

THE CIGAR SMOKER'S FAQ

(Frequently Asked Questions)



Revision 3.05 - 6/08/05
compiled by [Bob Curtis](#), Internet Cigar Group
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Introduction:

Welcome to the Cigar Smoker's FAQ - a comprehensive guide to cigar smoking compiled from online resources including the newsgroup alt.smokers.cigars. Our FAQ is considered to be the *definitive* document on the pleasures of smoking by cybersmokers all over the world! This document represents the combined efforts of thousands of these cybersmokers, and is intended to provide clear information about our pleasures, and perhaps debunk a few of the myths surrounding cigar smoking along the way.

As always, any and all corrections, additions, or suggestions are welcome. Please address any new submissions to Bob Curtis bc@cigargroup.com. This FAQ is available on the Web and in several useful forms via FTP at the following address:

on the Web:

- <http://www.cigargroup.com/faq> (always the latest version)

Download Text Version 3.01 via browser FTP:

- <ftp://ftp.cigargroup.com/pub/cigarfaq.txt>

Download Text Version 3.01 via anonymous FTP:

FTP to ftp.cigargroup.com in the directory /pub
(The FAQ file is called cigarfaq.txt)

To display the text-only version properly in a word-processor, be sure to download the Text Version, available from: <ftp://ftp.cigargroup.com/pub/cigarfaq.txt> and set your font to a fixed-pitch, such as courier-new. This will insure neat columns and tables.

NEW! Download our newest *PDA* version!

Yes, now you can carry our FAQ with you on any PDA computer!. All the details of our online FAQ and indexed and cross-referenced, as in the original HTML version. To download this super new version (created for the Internet Cigar Group by [Leslie S. Russell](#)), simply click on the link below: (NOTE: Users of certain browsers may have to RIGHT-CLICK on the link and then

click on "Save As" to download the file correctly)

[Download the *PDA* Version of the *Cigar Smoker's FAQ* now.](#)
[\(right-click here...\)](#)

Windows Help File version!

Yes, now you can host a Windows 3.1 or Windows95 version of our FAQ right on your home or office computer!. All the details of our online FAQ indexed and cross-referenced in the classic Windows "Help" style. To download this super new version (created for the Internet Cigar Group by [Scott W. Arnold](#)), simply click on the link below: (NOTE: Users of certain browsers may have to RIGHT-CLICK on the link and then click on "Save As" to download the file correctly)

[Download the *Windows Help File* Version of the *Cigar Smoker's FAQ* now. \(right-click here...\)](#)

I have intentionally excluded opinions of specific cigars, as these are a matter of personal taste. For a relatively complete list of cigars (without ratings), pick up my most recent Cigar Database, available at:

Cigar Database on the WWW:

- New, [Interactive version](#), allows sorting and online look-ups. <http://www.cigargroup.com/database>
- [Text Version](#) for downloading and printing your own copy. <ftp://ftp.cigargroup.com/pub/cigardb.txt>

or by anonymous FTP:


FTP to ftp.cigargroup.com in the directory /pub/
(The ascii database is called cigardb.txt,
the comma-delimited version is cigardb.cd)

Our readers have also compiled a number of other reference resources for cigar smokers on the 'net. These can all be found at the largest, non-commercial cigar site on the Internet:

The Internet Cigar Group
<http://www.cigargroup.com>

Many a.s.c. readers have contributed (sometimes without knowing!) to the creation of this FAQ. I didn't feel it necessary to attribute short clips from contributors, however when an entire section was contributed by a single author, I've tried to attribute it correctly. If you feel that your contribution was not properly credited, please tell me about it!

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1.0 The Internet and Cigars

Fine cigars are enjoying a dramatic revival in modern society. Their presence on the Internet is an indication of the new popularity of stogies. This section deals with where information, discussions, and camaraderie among cigar smokers can be found on the 'net.

1.1 Alt.smokers.cigars

Welcome to the Usenet newsgroup alt.smokers.cigars - The largest cigar-club in the world! Here we discuss all aspects of cigar smoking - from favorite types, to storage, to techniques. All cigar-related discussions are welcome. There are ongoing discussions of humidors, cutters, smoke shops, the politics of cigars, current trends, and (of course) there's much talk of particular brands and our readers' recommendations. This is an international forum, so don't be surprised to see much talk about those fine smokes not even available in the US (such as





Cubans).

Are you traveling? Ask our readers about smoke shops near your destination. Trying a new brand? Tell our readers what you think - or ask them their opinions! Building a humidor? Get advice from both laymen and professionals! Whether you're a novice, or life-long smoker, alt.smokers.cigars is here for discussions of *all* cigar-related issues.

Who are we? A.s.c. represents a broad cross-section of cigar smokers on the Internet! Our regular contributors are doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. We're college students, construction workers, and computer geeks... Married and single, guys and gals, everybody fits into our group. we all have the love of cigars as a common bond.

What *shouldn't* you post in alt.smokers.cigars??? ASC is a *discussion* group... In accordance with Usenet "netiquette", advertising is absolutely taboo. Nothing will hurt your image more than advertising in a discussion group - don't even think about it. One time announcements of special events are ok, but don't get caught attempting to trick our readers! And please don't use ASC to conduct illegal activities such as buying or selling Cuban cigars in the U.S..

Additionally, Usenet discussion groups like ASC are not the place for HTML posts or pictures (binaries), so please don't post images - and make sure you're posting in plain text! If you break the rules, you can be sure that vigilant readers will contact your Internet provider and ask that your access be restricted. ASC is an online community. Act responsibly.

Want more? You can hear about new products, brands, and all sorts of special offers in the newsgroup alt.smokers.cigars.marketplace. This resource was developed to give 'net advertisers a chance to tell us about their products without disrupting the non-commercial cigar talk in ASC. Read about the latest cigar brands, discounts, close-outs, and special offers. ADVERTISERS ARE WELCOME in ASC.Marketplace!

Then there's the ASC clubhouse - alt.smokers.cigars.clubhouse, where anything goes! Created just for good-natured fun, ASC readers have the opportunity to socialize with each other in this area - to kick back and enjoy an occasional smoke together while discussing life, love, and the state of the universe. Heard a good joke? This is the place to share it! As with ASC, advertising of any sort is strictly taboo in ASC.Clubhouse...

1.2 IRC (Internet Relay Chat)

The Internet Cigar Group, in our efforts to expand non-commercial cigar resources on the 'net, have recently created a new, interactive, real-time chat area on the World Wide Web! Come join us for casual discussions and occasional celebrity interviews. You'll need a Java-capable web browser to access this resource (Netscape 2.0 or greater, MS Explorer 3.0, others). Log in anytime to <http://www.cigargroup.com/chat>.

True IRC...

Yes, once upon a time on a network far away there was a specific area for real-time chatting called IRC. This Internet resource is still alive and well, and cigarsmokers are there! Cybersmokers have two permanent channels set up on an IRC system called the Undernet (Set the "server" option of your IRC software to "undernet.org") - #cigarsmokers, and #Cigarz. Although users are welcome to check-in anytime, most of the channel "regulars" sign on around 10:00 - 11:00 pm est. Come join us!

Instructions to join ...

```
From a Unix shell account -
Type "irc" to enter your local IRC server.
type "/server undernet.org" (your IRC client will pick the best
undernet server to use) and
then "/join #cigarsmokers" or "/join #Cigarz" (no quotes, of course)
```

Using Netcom's Netcruiser Software -
Click on the IRC button (the lips in the upper right)
Click on Other IRC Host
In the other server box type undernet.org
Hit Connect.
Once Connected at the bottom type
/join #cigarsmokers (or /join #Cigarz)

Chatting from America on Line

AOLers get together to talk cigars every Thursday evening, beginning at 10pm EST...

Go to People Connection, then click on list rooms. Click on "Create Member Room", then type "The Humidor". You will either create the room, or join those already there.

If you want to join the Internet chat group "#cigarsmokers" or "#CigarZ", AOLers need to download the new IRC connection software from AOL.

(From AOL's Internet Support group...)

To use IRC on America Online, you will need three things:

1. The latest version of the America Online software for Windows.
- NOTE: The Macintosh software is scheduled to support IRC in the next release, due for release in the forthcoming weeks.
2. AOL's WINSOCK DLL.
3. An IRC application. Both of these can be downloaded by using keyword WINSOCK. The WINSOCK.DLL can be downloaded by clicking on Download it Today. Once, the WINSOCK.DLL is downloaded you will need to install it into the C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory.

Once, this has been finished you will be able to download and install an IRC program from Keyword WINSOCK. You can find the IRC application by clicking on the Software Library icon. Instructions for setting up the IRC program are included with the downloaded software.

After you have set up your IRC program, all you need to do to run it is to sign on to America Online. Then, while signed on, run the IRC program. America Online will take care of communicating with the Internet, and you will be able to IRC from AOL.

It should be noted that at this time, CompuServe and Prodigy users do not have direct access to IRC sessions... :-)

1.3 CompuServe Cigar Forum

On the CompuServe network, Cigar information is in library 13 of the Wine forum (GO WINEFORUM) You'll find questions and answers discussed in the messages section, files available for download in the library section (Cigar files, including this FAQ are available in library 13), There are also occasional interactive conferences among the forum's members.

1.4 AOL's Cigar forum

On America On-Line, you'll find cigar related materials in the CIGAR forum.

- 1) GoTo Keyword: Cigars

- 2) Close the pop-up called Today's Specials to get to the Food and Drink Network (FDN) Main Menu.
- 3) Click on the Cigar icon in the lower right corner of the screen.
- 4) Double-click on Cigar and Pipes Message Boards
- 5) Double-click on Cigar and Pipe Messages, Q&A, Reviews
- 6) You can now browse folders and choose which you want to read or, if you are current with your reading, you may choose to use the "Find New" button and bring up only those messages that are new since your last visit. They will be listed for all folders.

This forum also hosts an on-line chat for cigar smokers every Tuesday.

1.5 Web Sites, FTP, and more

Cigars are also making an appearance on the World Wide Web. There are commercial sites, and private "home pages" containing a wealth of information. See "References" section for specific URL's (addresses). The [Internet Cigar Group](#) pages are a compilation of the best of these non-commercial cigar resources, and a great place to start. Look into: <http://www.cigargroup.com>.

For those interested in downloading cigar-related files via anonymous FTP (File Transfer Protocol), The Internet Cigar Group offers this FAQ, an extensive cigar database, the Cigar / Health FAQ, and more.... Simply point your FTP browser to <ftp.cigargroup.com>.

Finally, there is also a second newsgroup (not a discussion group, more of a periodical-style listing) with some smoking-related info. If your ISP carries the "Clari" newsgroups, check out "clarinet.news.smoking".

1.6 Cigars and Computers

- *Can smoking cigars damage my computer?*

Although many will tell you that hard drives are sealed and therefore not susceptible to smoke, all Connor and Seagate drives (to name a few I'm sure of) actually do incorporate an air filtration system to equalize atmospheric pressure. The good news is these filters employ a 0.3 micron filter to maintain a clean environment, and cigar smoke contains particles larger than 1 micron. Floppy drives can be a little more touchy, as they're used less frequently than your hard drive and directly exposed to incoming dust and smoke (the smoke seems to bind the dust), Most computers actually "inhale" through their front panels and exhaust through the power supply in the back. I'd recommend using a floppy cleaning kit on a regular basis.

- *Ashes in your keyboard? (a common problem for many!)*

Well, most modern keyboards use a sealed membrane system for their contacts, so until your KB gets to the point where the ashes cause a *mechanical* problem, don't worry. At that point, disassembly and cleaning usually works, but even in worst-case situations, keyboards are cheap to replace. (and don't involve loss of data).

Then there's monitors, which IMHO are probably the most susceptible component. Monitors have large ventilation holes and lots of static electricity - internally, they're very effective electrostatic precipitators. Unfortunately, they attract dust and smoke and deposit these contaminants on their own circuit boards! The smoke combined with dust creates a sticky goo which defies most cleaning procedures, and conducts electricity (slightly). Here in South Florida, we get a double-whammy effect, as there's a great deal of salt in the dust, which makes this goo hygroscopic. On a humid day, it's not uncommon for monitors to misbehave because of the moisture making this dust-film more conductive. This of course results in their premature demise. :-)

2.0 General information

2.1 New Smokers' Questions

- *How do the packaged cigars that I can buy from the drugstore or the magazine store compare to THE GOOD STUFF?*

Most packaged "drug store" cigars include non-tobacco ingredients such as paper, saltpeter (for even burning) and PG or Glycerin (to prevent them from drying out). Quality cigars contain *only* tobacco. Most quality cigars contain top-of-the-line leaves, and are made with long-filler (the leaves run from end to end. "Good" cigars are generally only available from tobacconists.

- *Are Mail-Order cigars ok?*

Many cigar smokers use mail-order houses for their discounted prices. The problem with this is that there are very few mail-order suppliers who will let you purchase singles - and who wants to spend \$100 for a box just to try a new smoke? This is one of the best reasons why you might want to frequent your local tobacconist. There you can get good advice, buy singles, and see and smell the stogies you're purchasing.

- *What about "old" cigars? Should I buy "fresh" ones?*

Tobacco used in premiums is aged 18 to 24 months before rolling. Some manufacturers age rolled cigars an additional year before even shipping them to the distributor. as long as they are stored properly, there's no such thing as an "old" cigar. Many people prefer "vintage" smokes. Refer to the FAQ section on aging cigars for more information.

Cigars are never "fresh" in the proper definition of the word. All reputable tobacconists will store them properly, at approx. 70 deg, 70% humidity. Always have cigars shipped overnight or 2nd day to prevent their drying out in transit.

- *If a cigar is properly stored in a humidor, how long will it last?*

Indefinitely. Many people still have pre-Castro Cubans (yum!) I've heard of pre-WW2 smokes which were GREAT!

- *If a cigar dries out, is it possible to get the taste back?*

If you let a cigar dry out it'll certainly damage it, but it can be recovered (somewhat) by s-l-o-w-l-y re-humidifying it in a proper humidor. It'll never be quite the same, but cigars *will* re-humidify far better than others

- *Besides being a suitable way to transport cigars, are those glass (or metal) storage-tubes ok to use? For how long?*

As long as the cigars were properly humidified before the tubes sealed, they should last for a long time. Open it up to smell the tobacco though, and you'll be letting in dry air (which will slowly dry them out). Tubes with cork stoppers also will slowly exchange moisture with the "outside" air. I really can't recommend these tubes for long-term (over a year) storage.

- *What's the difference in taste of cigars from different countries?*

Each country's cigar production has its own taste and character. Cigars are made all over the world, with tobacco grown in different soils, cured by different processes, and rolled with different techniques. Too many to discuss here (unfortunately), so let's stick with some general guidelines for some of the more popular Caribbean countries.

These are not hard and fast rules, but you'll have something to go by when you're faced with a humidor full of cigars from which to choose.

- Cigars from Jamaica are usually considered mild.
- Cigars from the Dominican Republic are mild to medium in strength.
- Cigars from Honduras and Nicaragua are stronger and heavier smokes.
- And cigars from Cuba are considered to be some of the richest and creamiest in the world!

Also remember that the larger the diameter (ring gauge) the richer and fuller the flavor, and the longer the cigar, the cooler the smoke. New smokers might want to start with any cigar made by Macanudo or Arturo Fuente. Just pick one that is a size you like and enjoy it. You might also try one with a "maduro" wrapper (which is dark and rich tasting).

2.1a Selecting the perfect single

- 1) Look for open boxes in your tobacconist's humidor that have been there for a while. Cigars are often shipped "wet" to retard drying, and should stabilize for a week or more in a proper environment before smoking. Grab them too soon, and they may have only stabilized on the exposed side, causing uneven burning. (You can compensate just as easily by putting your purchases in your own humidor for a week before smoking.)
- 2) Squeeze the cigar *gently*. It should "give" but not be too soft. Don't roll it in your fingers, as some suggest - this can damage the wrapper. Squeeze gently up and down the body to look for lumps or soft spots. A good cigar should have neither. Remember to be gently. Even if you don't buy that cigar somebody else might - don't damage it!
- 3) inspect the wrapper for "odd" discolorations, looseness, or cracks. The wrapper should be smooth and tight, and not damaged on either end. Smaller veins are good to watch for, as these often smoke smoother, but compare your single to other cigars with the same wrapper! Veins appear differently in different wrapper types.
- 4) Look at the tobacco in the exposed end. Some variation of color is normal, as most cigars are made from a blend of tobaccos. What you're watching for is extreme or abrupt color changes. This sometimes means an inferior leaf was used, or the leaves weren't laid together properly in the bunching process. Off tastes and uneven burns will often be the result.

