker usually draws in too hard to get a light quickly from someone else, and that can be bad for the cigar. As you smoke it, don't puff too rapidly. Your cigar will burn hot and acquire unsavory, burned flavors and dispel a whole lot of stink into the air. A puff a minute is considered more than adequate to keep a cigar lit.

And, as common sense will tell you, never blow smoke directly into someone's face, especially if that someone is trying to enjoy a different brand. This is an insult, especially in Europe, and can result in violence. So, definitely don't blow it in the face of someone bigger than you.

THE ASH



Let your ash get approximately three-quarters of an inch long (two centimeters) before you flick it. A long ash is actually essential to a pleasant cigar-smoking experience. The ash helps to reduce the temperature of the burning tobacco (creates an air block), thereby cooling the smoke that you inhale and slowing the burning of the cigar. These factors combine to improve the taste and lengthen your enjoyment of the cigar.

A sign of a premium cigar is its ability to hold a very long ash. Cigars using premium fill will maintain a lengthy ash before it falls off. When a longer ash is gently knocked off, the foot or burning area will come to a point.

Don't play architect with the ash. If you wait too long to knock it off, it will end up on your pants or on the tablecloth. Watch for a small crack in the ash, then tap it off.

Better tobacco will yield a whiter ash compared to a lower grade tobacco gray ash.

Let your ash get approximately three-quarters of an inch long (two centimeters) before you flick it. A long ash is actually essential to a pleasant cigar-smoking experience. The ash helps to reduce the temperature of the burning tobacco (creates an air block), thereby cooling the smoke that you inhale and slowing the burning of the cigar. These factors combine to improve the taste and lengthen your enjoyment of the cigar.

The ash is a good measure of a quality cigar - the whiter and longer the better. However, if you are not knocking the ash off properly you can do serious damage to cigar and wrapper. The proper method is to gently tap the ash to the bottom of the ashtray. Tapping the cigar on the edge of the ashtray or with your finger will cause the wrapper to break and unravel. The wrapper is very fragile and must be handled with care.

Ash structure has to do with the amount of magnesium and other nutrients in the soil where the tobacco was grown. As a general rule, a flaky gray ash indicates tobacco with low magnesium content, while a solid white ash indicates high nutrient content.

Watch your ash. Don't let it fall anywhere other than an ashtray. Cigar ash is quite hot. I've found that the best way to tip the ash off of a cigar is to take two

nice long puffs which heat the end up, wait about 5 seconds and lightly tap the cigar. Ideally this will cause the ash to break cleanly right at the boundary of the burning material leaving you with a perfect glowing orange cone at the end of the cigar. If the ash doesn't fall off with a light but sharp tap or two, it's not ready to be tipped. Forcing the ash to fall off, in my experience, can cause part of the glowing ember to come out of the cigar along with the ash leading to all sorts of problems including the cigar going out, uneven burning, lack of smoke and harshness. Give the cigar a little extra cool-down time after tipping, since the above double long puff method heats it up a little more than usual. If the cigar starts to burn unevenly, orient the edge of the cigar which is burning the slowest towards the bottom when holding it or setting it in the ashtray. This may seem counter-intuitive, but there is more fresh oxygen at the bottom of the cigar than at the top where all the burn products are coming out. If this fails to rectify the situation, hold a flame very briefly to the edge of the cigar which is burning slower. This gets the recalcitrant part of the wrapper smoldering again, causing the burn to even back out.

CIGAR TRANSPORTATION

There is nothing better than sitting at home with a fine cigar and some scotch. But what if you want the same pleasure while on the go? Bringing your prized cigars with you on business trips, outings, meetings, or vacation is actually very simple if done correctly.



The first thing you need to do is make sure that you have the correct device to store your cigars. If you are going to be out for a few hours then you can use a simple leather cigar holder or Ziplock bag. If you plan on being out for a day or two then a device with a humidifier is preferred, and for a few weeks on the road, it is advised that you use a humidor that has been properly rehumidified.



After you get your storage device, choose the cigars that you want to bring along. It is best to take cigars that have already been stored in a humidor for a period of time as they will have stabilized at the perfect humidity. Make sure you bring only enough cigars for the excursion. You really want to avoid bringing any cigars back with you that you took from home. For example, it is not advised to bring 25 cigars if you are going to a wedding and plan on smoking 2 during the evening.