2.2 Clippers, cutters, etc.

The first thing you should do is closely examine the "head" of the cigar - this is the closed end that needs to be clipped. Almost all have what is called a "cap" - a bit of tobacco leaf used to close off the end - you should be able to see how far down the length of the cigar the cap goes by inspection. Typically only a 1/4" - 3/8" or so; sometimes much less, and on figurado shapes sometimes quite longer. Anyhow wherever the cap stops is your cutting limit - cut beneath the cap's line or even too close and your cigar will start to unravel, and as you pointed out this is extremely unpleasant. Typically I cut the minimal possible while trying to open approx. 75%-85% of the cigar end's surface area. Sometimes this means a cut as little as 1/32" down, where other times almost 3/8" - it depends entirely on the individual cigar's roll and cap construction.

The single bladed cheapie cutters that most newbies are given or buy for \$3 typically do a very poor job of clipping the cap, and result in crushed, split, and tattered cuts. One thing to keep in mind when using a guillotine cutter is to line up your cigar at eye level and to then clipped it quickly and decisively - I have found this method to give satisfactory results nearly 100% of the time.

Many smokers swear by the .44 Magnum cutter which is a relatively inexpensive punch that is easy to use, makes a perfect round opening, and completely bypasses the problem of how much to clip. I personally don't use one because they do not work as well on figurado shapes, nor can I get as large an opening as I sometimes would prefer. Crestmark also makes a nice cigar punch that extracts the cut cap from itself. I own both types of punches and think they are excellent products and would recommend that you try one at your tobacconist, it may be ideal for you.

V-Cut clippers are also available, and a few cigar smokers I know think this is the ONLY way to clip your cigar. You don't have to worry about the caps length using this type of cutter since you rest the cigar against it, and it "automatically" takes out a v-

notched shaped bit of tobacco of the same size everytime. Personally I hate this type of cut, I find that it tends to build up tar on the edges and that some cigars tend to burn unevenly when cut this way. These cutters typically work better on some sizes than others, depends on the size of the v-notch blade.

Cigar scissors are elegant, but they are difficult to use in my opinion. Plus they are damn near impossible to carry around.

Some people use x-acto blades, swiss army pen knives, their teeth, and so on. How you clip your cigar is a matter of what works best for you. Just keep in mind where the cap ends and you should be fine.

2.2a Ashes, Ashtrays...

(editor's thanks to Steve Herman (BIGGUY46@msn.com))

ASHES

Your cigar ashes are a tell-tale sign about some of the characteristics of your cigar. A cigar that is well rolled (packed), can burn slowly and create a stiff ash up to two to three inches in length without bending or breaking. It merely looks like the cigar itself, except it's grey.

Should your ash break up quickly, or burn in a less than tightly contained manner, or expand, it is probably not packed well and its' smoking characteristics are probably below par. If the ash color begins to vary into the darker tones the leaf mix was not up to standard either.

The quality of the smoke is not affected by the length of the ash. Hot or bitter smoking taste, or any other kinds of less than smooth variations that occur WHILE smoking the cigar, are other indications of poorer quality, either in the leaf mix or the rolling .

A great quality cigar can usually be smoked down to the nub (way past the Band). Sometimes, as you smoke a great or good one down, the taste will change from "lovely smooth", to beginning to be "bitter" or have a distinct "after taste". Most experts suggests tossing it, but I practice more patience. I simply put it down and let it burn itself gently in the "proper ashtray". A good cigar can maintain its slow burning qualities from 3 to 5 minutes without being puffed. Quite often it will burn itself past a "tar" spot easily and a resumption of your smoking it (without it going out) will confirm its' return to its original wonderful flavor. Give it a chance to re-prove itself. I find the last two inches really satisfying and "Hard to put down"! It's almost like a love affair, when it's that good!

ASHTRAYS Critical to the fulfillment of the pleasures of smoking are an assortment of the the proper cigar ashtrays to match the size of your cigars AND your personal technique of how you physically handle your cigar while smoking, or how you hold it in your mouth (wet vs dry, etc).

Antique ashtrays picked up in fleamarkets, are usually old enough to have been designed specifically for CIGAR smokers. I avoid the modern, lead crystal ones with the very long cigar rest. It gets very dirty quickly, and it is hard to handle the cigar (the, "I'm not looking", reach for it) as it smokes down.

For me the proper ashtray has a "Rest" (landing) for your cigar that has generous proportions, such as about 2 inches long and 7/8 to an inch wide, with at least a generous curve on its' sides so as to contain it EASILY, ie, prevent it from rolling to the side.

The tray itself needs to be big enough to take, at least, the ashes from two big cigars, or else there is an annoying build up of a mountain of ash that constantly has to be played with (distracting to the purist), or else emptied frequently. Should a friend visit you you need an ashtray with two holders for cigars and an even larger size to hold the ashes without ash-buildup.

Sometimes there is no room on your desk for an ashtray or in many cases, you are in a room where you need a "Ashtray on a

Stand". Again I prefer antiques specially made for cigars, not cigarettes. These too, must have ample proportions, and of course a removeable tray that nests in a stand. In either the desk, or stand type, Heavy glass or Metal is preferred. Decorated Ceramics stand alone ashtrays or inserts, are of course, acceptable, as long as they meet the above criteria, and do not clash with your smoking room DECOR. For me, there is always the bounce test, where I gently mishandle things and see if then can stand up to a fall to a carpeted floor. Good ones bounce slightly without breaking. Don't use fragile ones, especially if they're purchased specially for you as a gift by a dear family member.

Above all, never put your cigar out by stubbing the end in the ashtry. Proper style calls for you to tip it into the ashtray and let it die out naturally. Pointing it down will end its life quickly. There will be less smell and residue.

DISPOSAL The 21st Century man, that smokes at home and wants to preserve his marriage, and relationship with his children, must pay careful attention to the devastating effects that cigar smoke has, as well as the OVERNIGHT smell of a dead cigar remaining in the ASHTRAYS. Safety and Sanity require you to be constantly running a BIONAIRE Air purifier in any room you are smoking in, within your house. These need to be permanently there, lest you forget. I run them all night just to be sure, and have two of them each in different rooms. Never, Never, leave a dead cigar in the ashtray overnight. Ashes are OK but Butts, never. They really create a stale stink that damages any "SMOKING FREEDOMS", granted to you by the QUEEN of the Household.

I know too many violators of these simple "after smoking care" principles, who have been BANISHED to Balconys', Porches or other OUTDOOR barren Spaces, especially by the Princesses of the Castle, who protest about their ability to get their Beauty sleep.

If you follow these guidelines I can guarantee that you and your cigars should be tolerated for at least 10 or more years as long as you spend on your wife, at least twice what you spend on your cigar "HOBBY". Never let her see the Invoice for your favorite high quality box of cigars. That will cause you to stutter, and try to explain something that no practical person will ever understand. If you repeat this folly, guilt will overtake you and cost you a fortune.

2.2b How to light a Cigar

- *Is there an etiquette for lighting a cigar?* This is as delicate as that wrapper color question! Everyone seems to have their own opinion on this, so what I am going to do is pass on is IMHO only! I light my cigars this way is that it provides me an even burn from the start, prevents any bitter taste during the lighting process, and also because I do enjoy the quiet ceremony of being so deliberate.

1. If you use a match, wait till the sulphur burns off before using it to light you cigar. Also if you can find those fancy long cedar matches all the better.

2. If you use a lighter, use a butane one. The gasoline based ones impart a foul flavor to your smoke. Of course this statement irritates the hell out of the Zippo manufacturer, so in rebuttal they actually published a rather nice little book that explains that if you allow the flame to burn for a few seconds all of the disturbing odor will dissipate. Try and see for yourself is my advice. Personally I use a butane lighter. I have no experience with the new fancy flameless lighters, so to put it simply: ask someone else.

3. Some people claim that the only proper implement for lighting up is a cedar spill. A cedar spill is a long thin strip of spanish cedar which is lit first and then used in turn to light your cigar. You will typically see these in use at fancy cigar dinners, rather elegant way to light your stogie, but not all that practical in the car...

4. Here is where it gets messy, "how to actually light it" has been the key stumbling block to peace in many a nation. I have heard so many different methods, with such subtle differences it is perplexing. So what I am going to share, is how -I- light my cigars. Here we go:

- I preheat the foot (the open end) by slowly rolling the cigar above the flame at an angle allowing a tiny black ring forms all the way around the wrapper. I don't allow the flame to touch the cigar.
 - Then I place the cigar in my mouth, and draw in as I repeat the process, slowly rolling the cigar at an angle above the flame, but never letting the lighter flame actually touch the cigar. I guess about a 1/2 inch or so away. What appears to happen is the flame seems to leap from lighter up onto the foot of the cigar, even though my stogie never comes in direct contact with the lighter's flame. Remember to slowly spin the cigar to establish an even burn.
 - Once I think I have it lit, I pull it from my mouth and actually look at the glowing foot to see if I did my job properly. Now if the burn is really uneven, I will repeat the previous step on the appropriate side to even the burn. If it is just a bit uneven (which in my case it typically is) I gently blow on the end in the appropriate place to intensify the heat there, and will then take a couple steady draws, but will then just wait a minute before continuing to puff. This short delay seems to allow the cigar a chance to stabilize and self correct the burn.
 - Then I sit back and relax and smoke to my heart's content!
5. If I am outside, and it is windy, and shelter is not accessible, I then throw decorum out the window, and I flame-torch the end, and put up with the initial bitterness to ensure a fast even light. Hey you, yeah you, the cigar snob, stop that groaning! :-)
6. If my smoke happens to go out, I just knock off the ash, gently blow through the cigar to clear out the old smoke, then I jump right to the drawing while rolling part of my light up sequence.

2.3 Smoke Rings

The biggest factor in blowing good smoke rings is practice. With that in mind, Try this technique.

First, you need a cigar with *dense* smoke, and a place with still air. Don't waste your time trying to blow smoke rings in a breeze!

Draw a thick puff of smoke into your mouth. Hold it there and open your mouth slowly. Make an "O" with your mouth, (maybe more of a rounded "oh") - definitely *not* a pucker like a kiss. Curl the tip of your tongue down, and pull your tongue all the way back.

Now, when blowing a ring, you're actually not exhaling. You're just pushing out the smoke in your mouth with your tongue in short bursts - like a piston, only in a *relaxed* way. It's actually a really gentle motion. Push forward with your tongue, with perhaps a *slight* recoil at the bottom.

Keep at it - it's like riding a bicycle... Once you "get it" you'll wonder what the problem was!

2.4 Cigar Styles and Sizes

All cigars can be divided into two broad categories by their shape. Parejos, which have straight sides, and Figurados, which include all "irregular" shapes.

Parejos include 3 basic divisions, by the relative proportion of their dimensions. There's Coronas (a broad category including Coronas, Dbl. Coronas, Presidentes, Robustos, and Churchills). All Coronas are characterized by an open "foot" and a rounded "head". Next are the Panatelas. Longer than coronas, these are generally considerably thinner. The third division is Lonsdales - thicker than Panatelas, but generally longer than Coronas.

(confused yet? - good!)

Figuardos, or "irregular" shaped Cigars are a little better defined. The smallest is the Belicoso - a small tapered cigar with a rounded head (not pointed) and a larger foot. Next are the Pyramids, tapering from a large foot to a small head. A "true" pyramid always has a pointed head. Although many smokers call a large pyramid a torpedo, a "true" torpedo has a large foot, smaller, pointed head, and a slight bulge in the middle. The Perfecto is tapered on *both* ends to a smaller size than its straight middle section - a classic "cigar shape". Finally, there's the Diademas, the giant of cigars. These are 8 inches or greater. (hmmmm - does that make the Aliados General a "Diademas-and-a-half"?)

Cigar size names did originally specify the exact physical size and shape of cigars. After a dozen decades of manufacturers "individualizing" their cigars, these original standards are long gone. As far as I know, only Cuban manufacturer's have stayed with these original standard sizes. Whether Upman, Partagas, or Cohiba produces it, a Habana Corona is still Corona sized....

CLASSICAL CIGAR SHAPES ORDERED BY LENGTH

PANATELAS

- Small Panatela (5" x 33)
- Short Panatela (5" x 38)
- Slim Panatela (6" x 34)
- Panatela (6" x 38)
- Long Panatela (7 1/2" x 38)

CORONAS

- Petit Corona (5" x 42)
- Corona (5 1/2" x 42)
- Corona Extra (5 1/2" x 46)
- Robusto¹ (5" x 50)
- Long Corona (6" x 42)
- Toro (6" x 50)
- Lonsdale (6 1/2" x 42)
- Grand Corona (6 1/2" x 46)
- Churchill² (7" x 47)
- Giant Corona (7 1/2" x 44)
- Double Corona (7 3/4" x 49)

FIGUARDOS³

- Petite Belicoso (5" x 50)
- Belicoso (6" x 50)
- Torpedo (6 1/2" x 52)
- Pyramid (7" x various)
- Giant⁴ (9" x 52)

1 : Sometimes still referred to as Rothschilds, a previous term used to describe any short and stout cigar. Even more rarely seen are cigars described as a "Rothschild" which is an incorrect spelling. Like the H. Upmann brand, this size is also named after a German cigar enthusiast, specifically the Rothschilds family. Regardless of whether you chose to call the size a Robusto or a Rothschilds, it is in general part of the Corona family and, as a result, was once referred to as a Royal Corona.

2 : Yes this shape is actually named after Winston Churchill. But considering how many cigars he smoked in a day, who's surprised?

3 : It is a common misconception among smokers to consider any irregularly shaped cigar to be a figuardo. The truth in this

statement is merely coincidental though. Unlike typical cigars (straight shafts with rounded heads and open foots) Figuardos are very hard to make—a master rollers job—and that's what makes them Figuardos. The types listed above are easy to pinpoint in respect to dimensions because they are very similar to typical cigars; ie. Coronas and Panatellas. The only specific notes are that Torpedos and Belicosos taper to a point at the head, and the Belicosos tapers over a shorter distance is usually more pointy. On the other hand the following types are so different and have there own range of lengths and ring guages, that they are mentioned seperately:

Pyramid:

Next to the Torpedo, probably one of the most recognized of the Figuardos. Unlike the Torpedo, which tapers in the last inch or two, the Pyramid tapers from head to foot. The Pyramid size is popular everywhere, with the Cuban Montechristo No. 2 being one of the most famous cigars of all time.

Culebras:

A very odd size that is not often found on the market today. It involves three smaller cigars being "snaked" together into a braided final product. In fact, the word culebra means "snake" in Spanish. Culebras first appeared when trouble arose regarding the practice of workers being able to take a few complimentary cigars home at the end of the work day. Factory bosses discovered that the workers were taking premium cigars from their workbenches and putting their daily gift cigars (which were of lesser quality) into the the premium cigar boxes! To curb this, the bosses began twisting the workers' cigars together when they were still moist to identify what was a daily gift and what was the real thing. The unique look eventually found demand from the public, but has dwindled in recent years. Hoyo De Monterrey apparently dropped its production of Culebras in 1998, leaving Davidoff as the only manufacturer outside of Cuba that still produces the shape. However, it's supposedly still made in a couple of factories in Cuba, including the world famous Partagas factory in Havana.

Perfecto:

A cigar that tapers at both ends and is closed at the head and foot. Once extremely popular in the early half of the twentieth century, this cigar has come to be looked upon as a joke. As a result it has lost popularity with smokers and is hard to find anymore, although major brands do still produce it. Te-Amo, comes to mind with its excellent Maduro Double Perfecto.

Cigarillo:

This is really a general term to refer to any small, cigarette-sized cigar. These days there are many named shapes that fall into the Cigarillo category. For instance, Demi Tasse is one that smokers will see often.

4 : The larger a cigar is, the harder it is to make and new rollers often start with Petit Coronas and then work their way up. The difficulty involved in rolling something as large as a Giant cigar is very great, and hence it falls into the "hard to make" category of Figuardos (see note 3 on Figuardos). Also note that the terms Diedamas and Giant are interchangeable; e.g. the Punch Grand Cru Diedamas Deluxe (8 x 52)

HAVANA SHAPES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

- Almuerzos (5 1/8 x 50)
- Britanicas (5 3/8 x 46)
- Cadetes (4 1/2 x 36)
- Campanas (5 1/2 x 52)
- Carlotas (5 5/8 x 35)
- Carolinas (4 3/4 x 26)
- Cazadores (6 3/8 x 44)
- Cervantes (6 1/2 x 42)
- Coronas (5 1/2 x 42)
- Coronas Gordas (5 5/8 x 46)
- Coronas Grandes (6 1/8 x 42)

- Cosacos (5 3/8 x 42)
- Dalias (6 3/4 x 43)
- Delicados (7 1/2 x 38)
- Delicados Extra (7 1/4 x 36)
- Entreactos (4 x 30)
- Especiales (5 1/4 x 45)
- Exquisitos (5 3/4 x 46)
- Favoritos (4 3/4 x 41)
- Franciscanos (4 1/2 x 40)
- Franciscos (5 5/8 x 44)
- Generosos (5 1/4 x 41)
- Gran Corona (9 1/4 x 47)
- Hermosos No. 4 (5 x 48)
- Julieta 2 (7 x 47)
- Londres (5 x 40)
- Marevas (5 x 42)
- Minutos (4 3/8 x 42)
- Ninfas (7 x 33)
- Numero 1 (7 1/2 x 38)
- Numero 2 (6 x 38)
- Numero 3 (4 1/2 x 26)
- Palmas (6 3/4 x 33)
- Palmitas (6 x 32)
- Panetelas (4 5/8 x 34)
- Panetelas Largas (6 7/8 x 28)
- Parejos (6 1/2 x 38)
- Perlas (4 x 40)
- Petit Bouquets (4 x 42)
- Piramides (6 1/8 x 52)
- Placeras (4 7/8 x 34)
- Prominentes (7 5/8 x 49)
- Robustos (4 7/8 x 50)
- Seoane (4 7/8 x 36)
- Superiores (5 3/4 x 40)
- Tacos (6 1/4 x 47)
- Trabucos (4 3/8 x 38)

The first dimension is the length of the cigar in inches. The second is the ring gauge of the cigar or the diameter of the cigar measured in 64ths of an inch. So a Churchill is about 7 inches long and 3/4 of an inch in diameter.

2.5 Construction - The Parts of a Cigar

Wrappers...

The wrapper is the outside layer of tobacco on a cigar. It gives a cigar one of its primary flavor components. Wrappers are usually very high quality leaves, and are available in colors ranging from double claro, the lightest to Oscuro, the darkest. Wrappers are very important to the taste of a fine cigar, and described in detail in another section of the FAQ.

Binders....

Binder leaves are the intermediate leaf used to hold the bunch of filler tobacco together. These vary considerably from one manufacturer to the next.

Filler...

Filler is the bunch of tobacco found at the center of the cigar. Generally the filler is responsible for determining how strong a cigar will smoke. There are two types of filler: long filler, which contains the whole leaf running from the head to the foot of the cigar, and short filler, comprised of scraps of tobacco (often the trimmed ends of long fillers).

The blending of wrappers, fillers and binders determines the overall flavor of a cigar. There is an art to blending tobaccos and as you smoke different cigars, you will notice how the various tobaccos interplay with one another.

- *Are there any differences between the blends of different size cigars in the same line?*

Manufacturers often use the same types of tobacco in different sizes, producing different tastes. Often the consumer will perceive this as the same "blend". There is a difference however - it's in the *proportions* of each type of leaf used. An experienced roller may use different proportions of the tobaccos in different sizes to allow for that size differences. In a smaller ring cigar, the binder and wrapper have a greater influence on the taste, for instance. The blender will allow for this difference by re-proportioning the filler blend. It's just one of those details that requires years of training among master rollers. (and of course, one of the reasons smokers will prefer the taste of one size over another of the same blend....

- *What is ring gauge and how is it measured?*

Ring size is the cigar's diameter, measured in 64ths of an inch. Thus a 32 ring cigar will measure 1/2 inch in diameter. Although many catalogs list ring sizes, they may deviate from each by a couple of points on specific cigars.

2.6 Wrapper Types

DOUBLE CLARO (also called Candela or American Market Select)- green to greenish brown. The color is achieved by picking the leaf before it reaches maturity, and then drying it rapidly. Very mild, almost bland with very little oil.

CLARO - light tan. Usually this is the color of shade grown tobacco. Connecticut Shade wrappers are said to be some of the finest in the world. Shade grown tobacco is grown under large canopies to protect the tobacco from harsh sunlight. Neutral flavor and smooth smoking.

NATURAL - (also called English Market Select) light brown to brown. These are most often sun grown, meaning they are not protected by canopies like shade grown leaves. Fuller bodied flavor than shade grown leaves, but still very smooth.

COLORADO CLARO - mid-brown, tawny. (For example, brands such as Dominican Partagas or Fuentes, using Cameroon wrappers.)

COLORADO - reddish dark brown, aromatic. A cigar with this wrapper tastes robust and rich.

COLORADO MADURO - dark brown, medium strength, slightly more aromatic than the maduro. Usually gives a rich flavor, as found in many of the best Honduran cigars.

MADURO - dark brown to very dark brown. These usually have more texture and veining than the lighter wrappers. They are often described as oily looking, with stronger taste - sweet to some palates with a unique aroma.

OSCURO - very dark brown or almost black. They are the strongest tasting of all wrappers. These wrappers tend to be from Nicaragua, Brazil, Mexico, or Connecticut Broadleaf.

The term EMS or English Market Selection is a broad one, which refers to brown cigars- anything other than double claro, (EMS) essentially.

The darker the color, the sweeter and stronger the flavor is likely to be, and the greater the oil and sugar content of the wrapper. Darker wrappers will normally have spent longer on the tobacco plant. or come from higher altitudes: the extra exposure to sunlight produces both oil (as protection) and sugar (through photosynthesis). They will also have been fermented for longer.

2.7 Body, strength, flavor, and blends

contributed by jebez@interport.net (Jerry Bezdikian)

All too often, smokers confuse, or blur together, the concept of body, strength and flavor in a cigar. You had posited smoke volume as a possible component - interestingly enough, smoke volume does indeed relate to these factors as well - more on that in a moment.

Most smokers define a cigar's character to two primary components:

- BODY (or 'strength', and even 'intensity'), and
- FLAVOR (the 'taste' that characterizes a particular cigar)

A full bodied cigar would be perceived as 'strong', but not necessarily as 'flavorful' - naturally, the converse is also true. Incidentally, many veteran smokers favor cigars characterized by both full body, and full flavor.

As an illustration...

Many inexperienced smokers mistakenly assume that all Cuban cigars are 'full bodied' - in fact, a large number of the great Cuban cigars are prized for their 'delicate' (what some might regard as medium or even light) body. A classic case in point are the larger Cuban Hoyos (and many of the Cuban Montecristos) which are characterized by their unrivaled complexity of 'taste' (full flavor), and relatively mild (as compared to other Cuban cigars) body. Likewise, there are a few Cuban cigars that are found to be quite strong (full bodied), but not very flavorful (some of the Sancho Panza, and El Rey Del Mundo come to mind).

While it is true that a smoker will select a type of cigar on the basis of body (full, medium or light), many assume (wrongly) that all smokers desire cigars that are full flavored. Just as some individuals are put off by 'full flavored' cuisine (Szechuan, or Cajun for example) some smokers desire cigars that are more 'gently' flavored (the Macanudos are a prime example).

As you can clearly see, we're obviously not talking science here. In a discussion of cigar body and flavor, of paramount consideration is experience, and a frame of reference. As one embarks on a lifelong relationship with cigars, a DR Cohiba might be perceived as a wonderfully robust smoke -- however, after a year or two of smoking, that same cigar will cause the smoker to wonder if the manufacturer altered the blend of this 'once' great smoke. It's all a matter of ...taste.

2.7a Descriptive terms...

It's amazing what terms some people will use to describe the flavors and subtle nuances of their favorite cigar! Paul B Harris (pbh@U.Arizona.EDU) has put the following list of descriptors together - all actually used in a popular cigar magazine!

----- **General Descriptors** -----

bitter	dry	full-bodied
green	harsh	medium-bodied
mild	rich	sharp
smooth	sour	sweet
tangy	tart	

----- **From The Spice Rack** -----

cinnamon
clove
nutmeg
pepper (peppery)
 black pepper
 hot pepper
 white pepper
rosemary
spice (spicy)
 aged spice
 dried spice
 sweet spice

----- What's For Dessert? -----

burnt sugar
 butterscotch
 caramel
 toffee
chocolate
 burnt chocolate
 dark chocolate
 milk-chocolate
 cocoa
 cocoa bean
fruit
 dried fruit
 ripe fruit
 citrus (citrusy)
 burnt citrus
 dried citrus
 dried orange peel
 raisins
licorice
nut (nutty)
 roasted nut
 almond
 chestnut
 walnut
toast (toasty)

----- Complimentary Beverages -----

coffee
 dark coffee
 roasted coffee
 dark roasted coffee
 roasted coffee-bean
cream (creamy)
tea

----- Back to Nature -----

earth (earthy)
flint (flinty)
flowers (floral, flowery)

herbs (herbaceous)
peat (peat-like)
sand (sandy)
straw
 dry straw
vegetation (vegetal)
 grass (grassy)
 leaf (leafy)
 stems (stemmy)
 weeds (weedy)
wood (woody)
 sweet wood
 dry wood
 cedar (cedary)
 aged cedar
 balsa wood
 dried balsa wood
 paper (papery)
 dry paper

----- Miscellaneous -----

chemical
camphor
leather (leathery)
metal (metallic)

2.8 Tobacco Production

Growing your own?

- *I have recently purchased tobacco seeds and planted them. Now I have little plant that I hope will get much bigger. I am looking for any advice on growing conditions.*

I've been involved in a similar project for the past month or more, and done a fair amount of research in that area of agriculture in preparation. What variety are you growing, and in what climate? I've got "crops" of *Nicotiana Alta* (flowering tobacco), and *Nicotiana Glutinosa* (a broadleaf variety) growing here in S. Florida. The flowering seeds were commercially available (Burpee's seeds, 1-800-888-1447), but I had a heck of a time getting seeds for a "smokable" (broadleaf) variety. Several resources of tobacco seeds I've found include:

Jim Johnson
3421 Bream St.
Gautier, MS 39553
601-497-6544
SEEDDEALER@aol.com

J. L. Hudson, Seedsman
PO Box 1058
Redwood City , Ca. 94064

Southern Business Express Seed Division
3421 Bream St.,

Gautier, MS 39553

601-497-6544

free e-mail catalog... send a message to:

seedman@datasync.com

Most tobacco plants should be grown them in partial shade for best results. Commercial shade-grown plants are actually grown in full bright sun, but under "cheesecloth" screens to diffuse the light. This produces more consistent leaf quality, top to bottom.

Soil should be rich and drain well. (Ph of about 6.7). Fertilize soon after germination to encourage root growth, and very frequently as the plant grows. Lower leaves may be picked to cure when they reach suitable size (Fuente claims 5 X 14" for a good leaf). Curing (for cigar tobacco) should be done for 6 to 18 months in a relatively controlled, humid climate (Uh, perhaps your local tobacconist would allow you to hang them from the ceiling in the back of his walk-in humidor - away from the lights?) Use large, paper bags if necessary to slow drying and keep light out. The trick to curing is to not let the leaves *ever* dry out.

Your plants will mature in 12-15 weeks (depending on climate) Nipping off the buds of any flowers that form will extend the life of the plants and allow multiple harvests from the same plant.

On Commercial Tobacco Production

From: BobT12@aol.com

The federal government recognizes various "types" of tobacco for regulatory purposes. One of these types is burley tobacco, which is primarily grown in Kentucky, Tennessee, and adjoining states. Burley is the form of tobacco that I grew up with, and have fond memories of. The burley tobacco season begins in late February, when the soil is prepared for the seed beds, which are planted in early March. Because the average temperature in Kentucky in early March is too cold for the seeds to germinate and grow, the seeds are sown broadcast in large rectangular beds, which are then covered by a thin protective cloth covering to create a greenhouse effect, holding the warmth from the sun in, and warming the soil.

Traditionally the form of cloth used was a very thin gauzelike cotton; today, synthetic types of cloth which are lighter and stronger than natural cotton are used. A sheet of this cloth in the size and shape to cover one tobacco bed is still referred to as a "tobacco cotton," because of the old tradition.

After the plants grow to a height of about a foot or foot and a half (when the weather warms up, and as the plants grow, the covering is removed), they are transplanted from the small seedbeds into the large tobacco fields, or patches. This process is known as "setting" the tobacco, and commercial transplanters pulled by tractors used in other regions for transplanting tomato and other vegetable plants are universally known here as "tobacco setters."

Burley tobacco is sun grown tobacco as opposed to some of the shade grown cigar leaf tobaccos. After the plants grow to a height of three to four feet, and leaf out fully, the buds that form at the top of the plants are removed, so that all of the plant's energies will be focused into the leaves, rather than into producing blooms and seeds. This is called "topping" the tobacco.

Most tobacco is air cured; no artificial heat from fires or gas heaters is applied. The leaves of burley tobacco are air dried for six to eight weeks in the barns - some cigar tobaccos are dried and cured for up to 10 years! And let me add from personal experience that there is no smell in the world more heavenly than that of a barn full of tobacco slowly curing.

Baling tobacco is a new phenomenon; traditionally the leaves were tied together in "hands;" the baling makes large quantities of tobacco easier to handle and process, but in my opinion tends to reduce the quality of it, because individual leaves cannot be seen or inspected, and removes much of the farmers' incentive to grow good quality tobacco.

The tobacco is sold in large warehouses by auction, though the prices tend to vary little from farmer to farmer in any particular year. The only role of the governmental association in the actual sale of the tobacco [other than regulating the amount which may be sold] is to purchase, with the funds raised through the membership fees, all tobacco grown by its members within their quotas,

which is not purchased by commercial entities, at a low price.

2.9 The Law and Cuban cigars...

There are lots of opinions posted on the 'net about the importing, sale, and possession of Cuban cigars in the US. I can't put these in the FAQ without reasonable assurances that the info is correct... :-)

Many of these posts are based on urban legends and rumors. Before we go into the specific law regarding importation of Cuban products, let's look over an advisory dated 2004, from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection division of the Department of Homeland Security...

"As a general rule, no. The allowance for bringing in up to \$100 worth of Cuban cigars if you were on authorized travel to Cuba is no longer in effect. In order to bring Cuban cigars into the U.S., you must have a specific license issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control. All other importations of Cuban cigars are illegal, including Cuban cigars that were acquired in other countries (such as Canada, England, or Mexico). It is also illegal for U.S. residents to buy, sell, trade, or otherwise engage in transactions involving illegally imported Cuban cigars. The penalties for doing so include confiscation of the cigars, civil fines of up to \$55,000 per violation and in appropriate cases, criminal prosecution, which may result in higher fines and/or imprisonment. Foreign residents and visitors to the U.S.(i.e., French, Mexican etc) may not bring in goods of Cuban origin under any circumstances."

"It is illegal for U.S. persons to buy, sell, trade, give away, or otherwise engage in (or offer to engage in) transactions involving illegally-imported Cuban cigars. The penalties for doing so include, in addition to confiscation of the cigars, civil fines of up to \$50,000 per violation and, in appropriate cases, criminal prosecution which may result in imprisonment."

"We recognise that the prohibitions that apply to Cuban cigars may deprive many consumers of a sought-after product. However, these prohibitions apply to all goods of Cuban origin and are an important element of the comprehensive program of economic sanctions against the Cuban government which have been in place since 1963. These sanctions have had the full support of the past seven Administrations and were further tightened by President Clinton in August 1994."

Pretty strong stuff, and pretty clearly worded. :-)

To hear it again in the U.S. Custom's service's own words, read their own press release at: <http://help.customs.gov>.

Note also that since 1994 it has been illegal for *anyone*, even foreign nationals to bring in *any* quantity of Cuban cigars - even for personal consumption. (Prior to 1994 foreign nationals were allowed to import cigars for personal use only. This loophole is now closed.)

Here's what it says in the U.S. Customs service's "[Customs Regulations for Non-Residents](#)"...

"You may include in your personal exemption not more than 200 cigarettes (one carton) or 50 cigars, or 2 kilograms (4.4 lbs.) of smoking tobacco, or proportionate amounts of each. An additional quantity of 100 cigars may be brought in under your gift exemption. **NOTE: Cigars of Cuban origin are generally prohibited entry, even for personal use.**"

The Trading with Enemy Act...