Now that you have the cigars you want to travel with, and they have been sitting in a proper humidor for some time, you can simply take your storage device and

load it up. If you just got cigars from the tobacco shop, it is advised to leave them in the wrapper and place them in your travel case.

Remember always to close your case, tube, etc. when you are done retrieving your cigar. This will help maintain the humidity and preserve your cigars longer. Also, try to not put the case in direct sunlight or any place where the heat will get extreme. It is best to carry the case with you at all times. As an example, bring it on the plane with you, rather than in the storage below.

GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

AROMA

The smell of a burning cigar.

BAND

Paper placed around the cigar, usually near the head, originally used to protect white gloves from tobacco stains. Merchants quickly seized the idea and began using it as a place to put their brand name. Allowing them to differentiate their cigars from their competitors.

BARREL

The body of the cigar.

BINDER

A single leaf of tobacco wrapped around the filler to hold it together.

BLEND

The mixture of tobaccos used in the cigar that provides each cigar with its unique character.

BLOOM

A harmless white film or spots on the wrapper caused by oils in the tobacco rising to the surface. This also indicates a stronger smoke. Also, called Plume.

BODY

The main or middle part of the cigar.

BOUQUET

The smell of an unlit cigar.

BOX

The container used to package cigars. Traditional styles include:

?? **Cabinet Selection**

Wood box with a sliding top, designed to hold 25 or 50 cigars.

?? **8-9-8**

A round-sided box designed to hold three rows of cigars with eight on the top, nine in the middle and eight on the bottom.

?? **Flat Top or 13-topper**

Flat rectangular box which is the most common container used today. This package holds 13 cigars on the top and 12 on the bottom.

BULK

The large piles of tobacco leaves as they undergo fermentation.

BUNCH

Refers to the cigar when it consists of the filler and the binder, before the application of the wrapper leaf.

BUNDLE

Packaging method which uses cellophane overwrap on 25 or 50 cigars traditionally without bands. Bundles are usually cheaper than boxed cigars, and contain seconds of premium cigars.

CAP

The circular piece of wrapper leaf placed at the head of the cigar to secure the wrapper.

CATADOR

Professional cigar taster who determines a cigar's qualities of aroma, taste and texture.

CHAVETA

The knife used in a cigar factory for cutting the wrapper leaf.

CHURCHILL

A large corona format cigar, usually 7 inches long with a 48 ring gauge named after Winston Churchill who liked large cigars.

CORONA

A traditionally-proportioned cigar measuring 5 1/2 to 6 inches by 42 to 44 ring gauge.

CORONA GORDA

A long robusto format 5 1/2 inches with a 46 ring gauge.

CULEBRA

An exotic cigar consisting of three panatelas that are braided together to form one cigar.

CURING

The process of removing moisture from freshly harvested tobacco.

CUT FILLER

Filler tobacco consisting of chopped pieces most common in machine-made cigars.

CUTTER

A device for clipping the end off a cigar. Some resemble scissors with curved blades; others look like small guillotines for making a straight or V-shaped notch. In addition one variety looks like a .44 magnum bullet and another a fountain pen, they pull apart to reveal a punch that cuts a round hole in the end of the cigar.

DEMITASSE

A small cigar around 4 inches by a 30 ring gauge.

DOUBLE CORONA

Cigar with dimensions of 7 1/2 to 8 inches by a large gauge of 49 to 52.

DRAW

The flow of smoke from a cigar. It can be too easy (hot) or too tight (plugged)

FILLER

The tobacco that makes up the center of the cigar. There are two main types of filler, short and long.

FIGURADO

A Spanish term that refers to cigars with exotic sizes, such as torpedoes, pyramids, perfectos and culebras.

FLAG

An alternative to a cap. The flag method of finishing a cigar involves shaping the wrapper leaf at the head of the cigar so that it secures the wrapper. Sometimes, it is tied off in a pigtail or curly head.

FOOT

Also called the "tuck," it's the part of the cigar that is lit.

GALERA

The room in which cigars are rolled at the factory.

GUM

A vegetable adhesive used to secure the head of the wrapper leaf around the finished bunch.

HAND

Individual leaves of tobacco that are hung together after harvest and tied at the top. These hands are piled together to make a bulk for fermentation.

HANDMADE

A cigar that is bunched, bound and wrapped entirely by hand.