Still have doubts? Here's one of the specific regulations governing the importation of Cuban products.

Trading with Enemy Act, 50 USC App5(b)
The Cuban Asset Control Regulation
Code of Federal Regulations, section 515.101 et seq. vol. 19

"The purchase, importation, transportation or otherwise dealing with merchandise outside the US if that merchandise is: (1) of Cuban origin; (2) is or has been located in or transported through Cuba; (3) is made or derived in whole or in part from articles which are the growth, produce, or manufacture of Cuba, is illegal and punishable by a fine of not more than \$50,000 or imprisonment of not more than 10 years."

"A transaction between a US citizen within the US and his agent, home office, branch, or correspondent outside the US is prohibited as if he made the transaction. Gifts of Cuban origin, whether acquired by US citizens abroad or brought into the US by another to be given as a gift within the US is prohibited unless licensed by the Office of Foreign Assets Control at the US Department of the Treasury."

"The Cuban Assets Control Regulations of the US Treasury Department require that persons subject to US jurisdiction be licensed to engage in *any* transaction related to travel to, from, through, and within Cuba. Licenses are **not** granted for business and tourism. This restriction includes travel to and from Cuba through a third party (such as Canada or Mexico, for example)."

"The Treasury Department will consider licenses on a case-by-case basis."

Whew! The bottom line is that it is not legal to import, buy, sell, or even possess Cuban cigars in the US anymore....

3.0 Health Issues

3.1 Health FAQ

This document is an accumulation of scientific reports and papers regarding the health affects of cigar smoking. It was compiled by Marc J. Schneiderman, M.D., a.k.a. CigarBaron@aol.com. I consider this to be the definitive word on the subject, a result of some very detailed research, hence the title Cigar/Health FAQ. Although I was tempted to include this wonderful collection of medical reports, it stands too well as a seperate FAQ. I urge all serious cigar smokers to read it through, and draw their own conclusions on the health affects of our chosen hobby.

The Cigar/Health FAQ is available on the Web at:

<http://www.cigargroup.com/faq/health>

or (text only version) by anonymous FTP at:

The following summary was posted by that FAQ's author, cigarbaron@aol.com (CigarBaron), Paraphrasing Wynder and Mabuchi, 1972

- (1) Heavy cigar and pipe smoking is associated with the development of lung cancer.
- (2) Cigar and pipe smokers have a lower risk of lung cancer than the cigarette smoker. We believe this finding to relate to differences in inhalation practices and to the age at which smoking began.
- (3) The lower risk of lung cancer for Jewish males does not apply for cigar and pipe smoking, indicating the lower overall risk of lung cancer for Jewish males to relate to the lesser usage of cigarettes rather than to constitutional factors.
- (4) The age of male lung cancer patients who have smoked only cigars and pipes is older than for cigarette smokers, possibly reflecting an older age at the start of smoking and longer life expectancy of cigar and pipe smokers as compared to cigarette smokers, or a lesser deposition of tobacco smoke in the respiratory tract of cigar and pipe smokers due to the fact that they are predominantly non-inhalers. It is also possible that this reflects the secular changes in smoking habits that has taken place in the general population.

(5) While light cigars (one to two a day) or pipe smoking (one to four a day) does not appear to be associated with an increased risk of lung cancer, heavier cigar and pipe smokers need to realize that their risk for lung cancer as well as for other types of cancer and diseases is quite appreciable.

Essentially all major articles had some procedural flaw. The conclusions however all reflect the above two statements, and continually be reconfirmed. My personal feeling is that 2-3 cigars per day, not inhaled, pose no significant health threat.

There are no studies which implicate "light" cigar smoke with an increased health risk. However, cigars certainly are implicated in lung and other forms of cancer, and once you smoke 5+ a day, the risks become substantial. We cannot consider cigars benign.

3.4 Insurance

The following is a list of Insurance companies, both good and bad, and their attitude toward cigar smokers... No specific effort has been made to verify this information.

Company

Aetna Life	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
American General	Hostile	(company representative)
Blue Cross of Oregon	Friendly	(reader)
Blue Cross of Florida	Hostile	(reader)
Blue Cross of Texas	Hostile	(reader)
Equitable Life Assurance	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Farmer's	Hostile	(reader)
First Colony Life	Friendly	(reader)
Great West Life (Canada)	Friendly	(reader)
Guardian Life	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Issue Insurance Co.	Friendly	(reader)
Illinois Mutual	Friendly	(reader)
Manufacturers Life of Canada	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Massachusetts Mutual	Friendly	(reader)
Metropolitan Life	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Midland National Life	Friendly	(reader)
Mutual Life of New York	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Northwestern Mutual Life	Hostile	(reader)
Ohio Life Insurance Co.	Friendly	(reader)
Pacific Mutual	Friendly	(reader)
Phoenix Home Life	Friendly	(reader)
Principal Mutual Life	Friendly	(Cigar Aficionado, 1995)
Prudential	Friendly	(company representative)
State Farm	Hostile	(Various)
Savings Bank Life Insurance	Hostile	(reader)
US Life Insurance	Hostile	(company representative)

4.0 Storage

4.1 Aging Cigars

From: jebez@interport.net (Jerry Bezdikian)

A cigar is constructed from tobacco leaves. While it is true comparatively speaking, that certain types of tobacco will 'age better'

than others, the fact remains that all tobacco, by nature, is living matter - and as such, will steadily alter over a period of time. Veteran smokers will for example select specific Habanas for long-term aging due to decades long experience with that particular blend; it is a simple fact certain blends of tobacco yield greater results from aging than others. Some cigars, it has been found, will mature over a period of time, then cease to offer any added advantage with increased aging. In those cases, it's not as if the cigars stop aging (remember, the compositional evolution is on-going), it's only that with certain cigars, no greater enhancement will be realized after a period of time. Yet, other blends continually improve with greater, and greater maturation.

Key in this argument is the issue of 'proper' maintenance. Even with cigars that are known to 'age well', with long term storage (5, 10, 20 or more years), proper maintenance (humidity/temperature) is extremely critical. It's one thing to practice haphazard storage with a box of cigars that are to be consumed within a month or so after purchase - it's an entirely different issue when one is considering the storage of cigars for even six months -- let alone 6 years.

We should not confuse long term aging of cigars with short term maturation. These days, more often than not, cigars are brought to market in a 'green' state; to derive any measure of enjoyment from a 'fresh' cigar, requires a bare minimum of 3 to 4 weeks just to marry the tobaccos, smooth off the roughness in taste, and bring the cigars up to par. On the other hand, long term aging is a process that will mature a cigar to a highly refined state, that greatly alters a cigars character. In Europe (particularly in England), the aging (or laying down) of cigars is a time honored practice, that is just beginning to find popularity in North America.

- *How long will it take to properly age my cigars?*

3 weeks will stabilize the mechanical tensions and moisture of a cigar, making it smoke better. 3 months will allow the oils to *begin* to migrate and flavors of the blend to marry. 2-3 years (in a suitable environment) will allow some of the more complex chemical processes of true aging to take place, and create subtle flavor changes...

- *and are there any special incidentals I need to know?*

The tobacco in most premium cigars is aged for 18 months to 2 years before rolling. In high-end premiums it's often aged 3 years, and some special blends use tobacco up to 15 years old! Regardless, many manufacturers will roll cigars from this aged tobacco, and then hold them (now rolled) for another 1-2 years before shipping. It's unfortunate that so many of the new "boutique" cigars becoming popular are in such demand that their manufacturers are shipping them directly off the roller's tables, without this necessary "post-rolling" aging. This leaves it to either the distributors or the end smokers to hold these "green" cigars until they stabilize, marry, or age - whatever your pleasure.

- *Should I remove the cello wrapper for proper aging?*

A good cigar will certainly age in the wrapper, just as a good wine will age in the bottle. Aging cigars, as wine involves very complex chemical processes. Oxidation, slow chemical changes, blending of essential oils are all involved. If you age a number of similar cigars, then removing the wrappers will allow different cigars to "marry", resulting in more consistence from one to another, but will not make the individual cigars any better or worse.

When aging cigars in your "daily" humidor, you're better off leaving them in their wrappers for another reason. Frequent opening and closing (exchanging the air) will result in faster evaporation/dissipation of the essential oils which give a good cigar its taste.

Many people keep a broad assortment of cigars in their humidors. With an assortment of different types, you are best off leaving the wrappers on. You don't want the spiciness from those Jamaicans mixing with the muskiness of the Hondurans. The Dominicans are mild - You don't want them to acquire any "power" from those Cubans!

Keeping the cello on also slows down the transfer of humidity. Your stored cigars remain stable - even with opening and closing the humidor frequently. You'll notice that the end of the cello is never sealed, it's just folded over. This allows the ambient humidity to *slowly* infiltrate the cigar. It also protects them from transferring problem like mold or bugs (shudder).

Now, if you're only keeping one or two similar brands in your humidor, you might consider unwrapping them - just so the

flavors "marry". This will produce better consistency from cigar to cigar.

- *What's this about cigar's flavors "marrying"???*

The phenomenon called "marrying" is a common, and well-known fact of tobacco production. It's what makes LGC's taste "green" until the 3 tobaccos in the blend mix sufficiently. Some of this transfer is by smell (airborne ethers), but much of it is caused by direct contact - transfers of "essential oils" in the cigar's tobacco. These oils migrate through the cigar and can be transferred readily.

Marrying can be good or bad. If your humidor is full of the same (or very similar) types of smokes, it will guaranty a consistent smoke. If you inter-mix mild or spicy blends with strong or earthy blends, the mixing is quite noticeable. This is why you should consider leaving the cello on when mixing a broad range of cigars in one humidor (or removing it if they're all the same). Some smokers go one step further, and leave their Cuban's in a completely different box from their others.... ;-)

- *But will these "essential oils" travel through the cigar's wrapper?*

The wrapper is just another leaf. Vapors and oils migrate through this layer as quickly as they travel from *any* adjacent leaves (such as the 3 tobaccos in a LGC's blend). Wanna see how well it protects 'em? Put a drop of water on the wrapper - after a minute, it'll soak right in to your stogie! The essential oils which give a cigar its taste travel just this readily from layer to layer, cigar to cigar. Just as the humidity will stabilize in a closed box, the essential oils of the cigars will eventually migrate and stabilize.

4.2 Humidors

- *Why use a humidor?*

The purpose of a humidor is to keep your cigars at their peak "smokability". The most crucial characteristic of a fine humidor is that it can provide a constant environment of about 68' to 70' F and 70-72% humidity. It doesn't really need to be fancy, but it *does* need to be functional.

- *What do I look for in buying a humidor?*

Starting from the inside of the box, look for details liked perfectly squared and fitted seams. Gaps provide an exit for moisture. Spanish cedar is the best wood for the interior of a humidor (see section on woods below) and it should be unfinished. There should be an "inner lip" protruding from the top of the side above in to the lid to help prevent the exchange of moisture.

The lid should close sufficiently tight, and be a uniform fit (no sign of warping). The humidification device should be capable of maintaining a constant level of humidity within the box with as little maintenance as possible.

- *What temperature is best for storage?*

70 degrees. - although cooler storage temperatures are definitely not a problem for cigars (as long as you maintain a reasonable relative humidity).

Why do we attempt to keep them at 70 deg. then? The key is in the subtle difference between stable storage and true aging. Your cigars will not age, mature, mellow, or develop the complex character of well cured smokes at lower temperatures. The blended tobaccos will not "marry", and if you're keeping them for a long time you won't get the subtle changes in flavor.

There have been several long threads in a.s.c. on the need to age La Gloria Cubanas, for example. These will stay "green" much longer if aged at cooler temperatures.

At higher temperatures, there are several insects to worry about. The microscopic eggs of the dreaded tobacco beetle, for instance, hatch at temperatures above 80 degrees.

- *Must cigars be stored horizontally?*

Cigars are stored horizontally because in a completely still environment moist air is very slow to mix with drier air. It obviously *does* stabilize eventually, but with a humidor's frequent openings and closings, this "layering effect" may make your stogies burn irregularly. You can minimize the effect by storing cigars horizontally (and not opening your box *too* often). I'd recommend a tupperdor over a jar for this reason.

Sliding cigars in and out of a cigar jar can often damage the ends of their delicate wrappers - it's best to subject your cigars to as little handling as possible. A shoebox size tupperdor hardly costs more than a single good cigar, and you'll be able to store more cigars (and longer ones). Picture an 8" tall jar (big enough for larger 7 1/2" sizes) with a few 4 1/2" robustos mixed in. You'll have to dump them all out to get at the shorter ones!

4.3 Building Wood Humidors

Building your own? Check out the detailed plans for a professional quality box published by Popular Mechanics! They're available on the web at: <http://homearts.com/pm/shoptalk/12humib1.htm>

Building your own wood humidor

contributed by Bob Lesnick (gammarll@ix.netcom.com)

First you have to ask yourself the question: "Do I really want to build one"?. Do I have the tools, the time, the ability, the patience? If you answered NO to two or more...forget it. Spend 800.00 and enjoy it. But if you really want to do it start by laying out the size and design. Go to tobacco stores and examine the ones they have for sale. Cut out pictures from magazines. Lay it out with your cigars in mind. I mainly smoke Mac's Prince Phillip Maduros 49 x 7 1/2 so the main compartment holds fifty of them. A side compartment holds about 10 - 15 Robustos and the tray that covers the smaller compartment holds about 45 Mac Duke of Devon Maduros (coronas). These are the three primary cigars I smoke so I designed my humidor with this in mind.

By now you should have taken measurements from the ones you examined at the tobacco stores and have a basic drawing of what you want to do. Next question is what kind of woods do I want to make the case out of. Remember that the humidor must be lined with Spanish Red Cedar about 3/8ths of an inch. There are some nice domestic woods like walnut and cherry that are good to work with. Exotics such as Padauk, Mahogonys, Babinga, Cocobolo, Rosewoods and others which have a beautiful grain and richness to them. They are a little bit more expensive but considering that you are going to spend quite a number of hours building the humidor you might as well make it nice. Try to buy the widest boards you can find so you don't have to get involved with jointing boards. Ask for or pick boards which are not warped and with a minimum of defects. Obviously you want boards with a nice grain. If you are fortunate enough to be able to visit the yard in person, look over the boards very carefully to make sure they are straight. Bring you measurements with you so you can make 'mental' cuts in choosing boards with the best grain. (Does that make sense??) You usually have to buy boards 13/16ths thick and 8-14 feet long.

The best place to seek out sources for woods and hardware is the American Woodworker or Fine Woodworking magazine. They have dozens of companies advertising for your business and most of them offer free catalogs. Send for them all.

Tools: A good workbench is a must. You should have a router, and preferably a router table. You need this for cutting a mortise for the lock, hinges and lid stop(s). Also if you want to inlay. And if you want to put a nice edge on the top. And probably for alot of other things I can't think of right now.

Either a Table Saw or Radial Arm Saw for ripping and making fine cuts. I have a Craftsman Radial which also has attachments for a drill bit, 11" sanding disk, sanding drum and planer. It came in very handy in making my humidor.

Band Saw or Sabre Saw, hand drill or drill press, belt sander (Optional) and a finishing sander - plus a host of hand tools and accessories such as chisels, drill bits, router bits, saw blade.

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE!!!

First you want to take the lumber and cut it down to workable pieces. If you have purchased 8' or longer boards, measure out the top and bottom of the humidor, add two inches and rip the board. p> Next you have to make sure that the board is square. Use a table saw to cut a thin slice of each long side of the board. If you are using a circular saw, clamp a fence onto it to cut a straight line. Cut the ends straight and check the whole thing with a square. Make sure the boards are not warped or bowed. If they are then you will have to plane them a little.

Once the board is square and flat, cut it in half. Prepare a board of Spanish Red Cedar in the same manner as described above. Glue the two pieces of cedar to the lumber. Make sure you glue it crossgrained and clamp it well. You can also drive your car up on it.

Once dried you can cut both pieces to size and plane them down to proper thickness. I used a half inch piece of lumber to a 3/8th inch piece of cedar.

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

Next prepare the four sides as described above and cut to size.

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

You can now do some sanding with 150 paper to smooth out the surfaces. Use some finer paper on the cedar because you will be gluing the unit soon and its easier to sand the inside now.

Choose what kind of joint you are going to use. You do not want the joint to show so consider some type of miter joint. I used a reversible combination rail and stile bit but also considered a lock miter joint. A good selection of bits can be had by contacting MLCS at 800 533 9298 for a catalog.

Rout your joints and dry assemble the unit and check to make sure it is square. Once you are satisfied, glue the top, bottom and four sides together and clamp well with **LOTS OF CLAMPS**. If you consider doing any inlay, now is the time. Just rout out a little channel and glue in the inlay. When dry, do some fine sanding at this point of the entire unit.

When the unit has dried overnight, measure off the top and neatly cut it off of the box. Measure off and rabbet down the inside of the top edge to leave a lip on the inside. Rout out a recess in the bottom to recieve the lip. (Look at any commercial humidor to see what I mean)

Make any dividers and trays out of 1/8th or 3/16ths cedar. If you want to make movable dividers, glue some chamois or felt to the ends of the dividers so they fit snug in the humidor.

Cut the mortise for the hinges, lock and lid stop. Mount all the hardware. Do the final sanding in stages up to 400 or 600 grit. Install the chest handles.

I used about six to eight coats of Semi Gloss Tung Oil Finish using 0000 steel wool between coats. By the way, do not finish inside the humidor, use the finish of your choice on the outside only.

I finished the humidor by applying several coats of a beeswax based furniture polish. It should finish like glass! I installed some peel and stick felt to the bottom of the humidor to protect the furniture. Wipe down the inside with distilled water and install your Credo or other humidity unit and hygrometer. Let sit for a day while you check the humidity periodically. Once satisfied fill

with your cigars. Board feet is actually a calculation of volume. Multiply the nominal thickness times the nominal width times the actual length in feet. This is then divided by 12. For example a one foot long 1 x 12 and a two foot long 1 x 6 would both be sold as one board foot.

Wood Considerations

contributed by Viktor Nehring (VikTheK@ix.netcom.com)

- *Is Closet lining the same as Spanish Cedar?*

The a.s.c resident expert on this topic seems to be humidor maker Daniel Morris DeRight. He responded to queries on a.s.c as well as on rec.woodworking.

"Spanish Cedar and American Aromatic Red Cedar have little in common except their appearance. Spanish cedar (Cedrela odorata) is a very mild wood with good absorption characteristics and is used to line humidors. Aromatic cedar (juniperus virginiana) is a pungent wood with varying absorption rates and is quite brittle, though workable if carefully treated.

"Spanish cedar also has little connection to Spain. Spanish cedar is grown in over a dozen countries world wide, much as English walnut is grown primarily in France and Turkey. Cuban, Brazilian, Topical American and others are all names for Spanish cedar.

"Honduran mahogany is similar to cedar in appearance and absorption, but by no means the same wood. It is used for the better cigar boxes, but most boxes are made of luann and the like."

Steve Yankovich has been a woodworker for 10+ yr.

"...there is no question that Spanish cedar and aromatic cedar used for chests and closet are not the same. Spanish cedar doesn't have the same strong odor of the aromatic varieties. Also Spanish cedar is not your only choice for the lining, shelves, trays, etc... for your humidor. Many older, and many very fine and expensive humidors use Honduran Mahogany for this purpose (of course unfinished). It is not imperative to use the Spanish cedar for proper aging...2 of the 3 humidors I have have mahogany interiors and work great."

- *OK.... Where do I buy Spanish cedar?*

Again, from humidor maker Daniel Morris DeRight "Most lumber yards do carry Spanish cedar, they just don't advertise it because they already have buyers. If you are building your own humidor, your best bet is to try and buy some from a local cabinetmaker. Better still, let them cut and plane it close to size, as cedar dust is rumored to be carcinogenic! I can't vouch for that, but I will tell you that the one time I planed cedar without my respirator on, I was coughing for several days."

From the home built humidor man Chavete, "Hardwood or exotic wood suppliers should have Spanish cedar. If not, old cigar boxes will work just fine. I get mine locally in New Orleans, but some folks don't seem to have access to it. It's nice to have, but not a "must" when building a humidor. Some very expensive humidors have none at all. It probably enhances the flavor of cigars, but one fellow I know that owns a cigar shop doesn't like cigars overpowered with cedar flavorings."

I ended up breaking up some cigar boxes I had on hand. I had more than enough for the bottom and sides, but the top will have to wait. WEAR YOUR RESPIRATOR when cutting this stuff: the dust gave me an instant headache. My Arturo Fuente Hemmingway box will make a perfect tray for the interior. I put on two coats of polyurethane. In between coats, I put on some old cigars bands that I had been saving for..... well, no reason, I had just been saving them OK? And my saving paid off. I put them in between the two coats of polyurethane. Some soaked up the juice and became soggy, some didn't want to stick, some soaked up only a little juice, leaving about 1/2 the band a different color. Humidor-wise, another coat should of poly-u should about do it I think. Any help on doing the cigar band thing would be appreciated.

- *Cigar boxes, are any made of Spanish cedar?*

Yes, many are, and many home-builders use broken-up boxes as a source for Spanish cedar. I've used the thin divider pieces that come in many Fuente boxes to line several humidors. It's very thin, so makes a good laminate.

[note: Take care when cutting or sanding Spanish Cedar. The dust is quite toxic when inhaled and can cause irritating respiratory ailments.]

4.3a Commercial sources of Spanish Cedar

Maurice Condon Co, Inc
250 Ferris Ave.
White Plains, NY
(914) 946-4111.

Gilmer Wood Co.
2211 N.W. Saint Helens Road
Portland, Oregon 97210
(503) 274-1271

Eisenbrand, Inc
4100 Spencer St.
Torrance, CA 90503
(800) 258-2587

Groff & Hearne
858 Scotland Rd
Quarryville, PA 17566
(800) 342-0001

[Steve Wall Lumber](#)
P.O. Box 287
Mayodan, NC 27027
1-800-633-4062

Trend Timbers
Cunneen Street
McGraths Hill NSW 2756
(02) 4577 5277
(Australia)

4.4 Finishes

4.4a Sealing the interior

Contributed by Daniel Morris DeRight:

Well, I'm not much of a fan of water based poly's, but finishing the inside of the humidor before putting in the cedar is a good idea in most respects. Not only will it help to prevent swelling in the wood, but it will help to maintain the moisture balance inside. One caveat with poly's, though the water based ones are better in this regard, is smell. Be very sure you allow the inside of your humidor to cure completely with the lid open or off. If the poly doesn't cure fully, and you start using it, all those fumes will be trapped inside and absorbed by your smokes!

Personally, I prefer to use a sealer coat, or as wood workers call it, a spit coat. Mine is made from 1 part 3lb cut super blonde shellac, mixed with 3 parts denatured alcohol. You can brush on a coat of this and it will dry in less than an hour, due to the high alcohol content. I put 4-6 coats of this on the inside of my humidors, before the cedar is installed. You can apply a fresh coat once an hour, and therefore finish the interior in an afternoon. You might want to scuff sand (ie very, very lightly) with some 600grit paper in between coats to knock off any raised grain.

4.4b Oil Finishing

From: Paul B Harris (pbh@U.Arizona.EDU)

Keep in mind, there are numerous ways to finish humidors -- I chose a natural oil finish because I like the way it brings out the rich colors and patterns of the wood without adding any colors of its own. I chose Danish Oil because I was told by a friend that it was one of the easiest to use for a beginner like myself. I am extremely happy with both choices.

Supply List...

- 1) sanding block
- 2) 1-2 sheets 150 grit sandpaper (not necessary if box is already well sanded when you receive it)
- 3) 1-2 sheets 220 grit sandpaper
- 4) 1-2 sheets 320 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- 5) 1-2 sheets 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- 6) 1-2 sheets 600 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- 7) dust brush and tack-cloth (a sticky cloth for picking up dust that is available at most hardware stores)
- 8) "Watco" Danish Oil Finish (Natural)
- 9) soft cotton cloths (i.e., cheese cloth, old dish towels, etc.). I used cut-up cloth diapers. I usually keep a couple dozen cloth diapers around the house because they are excellent for this kind of work, for dusting, and for waxing the car. They also come in handy for dressing up as the New Year after drinking too much on New Year's Eve ;-)
- 10) a coffee can or similar sealed metal container fill with water (this is for disposing of oil soaked rags which are highly flammable and prone to spontaneously combustion).
- 11) rubber gloves (optional)
- 12) "Trewax" clear paste wax

Instructions....

A. Getting Ready

Remove the hinges from the humidor, noting which hinge is on the left and which is on the right (I know, it shouldn't make any difference, but if one of the hinges is even slightly bent, the lid will sit differently if the hinges are switched). Also remove the brass lid support, and the tray.

B. Sanding

Using a sanding block along with some "hand-held" sanding, I sanded all of the mahogany surfaces up to a 320 grit finish (i.e., start with 150, then 220, then 320 -- you can skip 150 if the box is already very smooth). Always sand with the grain and try to use even strokes across an entire plane rather than concentrating on a small area (concentrating your sanding will cause valleys or indentations in your finish). Be careful not to over-sand the inside walls of the lid or the outer Spanish cedar lip, because you may end up loosening the seal between the lid and the body of the box.

When the box is smooth as "a baby's bottom," brush the dust off of everything (or blow it off with compressed air). Then, with a wet washcloth or sponge, wipe down all of the surfaces that you have sanded and let the box dry. The moistened wood gives you a nice preview of how the box will start to look when you finish it and also cleans out some of the sawdust, but the primary reason for wetting the box is to open the grain of the wood and bring up loose fibers. After it dries, you will notice that your "baby's bottom" sanding has suddenly developed some 5:00 stubble. Sand the box one more time with the 320 grit paper to remove this "stubble."

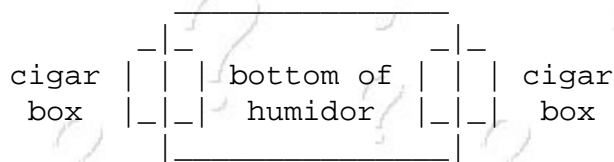
C. Cleaning

All sawdust should be thoroughly cleaned from the box before you apply your oil finish (if anything else has managed to get on your box, this should be cleaned or sanded off also). You can blow the dust out using compressed air, or brush off the box with a paint or shop brush and use a tack cloth to pick up the "hard to get" dust that has accumulated.

D. Applying the Danish Oil

Work in a well ventilated area, preferably on a table that gives you plenty of room to work.

Oil finishes are not like paint, you don't have to wait for one side to dry before you can flip it over and do the other side. However, it's probably not the best idea to have an oiled surface sitting directly on your work table -- it will take longer to dry, may pick up dust, etc, from the top of the table, or may even stick to the table. I used old wooden cigar boxes, lids removed, to create platforms on which the humidor could rest. When I had finished applying oil to the base or lid of the box, I would flip it over so the open side was down and set it on two boxes. These boxes were sitting open side up, so only the tops of the thin wood sides of each cigar box came into contact with the humidor (see diagram below).



Before you start, decide what you are going to finish. I finished every exposed mahogany surface on the box including the lid (inside and out), the four exterior sides, the upper ledge of the base, and the bottom (outside) of the box. The only Spanish cedar surface I finished was the outside of the lip, up to its top (I masked off the inside of the lip with masking tape so as not to slop oil onto the box interior).

Danish Oil is a skin irritant to some people. I wore rubber surgical gloves while finishing my humidor. However, I know people who just use their bare hands and have not had problems. Whatever you decide, be careful not to get your oily fingers inside the box, leaving Danish Oil fingerprints on the Spanish cedar lining (this should remain unfinished). If you goof up (which I did several times) you can sand off the fingerprints once the oil has dried.

To finish:

- 1) Shake Danish Oil, saturate a piece of cloth and apply the oil to all areas that you want to finish. You may need to add more oil to the cloth as you apply it to the wood.
- 2) Let the piece sit for 30 minutes, then wipe off excess oil with a soft cotton cloth.
- 3) Reapply the oil as you did above. For each surface, after you have laid down a liberal coat of oil, rub the oil in using your wet/dry 320 grit sandpaper -- sand with the grain as you did in step B above. This wet sanding helps work in the oil and also allows tiny particles of wet sawdust to fill-in some of the open grain in the wood. This will give your finish an extra-warm lustre when the piece is done.
- 4) Let the piece sit for 15-20 minutes, then wipe off all excess oil with a soft cotton cloth.
- 5) Let the piece dry for 8-10 hours or over night. During the first 2 hours, you may want to wipe the piece off every half hour as oil will continue to seep up to the surface.
- 6) Seal all of your oily rags and sandpaper into a sealed coffee can or other sealed metal container that has been filled with water. These rags are prone to spontaneous combustion if not disposed of properly. (Whether in the workshop, the

laboratory, the kitchen, or in the arms of your honey, remember, Safety First!)

7) My humidor was treated to three applications following steps 1-6 above; you may do as many as you like (I'd recommend at least 3). For every application, I increased the fineness of my sandpaper. For the second application, I repeated steps 1-6, using 400 grit wet/dry paper during step 3. For the third application, I repeated steps 1-6, using the 600 grit wet/dry paper during step 3.

8) After your final application of oil, when the box is completely dry, lightly sand all of the finished surfaces with a piece of dry worn (i.e., crinkle it and soften it a bit) 600 grit sandpaper. This will bring out the "shine" in the piece. However, be careful not to sand so hard that you damage the finish (if you do damage it, oil it again -- that's the beauty of oil finishes, it's hard to screw-up).

E. Protection

Once you are done with the Danish Oil, you can leave the box as is. However, if you want additional protection you can put on a polyurethane finish, or do what I did and put on several applications of Trewax. Trewax is easy to use -- just put on a layer with a cloth, let it dry for five minutes, then buff it out with a clean dry cloth. I repeated this procedure three times.

F. Final Touches

Reattach your hardware, glue in the unattached end of the brass lid support, and replace the tray.

Before you put your cigars into the humidor, you should re-humidify the wood, otherwise the relative humidity in the interior may be significantly less than the optimal 70% rh. You may want to start by wiping the interior and the tray down with a rag moistened with some distilled water. Next place your charged humidification device inside the humidor along with your hygrometer and check it every day or so. You may have to wait several weeks before humidor stabilizes and 70% rh and is ready for your cigars -- it is worth the wait ;-)

4.4c Staining and Urethane Finishes

contributed by (merc@cris.com)

There have been a lot of posts lately from people buying or building unfinished humidors. I thought my recent experience may be helpful to some. (If I can do it, you can too. Trust me, I'm a certified klutz.)

I received a beautiful J&S 200 mahogany (thanks, Sam!) humidor. I removed the brass hinges and the brass lid support and filed them away in a bag. I then sanded the outside and bottom, using 150, then 220, then 400 grit paper. Be careful to sand with the grain. A sanding block is highly recommended. For small areas that are hard to get to, a small piece of sandpaper on the end of an unsharpened pencil can be handy. While there is no need to get really anal retentive about the sanding, be aware that a missed spot can result in an uneven finish.

After sanding, you need to remove the dust before applying stain. There are a number of ways to do this, such as compressed air or soft brushes. I used "tack cloths", rags covered with a slightly sticky surface. Wiping the surfaces with these did a very nice job of removing sanding dust.

I then applied a Minwax red mahogany stain. I had purchased stain applicator pads, but ended up using soft cotton rags, as I felt that it gave me a bit more control. Here is this first tip I wished I'd thought of before hand: cover areas that you don't want stain on with masking tape. I ended up getting a little stain on some trim and on the inside top lid and a drop or two on the bottom inside. Easily avoided if you think about it ahead of time. Don't forget to finish the bottom also. The stain wipes on, then you wipe the excess off. The longer you let it sit, the darker the color.

The stain went on easily. I had already prepared a couple of stands to sit the lid and the box on while the stain dried. The stain was allowed to dry for 24 hours. I had thought about a second coat of stain, but I was pleased with the color, so I proceeded to

the next step. Remember, the stain soaks into the pores of the wood and does NOT offer protection to the wood.