HAND-ROLLED

A cigar made entirely by hand with high quality wrapper and long filler.

HEAD

The end of the cigar that is placed in the mouth.

HOT

A cigar which has a quick, loose draw. This is caused by the cigar being under filled. It is usually accompanied by harsh flavors.

HUMIDOR

A box (but actually an environment) used to store or age cigars. Like a wine cellar, the box is fitted with devices to control temperature and humidity. The ideal environment should be 70°F and 70% relative humidity.

LIGERO

One of three types of filler tobacco. This aromatic tobacco adds body to a cigar blend. Ligero means light in Spanish.

LONG FILLER

Whole leaves selected and rolled by hand to create a looser and easier draw of

smoke.

LONSDALE

A cigar typically 6 1/4 inches by a 42 or 44 ring gauge.

MACHINE MADE

Cigars made entirely by machine. Heavier weight binders and wrappers are generally used and cut filler is used in place of long filler.

MOLD

The device used in making cigars that gives shape to a finished bunch. Also, a fungi, which is potentially damaging, that forms on cigars when they are stored at too high a temperature.

OLEORESINS

Oils and resins found in tobacco that give it its smoking qualities.

PANATELA

A widely-varying cigar format ranging from 5 to 7 inches with a gauge from 34 to 38.

PERFECTO

A cigar with a rounded head and a closed foot.

PETIT CORONA

A short corona format usually 4 1/2 inches by a 40 ring gauge.

PLUG

A tight spot in a cigar that prevents a proper draw.

PREMIUM CIGAR

A high grade cigar made by hand from 100% tobacco long leaf filler.

PURO

A cigar whose filler, binder and wrapper come from the same country.

PYRAMID

A cigar with an open foot and a tapered head.

RING GAUGE

The diameter of a cigar is referred to as the ring gauge. It is a measurement equal to 1/64 of an inch. A 64 ring gauge would be one inch in thickness and a 32 ring gauge would be 1/2 inch thick.

ROBUSTO

A short churchill format typically 5 to 5 1/2 inches by a ring gauge of 50.

ROLLER

Highly skilled artisans who apply the wrapper to the bunch.

SECO

Spanish meaning "dry". This filler contributes aroma and is of medium-body.

SHADE GROWN

Tobacco, usually the wrapper leaf of a cigar. For mildness, the wrapper is grown under tents and is not exposed to sunlight.

SHADE LEAF

Tobacco grown under a canopy or tent producing a thinner, more elastic leaf used in the wrapper.

SHORT FILLER

Chopped scraps of leaves hand-rolled, but more likely machine-rolled, to create a tight hard draw of smoke.

SMOKING TIME

A 5-inch cigar with a 50 ring gauge, such as a robusto, should provide anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes of smoking pleasure. A double corona, a 7 1/2-inch cigar with a 50 ring gauge, may give over an hour's worth of smoking time. A thinner cigar, such as a longdale, smokes in less time than a cigar with a 50 ring gauge.

SUN GROWN

Tobacco which is grown in direct sunlight. This creates thicker veins and a thicker leaf.

TOOTH

Small bumps which texture the wrapper on a cigar.

TORCEDOR

Title earned by the master cigar rollers.

TORPEDO

A cigar with a closed head and a closed foot.

TUBO

A cigar that is placed in a tube. Most tubes are aluminum while some are glass.

VEINED

The rib of the tobacco leaf. A quality cigar should not be too veined.

VOLADO

A type of filler tobacco chosen for its burning qualities.

WRAPPER

The outermost tobacco leaf of the cigar.

IN CLOSING

I sincerely hope that you now have a better understanding of cigars and how they can fit into your lifestyle. Through my years in the business I have learned many valuable lessons, however I don't know everything. With this in mind, be sure to ask others their opinions on storage, lighting, cutting, etc. If you have a great tip I would love to hear it and add it to the next version of this eBook. You can always contact me at dave@cheaphumidors.com.

All criticism is gladly appreciated, believe me. Like I said before, I am no writer, so if you saw something spelled wrong or a sentence that looks like it was translated into English from Chinese, please let me know. Seriously, I want to know. Well, don't be too hard on me.

Please feel free to tell others about this resource if you feel it was useful to you. If possible, have them download it directly from us to ensure they have the latest version. We will always be updating this eBook. The latest version will be located at:

<http://www.cheaphumidors.com/book>