I chose to put on a urethane coat, for the protection and looks. I found a wonderful product, also by Minwax, which is a wipe-on urethane. It comes in a satin or a glossy finish; I chose the high gloss. I lightly sanded the stained wood (400 grit), removed the dust as above, then used the cotton rag method to apply the finish. I allowed this to dry overnight (the can says 3-6 hours). Don't worry if the finish looks dull; it will. This is because some of the coating will soak into pores of the wood and some will not, leading to a relatively rough finish. Subsequent sanding and coating will fill the pores and level the finish. After the first coat dried, I lightly sanded again (400 sandpaper) and removed the dust. Then I applied another coat of the urethane and again allowed it to dry overnight. I repeated the process for a third coat: sanded the second coat, removed the sanding dust, then wiped on the third coat. After this coat dried, I had a nice, smooth, glossy finish. I then put the hardware back on, and admired my beautiful dark red mahogany humidor.

Hope this helps anyone out there who is a little squeamish about finishing a humidor. If I can do it, you can do it.

4.5 Tupperdors, Igloodors

- *Isn't there a cheap way to store my cigars?*

Yes, of course! You don't need an expensive container to keep them stogies happy! Any container which limits the exchange of outside air will work. Many a.s.c. readers use large Tupperware containers, humidified with homemade credo units.

The difference between tupperdors and wood humidors....

Wood humidors "breathe" - slowly exchange gasses, and are less likely to get you into the overhumidification problems of tupperdors. A well-sealed tupperdor doesn't allow excess moisture to escape (they require less frequent recharging because of this). A wood humidor "dampens" these changes in humidity by absorbing the excess moisture, and slowly releasing it. Cigars *like* slow changes better than rapid ones. A sudden change in temperature can produce condensation in a well-sealed container (until the credo can compensate). This, and their large storage volume give Igloodors a distinct advantage over tupperdors. (and of course, wood remains king in this way too)

Tobacco needs to breathe to age properly. The downside of tupperdors is that they don't allow any gasses to exchange. Cigars will consume a small amount of oxygen and give off other gasses as they age. If you open your tupperdor at least weekly, this is not much of a problem, but leave it tightly sealed for a months at a time to age some premiums, and the ammonia smell will make you want to give up smoking when you open it! This won't happen in a properly finished wood box...

Igloodors

Ton Gardner (tom_gardner@smtp.svl.trw.com) has these suggestions for setting up a large Igloodor...

"I recommend a Coleman model that has straight sides, and rope handles. You do not want molded sides that slope. The 130 qt Coleman that I found has a positive latch closure. I cut the ropes and the plastic tabs the ropes were attached to. This was to enable me to stand the thing on its end, like a refrigerator. I then went to a kitchen store and bought plastic coated shelves to put inside. I now have vertical racks inside. You may just want to use it like a chest type, flat, then you could leave the handles alone. But you would find yourself digging through boxes all the time. I take the tops off my boxes and they then become trays. IMHO easier. I mounted two Credo 20's and my hygrometer/thermometer on the door. I also have another humidity source on the bottom shelf that is about twice as big as a Credo 70."

4.6 Converting Furniture into humidors

- *I'm considering converting a china cabinet into a humidor - why won't this work?*

Most of the \$\$\$ of a good humidor is in its construction. Good quality hardwoods, special joinery, lining, etc. Keep this in mind when you consider a furniture conversion project. I've heard from many who've tried converting cabinets, chests, and armoires into humidors unsuccessfully. The problems they experience are warping, mold, inability to regulate humidity, and (in several cases) complete disintegration of the furniture after a few months.

Why? There are some tremendous stresses involved in keeping a large piece of furniture moist on the inside and dry on the outside. The larger the piece, the more stress is involved. Special techniques go into the design and construction of a humidor to compensate for these stresses - considerations which were never made in the construction of other furniture. Planked panels are prone to warping. The finishes used may be slightly toxic. The wood used (some plywoods, *all* particle board) may give off noxious gasses when you seal the box tightly. Particle board panels are quite common in inexpensive furniture. This can swell and crumble into dust when exposed to moisture for long periods of time.

The bottom line? Yes it can be done - but not to just *any* enclosed chest, cabinet, etc. Choose your furniture to convert wisely, and consider additional bracing, support, lining, etc. along with simply sealing the enclosed areas...

5.0 Humidification

- *Why create a humid environment with a constant relative humidity of 70%?*

Cigars are naturally hygroscopic products. In common with many organic substances, they dry out in the absence of humidity in the air, or absorb moisture from the ambient air. They establish an equilibrium with the atmospheric humidity which surrounds them.

At 68% a cigar will slowly dry out and lose essential oils. At 74% and higher, organic molecules will break down out-of-order, producing unwanted tastes. More importantly, at 80% or higher, you're leaving your stogies wide open to grow mold. Neither cigars or humidors are a particularly sterile environment. Note that these are *relative* humidities - cigars should be stored at 70 - 73% RH *regardless* of temperature.

5.0a The "Variable Humidity Myth..."

Many self-proclaimed "authorities" have been making a serious mistake of confusing moisture content with relative humidity lately. At least one well-known Cigar distributor has added strength to this legend by distributing a table recommending different relative humidities at different temperatures. Don't fall for this "urban legend"! Cigars should be kept at 70% RH REGARDLESS of temperature or you WILL ruin them...

The modern myth of varying humidity with temperature is based on an entirely false premise. Cigars don't care about absolute moisture content. They need just enough moisture to keep the tobacco pliable, but not so much to swell it. This occurs at 70-73% REGARDLESS of temperature.

Tobacco should be kept at a relative humidity which just keeps the leaves pliable without swelling them. Since that pliability is based on the interaction of the cellular membranes with the air surrounding them, **relative humidity**, not absolute moisture content is what's important. This isn't chemistry, it's mechanics - on a cellular level. Ideally, the correct point is 70-73% regardless of temperature. At 70% relative humidity (a measure which by definition is independent of temperature) cigar leaves become pliable without swelling. at 75% or higher, the cells begin to swell. at 68% or lower, they can become brittle. These points are regardless of the ambient temperature or the absolute moisture content.

Does it make any sense to a rational person to keep their cigars at close to 100% humidity at 60 degrees? Anyone living in cold climates can attest to the fact that at 60 deg, their cigars are perfect at 70%, and (as they would at any temperature) their cigars are prone to mold and swelling at humidities above 80%. Those living in the tropics will tell you the same thing - their cigars MUST be kept at 70% humidity at storage temperatures of 80 degrees. According to "the table", those cigars should be at 50% humidity? I'll tell you what... If the humidity drops below 68%, your cigars will become dry and crack - I couldn't even imagine

how badly dried out they'd be at 50%!

Try it yourself. The "logic" of varying RH with temp falls apart in the real world. Moisture content is NOT why we keep cigars at 70% humidity...

Here's a more scientific explanation debunking the myth of varying humidity from David E. Patton, Ph.D. at the Department of Physiology, UCLA School of Medicine...

"There has been extensive discussion on A.S.C. concerning the effects of temperature on humidity and its application to proper cigar storage. Much of the confusion concerning these concepts comes from not understanding what is happening at the molecular level. My goal is to explain some of the relevant concepts and then to put the concepts together in such a way as to give an intuitive understanding of how they relate to cigar storage.

Cigars are made from tobacco leaves. Tobacco leaves (like most plant material) consist primarily of carbohydrates and proteins. Protein and carbohydrate molecules contain many binding sites for water molecules. A certain proportion of the water binding sites need to be occupied by water molecules in order for the tobacco leaves to be adequately pliable, to burn properly and to age properly. So when we think about humidity as it relates to cigar storage, the most relevant factor to consider is: are the correct proportion of water binding sites occupied? Water molecules bind to other molecules via hydrogen bonds. Van der Waals interactions also participate. This applies to water bound to protein and carbohydrate molecules (e.g. tobacco leaves) or to other water molecules (e.g. liquid water). For the purposes of this discussion, water bound to tobacco leaves will be treated like liquid water.

Temperature is the main factor determining whether a water molecule will be more likely to be in either the gas or liquid (or bound) phases. This is because at higher temperatures, water molecules (like any other molecule) will have more kinetic energy. The more kinetic energy a molecule has, the higher its probability of being in the gas phase. This is because it will have sufficient kinetic energy to break out of the hydrogen bonds and Van der Waals interactions that would otherwise keep it bound. At lower temperatures molecules have less kinetic energy so when they collide with a carbohydrate molecule, for example, its kinetic energy is insufficient to break away from it. The important point here is that at higher temperatures, a water molecule is more likely to be in the gas phase and less likely to be bound. At lower temperatures a water molecule is more likely to be bound and less likely to be in the gas phase.

Another point that needs to be explained here is the concept of relative humidity. Simply stated, relative humidity is the ratio of the concentration of water in the gas phase divided by the maximal concentration of water the air can hold (the saturating concentration) at a given temperature. Air holds more water at higher temperatures. Therefore, if you hold the relative humidity constant and increase the temperature, the concentration of water molecules in the gas phase will increase. If you think about this superficially you may think that because the concentration of water molecules increases in the gas phase as you increase the temperature (holding relative humidity constant) that your cigars will become over-humidified. This is **WRONG**. Remember, as you increase the temperature, the water molecules are less likely to be bound to the tobacco and more likely to be in the gas phase. Thus, to keep the same proportion of water binding sites in the tobacco occupied by water molecules, the concentration of water molecules in the gas phase must be increased when temperature is increased."

Again, cigars should be stored at 70 - 73% relative humidity, **regardless** of temperature. Period.

5.1 Humidifying devices

Perhaps the most important part of your cigar storage system is the humidifying device, or credo. Maintaining proper humidity will either make or break your humidor system. There are dozens of commercial systems available, but perhaps the "king" of them all is the original "Credo". The Credo device is a self regulating reservoir. The secret to a Credo is the use of a physio-chemical solution (propylene glycol and distilled water in a mix of approximately 50/50). Remember this "secret" later, as it will become increasingly important...

The original Credo is manufactured in France by:

Credo

34, rue Roussel Doria

13004 Marseille, France

Telephone: (33) 4 91 85 46 36

Fax: (33) 4 91 34 54 31

Distributed in the US by Holloc-Rohr, Bell, CA.

5.2 Using Propylene Glycol to regulate humidity

- *How exactly does the use of Propylene Glycol (mixed with distilled water) aid in the humidification of cigars?*

Any solution with a fixed composition has a fixed vapor pressure at a given temperature and total pressure. If the solution has only one volatile component (water), then the vapor pressure is caused by that component only (i.e., you won't find PG in the vapor phase). By coincidence, the vapor pressure over a mixture of PG and water is about 70%.

To put it more 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.

PG is certainly not the only solution which will regulate humidity properly for cigar storage. As several posters have pointed out, a glycerin solution will also work in a credo. Being a thicker substance, I feel that glycerin solutions ultimately "plug-up" the pores of your medium, reducing its effective surface area. Both are non-toxic, but PG actually has anti-bacterial properties, which means you may use it alone, where glycerin should be mixed with some sort of inhibitor to prevent "nasties" from growing inside your credo. (this is the "secret formula" in some glycerin based solutions).

- *How much distilled water do I mix with it?*

50/50 to start. It's not that critical, as the water evaporates eventually anyway - the proportions are constantly changing because of this. Don't forget to use distilled water to replenish as needed.

- *Does the PG eventually evaporate or dissipate?*

Eventually is a long time, and evaporate / dissipate the wrong words. In several years the PG will become less effective due to reactions with contaminants in the air (er, like tobacco smoke for instance)(G&D). I recommend changing it every year or so because of this phenomena. Using the same PG for 3-5 years with just water replenishment is not uncommon however. If your credo isn't regulating the environment like it used to, it might be time for a change. A common problem causing loss of PG is over-watering when recharging. Any water which runs through your credo is removing PG as it runs out! Careful re-charging will avoid this.

- *I just made a credo and my humidity's too high!*

A new oasis will take days (up to a week) to stabilize. This is because PG does not regulate through partial vapor pressures, as the salt test does. PG regulates through a tenso-active (surface tension) process. The PG and water do not create a solution, it's actually a mixture (with separate components). The PG essentially migrates to the surfaces, sealing in the water in a lower layer. It takes time for these components to migrate to their proper positions in the oasis and begin regulation.

- *I used filtered tap water instead of distilled. What's going to happen?*

Your credo is going to become less and less efficient over time. Filtered tap water is full of all the dissolved minerals which will ultimately plug your credo. The PH is balanced in tap water with chemicals which *may* interfere with the PG and cause variations in your humidity. Spring for a \$0.69 gallon jug of distilled water. It'll make a difference.

- *Should I dilute the whole bottle at once and hold onto the solution???*

It doesn't matter. Pre-mixed or not, PG is a stable compound - It'll keep well for years. It may pick up odors from its environment, so be sure to store it in a suitable container.

- *Where can I buy Propylene Glycol?*

PG is available (though often only by special order from any full-service Pharmacist. The cost varies from \$5 to \$8 per pint. Pharmacologically, it's used as a solvent for oral and injectable drugs.... It also has many uses as a chemical solvent, as well as being used in many cosmetics.

PG is also available from many feed-stores, as it is used as a feed additive and a medical treatment for livestock.

- *By mail-order?*

best sources...

www.chemistrystore.com

Just \$16 per *gallon*, \$11 shipping...

Chem-Lab Supplies

714-630-7902

about \$6/pint + about \$5 for shipping

Advance Scientific & Chemical

1-800-533-4605

(\$0.50 per ounce)

ChemistryStore.Com

www.chemitrystore.com

(around \$17/gallon)

also try...

Tri-Ess Sciences

Burbank, CA

818-848-7838

Springfield Scientific

1124 Main ST

Springfield OR 97477

1-800-344-2047

Sigma Chemical Company

1-800-325-3010

And FYI, Propylene glycol is also mixed with some pipe tobaccos and cheap drug-store cigars so they won't require

humidification (YUCK!!!).

5.3 Other Suitable Chemicals

chuck@marsh.com writes:

What I do is take cheap plastic soap dishes, pour in maybe 3/8" of salt and wet the salt until it is the consistency of gruel, patching concrete...a paste. The soap dishes, being designed to trap soap scum in the bottoms, also do a good job of making salt sludge stay put.

What I am doing is using salt as both humidity limiter and vehicle, standing it in for both PG and a sponge or Oasis foam. This works fine for me, despite a limiting pressure at about 75% RH at room temp., a bit higher than PG and water at 70%.

I am currently using 2 soap dishes inside a 30-qt. ice chest. This is more wet salt than is strictly required, I think, but with the self-limiting humidity trick, too much surface to absorb/release moisture can't hurt while too little can.

5.4 Oasis Materials

- *Why use oasis? Why not use a sponge?*

The many holes in oasis material mean a greater effective surface area. This means a smaller humidifier is able to do the same work as a larger one using other materials. Natural sponges are much more prone to contamination and should not be used. Good quality synthetic sponges are a reasonable alternative IMHO (although your credo might need to be a little larger than if you used oasis).

How large should that credo be? No simple answer there! It's dependent on how large your humidor is, how full you keep it, how often you open it, how moist (or dry) the ambient air is, how tightly sealed your humidor is, and how often you're willing to replenish it.

If your credo is too small, you'll need to replenish its water frequently. I can't actually think of any detrimental side effects of a too-large unit (except the obvious space it takes up).

- *Are there different types of oasis?*

There are two kinds of oasis material available from floral suppliers - be SURE to obtain the right type! Oasis foam is made for both wet (watered) and dry floral arrangements. DO NOT USE "DRY" OASIS.

Dry Oasis is made of a closed cell foam and used for arranging dry (and silk) flowers. It's slightly more durable, but will NOT absorb water. It will float for days without getting wet. :(Wet Oasis is an open-celled foam, and very absorbent. It's meant for "real" flowers, but also used occasionally for dry arrangements.

- *I have a clay-type "credo" unit. Is PG suitable for this as well?*

No problem - PG is definitely suitable for those as well. The chalk (clay?) in those type humidifiers should be "cleaned" once every year or two though... Just soak them overnight in a big pan of water, dry them out, then re-charge with PG solution. Given proper care, that type of element will out-live us all!

One word of caution with *all* clay type elements. Always use *distilled* water to re-fill them. The trace salts in tap water will clog them eventually....

5.5 Suitable Credo containers

Any container capable of separating a block of oasis from accidentally touching your cigars will suffice, however there are a couple of important considerations.

First, let it breath! Cut your oasis loose enough to "rattle slightly within its container. A force-fit (for instance using a cigar tube with holes to slice its own bit of oasis) won't breath. Its surface area will be limited to the area of the holes in that case. The same tube with a loose-fitting piece of oasis will allow the *entire* surface of that oasis to evaporate moisture into the environment. The outer holes are just for circulation...

Speaking of holes - give your humidifying device enough of them! Plastic salt-shakers, for instance *don't* provide enough circulation to properly humidify a humidor. If you use such a device, drill *lots* of 1/8" holes all around the body of it.

Also, Don't let the oasis come in contact with the wood of your humidor. PG or not, you're asking for a mold/algae problem if there's any area of your box with a humidifying element present and no circulation.

Cybersmokers have shown tremendous creativity in enclosing their oasises. Suggestions (before drilling *lots* of holes, cutting slots, etc.) have included wire frames, traveling soap dishes, ladies' powder compacts, small Tupperware, cassette cases - almost anything which won't be affected by moisture!

6.0 Hygrometers

- *What is a hygrometer?*

A hygrometer is a mechanical or electronic device for measuring relative humidity. Many quality humidors incorporate a small hygrometer in their lid to monitor their internal humidity level. Refer to the section on cigar storage for a more detailed explanation as to why this is important.

6.1 Checking your Hygrometer Calibration

- *Why should I check my hygrometer's calibration?*

Even if you don't want to open its case and adjust your hygrometer, you would be well advised to check its calibration. These are not the precision instruments that some people think... Analog (dial-type) hygrometers are often shipped as much as 20% out of spec. Even the often-recommended Radio shack hygrometer is shipped with a factory tolerance of plus or minus 5 points of humidity through the range 40-80%. That means your unit could read anywhere from 65 to 75% while in a 70% environment and *still* be considered in spec! I've personally seen up to an 8 percentage point difference between units before calibration.

For a calibration source, we're going to use salt - NaCl - plain table salt... Why salt? The following is a brief explanation of the chemistry, originally posted to asc by Peter Shenkin of Columbia University. Don't worry too much about the technical details - the point is that plain salt will, when used properly will maintain an exact 75% humidity in a sealed environment.

A saturated solution at constant temperature & pressure has a fixed composition. [[Explanation in terms of the Gibbs Phase Rule omitted.]] Therefore, such a solution has a fixed vapor pressure. Thus, at constant temperature, no matter how much solid NaCl and how much water are present, the concentration of the NaCl in the water is fixed, just as long as both the solution and the solid phase are present. Therefore such a solution has a fixed vapor pressure.

Now, it just happens to turn out that the vapor pressure of a saturated solution of NaCl in H₂O is about 75% of the vapor pressure of pure water at any temperature close to room temperature. This means that at equilibrium, if there were nothing present except this solution and a vapor phase in contact with it (no air), the pressure above the solution would be about 15 mm_Hg, in round numbers, using 20 mm_Hg as the vapor pressure of water near room temperature, again in round numbers. As mentioned earlier,

the only gas providing the pressure above the solution would be water vapor. We'll see in a few minutes that the same thing happens even when air is introduced.

OK, class dismissed - you've got it now, right? :-) For more details about the science behind this calibration procedure, check out the excellent report available at: <http://www.pip.dknet.dk/~pip1985/gemarkus.htm>

Now to procedures. You'll need a zip-lock baggie or other see-through container, about a teaspoon of salt, and a small, shallow open container for that salt (I use the screw cap from a bottle of milk) Gee, I love this high-tech lab gear.... ;-)

Place a teaspoon or so of salt in its 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 bottle cap. This is important! Just a few drops! you want damp salt, NOT a solution. As the technical explanation above says, you want the salt present in a wet solid phase. Place it in the baggie, along with your hygrometer. CAUTION - DON'T SPILL ANY SALT ON YOUR INSTRUMENT! Be sure the Hygrometer isn't in its "min" or "max" mode, BTW.

Seal the baggie with some air trapped inside (so it's not tight against the hygrometer) and let it sit. Allow this to stabilize for *at least* 6 hours. (don't rush it!). After the internal "system" has stabilized, check your reading WITHOUT OPENING THE BAGGIE. It should be *exactly* 75%. If not, note the deviation - this is how much your hygrometer is out. Don't be surprised if your reading up to 5 points out - unfortunately, that's the factory tolerance of this instrument.

Note that several readers have had occasional problems with poorly sealing baggies. Use a small tupperware container, or double-bag your experimental setup will help avoid inaccuracies.

6.2 Radio Shack #63-855 Calibration

Ok! Feeling "scientific" after testing the calibration of your hygrometer? Well, the next step for the ambitious among us is to actually calibrate our hygrometers. Many cybersmokers use the Radio Shack 63-855 Hygrometer, (also known as the "Airguide" Hygrometer). The following procedure was written specifically for that instrument. Please read these instructions *very carefully* before proceeding - If you don't feel comfortable tinkering with sensitive circuitry, DON'T DO IT!

Now that you know how far your instrument is out, you *might* want to adjust it. CAUTION! Mess-up here, and you could damage your hygrometer! There is no simple calibration knob to turn. To adjust this instrument, you'll be re-adjusting the bias current of the sensor, then comparing it to your calibration reference - the salt in the baggie.

Remove the battery door, the batteries, and finally the back of the unit. along the top edge of the PC board inside, you'll see two round, flattish metal disks (micro-potentiometers). don't touch the left one, you'll be working *only* with the one on the right. First, look at it closely. You'll see a tiny indent for a tiny screwdriver blade across the middle. Sketch its exact position carefully - this procedure might take several days, and you *will* forget the original orientation if you don't write it down!

You'll be turning this *right* potentiometer (pot) a *tiny* amount to change the humidity reading (1/8 turn might change your reading by 3 or 4%). DO NOT turn it more than 1/4 turn! Use a very small screwdriver (like a jeweler's screwdriver), and don't change it by much! If you were reading *above* 75% in the calibration test, turn this pot *clockwise*, again only a tiny amount... If your reading was low, turn it slightly counter-clockwise...

You can leave the back off to save some effort, and put the batteries back in now. Be sure the "min" and "max" functions are turned off, and place the hygrometer back in your baggie with the salt. Again, let it stabilize for 6 hours, and DON'T LET IT TOUCH THE WET SALT! Check your reading, and re-adjust if necessary. Be patient, you may have to try a few times to get it right. If you feel you're getting nowhere, set the pot back to exactly where it was when you started.

When you're satisfied with your setting (set it to +/- 1% of 75%) remove the batteries, re-assemble the unit, and give it one final check. Once you're done, light up one of your best cigars - you'll deserve it!

Radio Shack #63-1013 Calibration

The Radio Shack model 63-1013 hygrometer can be calibrated similarly. The potentiometer (pot.) can be found on the upper left hand side of the circuit board once the back is removed. The pot. is small -- about half the diameter of a pencil eraser. The pot. has a small slot in it to allow for adjustments. Clockwise turns increase the humidity percent reading and counter clockwise turns decrease the reading.

6.3 Older Radio Shack units

contributed by Steven Banks

I would like to add some new information. I have one of the older Radio Shack hygrometers #63-844, but do you think that stopped me? You give me an opportunity to take something I know nothing about apart, I'm there! Plus, my Dad was a quality assurance engineer and he wouldn't have put up with that much of a error factor.

Well the salt portion of this whole procedure is sweet indeed - so simple, I felt like I was watching "Mr. Wizard" again. After doing this I found that my hygrometer was a whopping +8% off. Now... I'm not great with math, so I decided to correct the problem instead of just knowing how much it's off by. The problem was, which "pot" screws to adjust, since the instructions were for a #63-855. Well for those of you that have the same model as I do, there are two circuit boards in it, the top one is for the temperature and the bottom is for the humidity. The "pot" screw CLOSEST to the battery compartment is the one you need to adjust. And yes, as was mentioned in the first posting, it does take some fiddling!!! There were times I'd adjust the screw, and see no change. But I finally got that puppy within + -1%. Note that this hygrometer's reading will INCREASE as you turn the control CLOCKWISE - exactly the opposite of the 63-855 model...

Let it be known that I tinkered where no person in their right mind should, and this is no guarantee that it'll work for you (especially knowing Radio Shack stuff - yours could be laid out differently?) But if you're bold, go where no man has gone before and make it right!

6.4 The Airguide Digital Hygrometer

This is the same unit internally as the Radio Shack #63-855. See section 6.1 and 6.2.

6.5 The Bonaire Digital Hygrometer

This is a fine looking digital hygrometer available from several suppliers for about \$17.95. It's similar in operation to the Radio Shack #63-855, buy without its memory features or internal adjustments. Its factory rated accuracy is +- 5%, but tests show its linearity (accuracy over a broad range) is considerably less. Since this unit can not be re-calibrated, I recommend testing its accuracy with the salt calibration test, to allow for differences in readings.

6.6 Analog Hygrometers

Surprisingly, both the most expensive *and* inexpensive classes of hygrometers are the dial-type (or analog) hygrometers. Many are sold in fancy brass or chrome housings, but their accuracy in general is not very impressive. Being a mechanical device, rough handling in shipping can often knock these gauges as far as 20% out from an accurate reading. The calibration of this type of instrument should always be checked.

Many of these gauges come with the simple instructions to "wrap the instrument in a damp towel for at least 20 minutes, then adjust it (either by set-screw or rotating the outer housing) to a reading of 95%." As this technique does not address the non-linearity of these gauges, I recommend checking them in the general RH range cigar-smokers need by using the above mentioned "salt-standard" calibration technique.

Don Meyer (donme@primenet.com) has recommended a very inexpensive (\$4.86) Sunbeam thermometer/hygrometer, available

at Wal-Mart. On inspection in the store, he found that of the 10 or so on display, all read within 3%, whereas others (in the same store) displayed a broad range. Of course, consistency doesn't always mean accuracy, but it's a good sign. It should be noted that this unit is mounted in a rather large case. Users should consider re-mounting this unit for use in their humidors. The model # BTW, is 90113. (old #1803)

7.0 Trouble?

Problems with your new humidifying device? Check the following...

- Is this a new humidor? Perhaps the wood hasn't stabilized. It will take up to 3 weeks for new, dry wood to absorb enough moisture to be able to keep the interior humidity up at 70%. Be patient and keep your credo moist.
- Was the Oasis already "charged" with credo solution? Too much PG will draw moisture out of the environment, resulting in low humidity. Too little will be unable to remove moisture and you'll have soggy stogies!
- Does your humidor seal well? Perhaps a bad seal is exchanging too much air with the outside.
- Is your hygrometer calibrated? Factory units (dial type) are often out by up to 20%! Your actual humidity might be fine. Use the simple calibration procedure in this FAQ to check your unit.
- That's not that "dry" oasis you're using, is it? Oasis should get very heavy as it soaks up water.
- Is your humidifying unit homemade? Too few / too small holes will not allow enough evaporation to saturate the humidor. This is a common problem with home-made units. Be sure the oasis isn't a tight fit in its case, as this will restrict air circulation.

7.1 Bloom or Mold?

- *How can you tell the difference?*

Bloom refers to the slow rising of "essential oils" to the surface of a cigar. It first shows up as tiny (almost microscopic) crystals on the surface, and can eventually make a cigar look slightly "dusty" with a whitish finish on the surface. Not only is it harmless, some prefer to see a little bloom, as an indication of strong taste.

Mold OTOH, is (ick!) a fungus, growing on overly humidified stogies. It is recognized as white, gray, or blue-green "fuzzy patches" with a definite dimension to them. Mold spreads by spores, so it's important to get rid of any moldy cigars immediately, before they contaminate your other cigars or the mold gets into the wood of your humidor. Mold appears when the RH passes 85%.

7.2 Soggy Stogies Stories....

- *I stored some of my favorite cigars with a wet sponge, and now they're "wet and spongy"! How can I dry them out?*

- 1) set-up a proper humidity regulation system (the same sponge with a PG/H₂O solution is all you really need.
- 2) open your humidor often to exchange the air regularly. It may help to leave it open (just a crack!) unless your room is very humid.
- 3) Wait. It can take a long time for moisture to migrate from inner layers to the wrapper and out of your cigars... There is no way to rush this without ruining them. Typically, figure on about three weeks to stabilize a cigar when changing its moisture content.

- *Help! I opened my humidor today to find some of my best cigars with this fluffy white mold. Some cigars even started to unwrap....*

Ouch! Let your cigars go this far, and it may be too late to save 'em! You've got to catch mold *early* to effectively stop it. Is this a wooden humidor or a tupperdor? Tupperdors are more prone to this sort of thing (especially if you humidify with plain water instead of "credo solution" Propylene Glycol, Glycerin, salt, whatever - you need a chemical compound that's going to *regulate* the environment, not saturate it. Humidifying with plain water is asking for trouble.

Mold will form anytime the humidity holds at over 85% for a few days. It propagates by microscopic spores, so unless you sterilize the environment carefully, it can become a recurring problem.

That said, let's try to save them stogies....

Start by cleaning your humidifier out, removing the credo, and wipe the whole interior down with isopropyl alcohol. (yes, I know... alcohol's not good for the wood, but mold in the wood pores isn't gonna be good for your stogies either! A quick wipe won't hurt it.) Let it air out for a few days in a relatively dust-free place. Next, you'll have to disinfect your credo - inside and out. Boiling water would do the trick, but most credo's are plastic, or have plastic parts. BE CAREFUL! Don't use alcohol to disinfect the credo - once it's absorbed you'll have a devil of a time drying it out. (after all, that's what a credo does - evaporate very slowly) If it's a homemade unit, throw out the oasis and wipe the case thoroughly with alcohol.

Saving the cigars is going to be tough. Wipe off the contaminated cigars (contaminated ones *only!* - don't spread the mold!) with a clean paper towel, slightly moistened with distilled water. (only SLIGHTLY moist, please - let's not get the cigars any wetter!) Separate the cigars you *know* are contaminated from the others. Smoke them as soon as possible.

Make some kind of temporary humidor for those "contaminated" ones. Put it in the refrigerator. (I know, I hear the moans... "My Cubans, in the 'fridge?") Well, it'll retard the growth of mold - it'll buy you some time. Refrigeration (even in a container) will dry them out without a source of humidity - In the case of soggy stogies, this won't be a problem - desperate times require desperate measures!

Keep the (hopefully) uncontaminated ones away from your now-clean humidor - you've got to break the cycle. And don't assume those wrapped in cello are safe either. If the mold gets back into the wood or credo, you'll start the problem all over again. Better to keep them in a temporary humidor for a few weeks until you're sure they're "clean".

Finally, check on these cigars every few days. If there is *no* sign of mold for a full week (and I mean *absolutely* no sign) move the temporary humidor out into room temperature. Don't put the cigars back into your "real" humidor. If there's no mold for *another* week, it *may* be safe to return them to the "real" humidor. (I wouldn't chance it personally).

The trick is to break the "mold-cycle" by getting all potentially contaminated cigars out of your "regular" system. If you don't, I guarantee you'll be starting this process over again!

And get yourself some Propylene Glycol solution to humidify with - This kind of disaster won't happen with a "proper" humidification system....

7.3 - My humidor isn't at 70%

- *My humidor is higher than 70%!*

No point splitting hairs over relative humidity. I'm guessing your cigars feel and smoke fine, right? 74% is a perfectly reasonable RH to be running at. One thing though - keep an eye on it. If it continues to climb, *then* there may be a situation to deal with...

As a credo is repeatedly replenished with water, often a little PG (the regulating chemical) is flushed out by slight overfilling. Eventually, you end up with more H2O than PG, and your humidity starts to climb. This indicates that it's time to re-charge the Credo with fresh PG. (frankly, the newer Credos seem to be being shipped with less and less PG pre-charge in them, so this'll come up soon with most new units)

- *Over humidification. If this occurs, will it harden the draw of a usually pleasant draw cigar?*

Yes, the filler will swell (particularly from the heat of smoking it) resulting in a hard draw and occasional split wrapper. Sometimes you'll get that ammonia taste too.

- *If my hygrometer reads 68% (assuming accurate) is this environment ok for cigars? What if it was 65% or 75%?*

68 is ok generally. At 65 you'll find your wrappers starting to dry out (very delicate and easy to crack). 75 is not much problem, although your cigars might smoke a little tighter...

- *I made a humidification device from an aluminum cigar tube/oasis/PG and my cigars seem too dry*

There is a common problem in this usage. The oasis should *not* be a tight fit in your tube (many people take the "easy" route and use the tube as a "cookie-cutter"). This seriously restricts the circulation of air around the oasis material. A tight-fit reduces the surface area of your credo to just the surface area of those holes - usually far too inadequate for proper evaporation. Cut it a little loose, and make *plenty* of holes for circulation.

- *I can't get the humidity in my humidor high enough!*

Be patient! A new wooden humidor will take up to 3 weeks to stabilize. Misting the interior lightly with distilled water can hasten the process in a new box, but only patience will *stabilize* it. Don't try to rush a new humidor...

Also, is your hygrometer calibrated correctly? 70% is the "correct" storage level, but since many new analog (dial-type) hygrometers are as much as 20% out of calibration when received, you should verify its accuracy before trusting it.

Check the lid. Is it a tight seal? looking along the "crack", can you see daylight through it? In dry weather, this small crack can result in enough moisture loss to limit the humidity...

If you've checked the cal and the lid, the problem's almost gotta be in the way the exterior wood is finished and sealed. You see, the moisture *must* be going somewhere.... Moisture will readily seep right through the wood of a poorly sealed humidor - especially in the dry season. Be sure the bottom is properly finished (and sealed)!!! This is a common oversight of home-finished boxes. You can check if poorly sealed wood is your problem simply enough. Put the whole system into a tightly sealed plastic bag (with wet credo and hygrometer inside), and let it sit for 3 days. Did the humidity come up? If so, you'll have to seal the exterior of your box better. (See section on humidor finishing)

7.4 Worms (Lasioderma - the tobacco beetle)

portions contributed by Rafael Bernardo (rafaelb@csatelite.es)

Common names: Perforador del Tabaco and Gorgojo del Tabaco (Cuba), Carcoma del Tabaco (Puerto Rico), Tobacco Beetle and Herbarium Beetle (USA)

Scientific name: *Lasioderma serricorne* (Fabricius)

Class: Insect
Order: Coleoptera
Suborder: Polyphaga

Superfamily: Bostrychoidea
Family: Anobiidae
Genre: Lasioderma
Species: L. serricorne

This insect is capable of damaging stored tobacco in both raw material and manufactured product, and can be found in any of its phases: egg, larva, pupa and adult.

Eggs are white colored and about 1/2 mm (1/64") in length. They are laid on tobacco at the warehouse by adult females, and hatch in 6 to 10 days.

The small larvae are grub-shaped and whitish, measuring about 4 mm (1/6") at the end of their development, and are covered by fine, long brown hairs that make them appear "fuzzy"; their heads have yellow-brown markings. They feed 5-10 weeks (depending on temperature), and cause extensive damage to cigars by boring through them. At temperatures below 15-16 degrees C (60 degrees F) the larvae become dormant and get a status of lethargy.

Larvae pupate in the damaged material for 2-3 weeks, remaining inactive during that period of time. The whole life period, from egg to adult, takes about 10 to 12 weeks.

The imago or adult insect is oval, about 3 mm (1/8") long and reddish-brown in color; it has a hard body covered with tiny hairs that give it a golden sheen; its head is bent downward so that the beetle has a distinctive "hump-backed" look. It is a good flier, and can live up to a month.

Tobacco Flea Beetle

Epitrix hirtipennis (Melsheimer), Chrysomelidae, COLEOPTERA

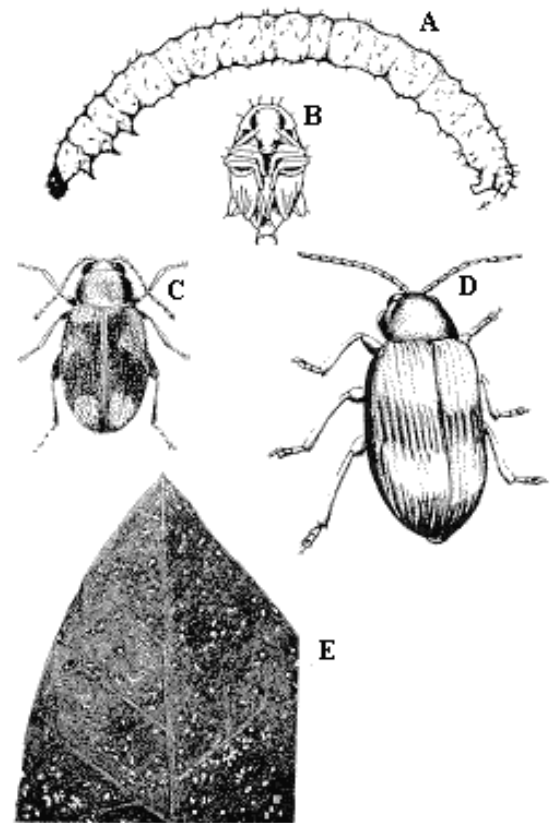
DESCRIPTION

Adult - The adult is a hard-shelled, black, very active beetle about 1.5 mm long. Wing covers have rows of fine distinct punctures. The eyes are black and the antennae 12- segmented.

Egg - The egg is very small (smaller than a pinhead), white when first laid, elongate and pointed at one end.

Larva - The larva is 4.3 to 4.8 mm long when fully developed with a slender, white, 12- segmented body and brownish head. It has three pairs of short, jointed legs on the thorax and a proleg on the last segment.

Pupa - The pupa is whitish with the head bent downward which is typical of pupae of the Chrysomelidae family (leaf-feeding beetles).



Tobacco flea beetle. A, Larva. B, Pupa. C-D, Adults. E, Beetle injury to leaves.

BIOLOGY

Distribution - The tobacco flea beetle is present wherever tobacco is grown from Connecticut to Florida.

Host Plants - The tobacco flea beetle is a pest of tobacco, tomato, and potato and will also attack jimsonweed, horsenettle, and ground cherry.

Damage - The tobacco flea beetle is a major pest of tobacco seedlings in plant beds and of tobacco plants in the field. Adult flea beetles damage tobacco plants from the time the plants begin growing in plant beds until harvest by chewing small, rounded holes through the leaves resulting in a "shot hole" appearance. Larvae feed on the roots of the tobacco plant and may tunnel into stalks. Large numbers of larvae may kill seedlings or severely damage newly set plants.

Life History - Adults generally overwinter in litter and trash around tobacco fields. Some may hibernate in tobacco fields if stalks were not destroyed after harvest. In early spring adults migrate into plant beds. They attack seedling and lay eggs on the soil surface beneath tobacco plants. Eggs hatch in about a week and the small, slender, white larvae feed on and tunnel in the roots and stems of tobacco plants for 4 to 5 weeks. There are three instars. After 4 to 7 days as pupae in the soil, adults emerge. With three to four generations per year, tobacco flea beetles continue to attack field tobacco until after harvest when they migrate to litter and trash surrounding the fields for hibernation.

CONTROL

Control of the tobacco flea beetle in plant beds is important because the plant bed is often the source of field infestations and because healthy seedlings are important for a good crop. Trash around plant beds where beetles hibernate should be destroyed and plant beds should be covered. A braconid wasp, *Microtonus epitricis* (Viereck), is a natural enemy of the adult tobacco flea beetle.

A number of insecticides are available to control the flea beetle in both plant beds and in the field when flea beetle populations reach the economic threshold which averages eight or more adults per small plant. Larger plants should be sprayed when there are 62 or more beetles per plant late in the season. For specific chemical control recommendations, consult the current [North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual](#).

Cigar manufacturers fumigate not only their warehouses but also the finished products, that are treated against potential pests in vacuum chambers. Of course, fakes and other "home-made" cigars are not being processed in this manner, so take it into account when storing cigars whose origin has not been clearly determined. Cigars that have not passed those insecticide treatments are more likely to infest some of your best smokes.

Lasioderma not only ruins cigars and cigarettes, but it is also a pest of mustard, chili peppers, cloves, raisins, and upholstery material. It can also cause serious damage to books and all kinds of dried plants.

Worms are an unfortunate part of the tobacco world. They are more common than most smokers think. (shudder...) They are sensitive to temperature, and may start hatching when the temp is held over 75-80 degrees.

Tobacco worms eat tobacco leaves rather voraciously. Even though cigar makers fumigate their warehouses every thirty days, these nasty critters still manage to survive. Their eggs, layed within the tobacco leaves aren't destroyed by conventional techniques.

The eggs are extremely small, and *often* present (too often!) on the underside of tobacco leaves. These are virtually imperceptible, and more common than most people think. This is why it's always a good idea to keep cigars cool (low 70's) - the worms won't hatch from these eggs at temps below 80 deg (or so...)

When hatched by slightly warm temperatures these nasty critters (still too small to be seen) will bore a clean hole through a cigar leaving a perfectly round exit hole approx. 1/20th inch in diameter. A bunch of worms (or beetles in their adult stage) can

completely demolish a box (or humidor) of cigars in a matter of days. You'll end up with tobacco that looks like sawdust.

We've all probably smoked cigars with eggs in them without knowing it. Worms will affect the draw by tunneling through the 'gar. (and they "pop when you cook them" (g). Beetles? Ick! You don't want to consider smoking the pinhead-sized adult bugs!!!

The "cure" for these nasty critters? Freezing your stogies (the minimum recommended period is 3 days) will kill the larvae. What effect does freezing have on those \$25 Cubans? - not much, actually. be SURE to place them in a completely airtight container, with *as little airspace* as possible. The more air in the container, the more ice crystals can form to damage the delicate leaves - especially the wrapper. Minimizing the air-space also will cut down on dangerous condensation as you "thaw" your smokes.

After three days in a *cold* freezer, you'll need to re-stabilize the stogies in a humidor for a few days before you can smoke 'em. It's best to thaw them slowly - one day in the refrigerator, one day (still sealed) to acclimate to room temperature, and a final day open in a properly maintained (70% RH) humidor. If done properly, there should be little damage to your smokes, and no chance of bugs (or eggs!) returning.

8.0 References...

8.1 Toll-Free Listings...

As always, any additions/corrections to this list are welcome! A more frequently updated version of this list is available on the web at: <http://www.cigargroup.com/cigar800.htm>

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- * 800 509-0070 A-1 Cigars (Canadian retail - no U.S. orders, please)
 - * 800-728-4689 AAA Cigar Distributor (Distributor-Wholesaler)
 - * 800-942-9463 ABC Liquors (retail)
 - * 800-259-3750 A.K. CIGAR COMPANY (Plaistow, NH) (Havana Royale Cigars)
 - * 800 722-7692 A Tobacco Supermarket (Atlanta GA) (retail)
 - * 800 227-8296 Adeline Smoke Shop (Plummer ID) (retail)
 - * 888 578-7324 Air Purifiers (Durango CO) (retail/wholesale)
 - * 800 484-8724 Alcalde Cigar & Coffee Co, (Brandenburg, KY) (retail)
 - * 800 331-1750 Alfred Dunhill (New York, NY) (retail)
 - * 800 348-1412 Aliados Cigars (?) (retailer)
 - * 800 922-4427 Aliados Cigars (manufacturer)
 - * 888 663-5254 Allegheny Mtns. Cigar Company (Mt. Jewett, PA) (retail)
 - * 800-328-1001 Alliance Cigar, Inc. (Bethel, CT) (Importer, distributor)
 - * 800-850-1633 Ambassador Cigar Company (retail)
 - * 800 365-2888 AMD Premium Cigars (Whitinsville, MA) (wholesaler)
 - * 800 843-2826 American Tobacco Co The (Chester VA)
 - * 888 626-2442 Andaluza Cigar (manufacturer)
 - * 800 831-1684 Andreas Inc (Kenosha WI)
 - * 888 682-7224 Arabi Cigars (manufacturer)
 - * 800 222-4427 Arango Cigar Co (Skokie IL) (distributor)
 - * 888 977-2121 Arrowhead Cigar Club and Shoppe (retail)
 - * 800 586-8409 Avanti Cigar (Scranton PA)
 - * 800 455-9449 Axion (San Bernardino Ca) (acrylic humidor manufacturer)
 - * 877 232-2474 Beachside Cigars (Huntington Beach, CA) (Wholesale/Retail)
 - * 800 237-5074 Bennington Tobbaconist (retail)
 - * 888-284-8978 Bernardo's Fine Cigars (retail)
 - * 888-546-2994 Big Dog Cigars Imperial, PA (wholesale)
 - * 888-869-2442 Big Mike's Cigar Sanctuary (personalized wholesale)

- * 888-628-8312 Big Cigar Company (Tuscaloosa,AL) (retail)
- * 888 286-1212 Blackwood Ind. (manufacturer, cigar boxes)
- * 800 373-5681 Bloom Cigar (Pittsburgh PA) (retail)
- * 888-757-9510 Blowin' Smoke (Janesville, WI) (retail)
- * 800 486-3996 Bob Ashe Cigar Co. (Skokie IL)
- * 800 652-4427 Bonita Smoke Shop (Bonita Springs, FL) (retail)
- * 800 772-7427 The Briar & Bean (Evansville, IN) (retail)
- * 800 540 6258 Brewtopia (Athens, GA) (retail)
- * 800 232 1323 Briar Rose (Carson, CA) (retail)
- * 800 255-5556 Brick Hanauer Co., Inc (Waltham MA)
- * 800 577-7737 Broadleaf Humidors (wholesale)
- * 888 448-3220 Buckhead Cigar factory (Atlanta, GA) (manufacturer, retail)
- * 888-BB-CIGAR Bull & Bear Cigar Club, Inc (Plainsboro, NJ) (club)
- * 888 876-4443 Burning Solutions (Marietta, GA) (manufacturer-accessories)
- * 800 637-7964 Campa Import & Export (La Aurora) (Miami FL) (distributor)
- * 800 813-8588 Capital Cigar Source (retail)
- * 800 992-7427 Carey's Smokeshop (Canton, OH)) (retail)
- * 877-742-4477 Carson Cigar Co. (Carson City, NV) (retail)
- * 800 367-0782 Caribe Imported Cigars (Miami FL)
- * 888 878-7418 Caribe' Imports, Inc. (Austin, Tx) (distr. cigars, humidors)
- * 800 882-6881 Casa de Malahato Cuban Cigars (Victoria, BC, Can.)(retail)
- * 800-593-4123 Cascade Cigar & Tobacco (Portland, OR) (retail)
- * 888 223-0657 Chacaro Black Stallion Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 888-627-8905 Cherokee Cigar Co. (Glenview, IL) (distributor)
- * 888-766-5389 Churchills Cuban Collection (Vancouver B.C) (retail)
- * 888-243-4611 Ciego & Vak (Del Mar, CA) (manufacturer - ashtrays)
- * 800 260 5526 Cigar Baron (Lafayette IN)
- * 800-644-1413 The Cigar Box (Kansas City, MO) (retail)
- * 888-594-24427 CigarCafe (web zine)
- * 888 223-5527 Cigar Cellar Inc. (manufacturer, humidors)
- * 888 663-7363 Cigar Central (retail)
- * 800 245 7146 Cigar Club International (Alexandria VA) (retail)
- * 800 672-4427 The Cigar Club (Melrose Park IL) (retail)
- * 800 588-1857 Cigar.Com (Houston, TX) (web provider)
- * 888 987-4689 CigarCart.com (Retail, Canada)
- * 888-949-6900 Cigar Compadres LTD. (Evanston IL) (manufacturer)
- * 877 938-5050 Cigar Den Inc. (Plainview, NJ) (retail)
- * 800-962-2495 Cigar Elegante (Tampa, FL) (retail)
- * 800 871-6077 Cigar Exchange International (Upland, CA) (distributor)
- * 888 766-5330 Cigar Express (Las Vegas NV) (retail)
- * 800 922-1233 Cigar Express (New Castle, PA) (retail)
- * 888 623-8767 Cigar Express Humidor Hotline (New Castle, PA) (retail)
- * 888-588-4244 Cigar Girls Int. (Newport Beach, CA)(retail)
- * 800 679-0185 Cigar Humidors By Tomway Corp. (Ft Lauderdale FL)
- * 800 244-2751 Cigar King (Skokie, IL)
- * 888 SMOKE-8 Cigar Lovers (Oxnard, CA) (retail)
- * 888 764-7775 Cigar Mart (College Station, Texas) (dist. Don Tomas)
- * 888 638-1755 Cigar Max (Highlands, NC) (retail)
- * 888 502-4427 Cigar Museum, Inc. (?)
- * 888 33-CIGAR Cigar-Net (?) (retail)
- * 800 336-1181 Cigars of Honduras (Alexandria, VA) (manufacturer)
- * 800 700 7661 Cigar of the Month (Deerfield WI) (retail)
- * 877 244-2778 Cigars-On-Wheels (retail)

- * 800-665-0772 Cigarros Del Mundo (retail)
- * 888 942-8224 Cigar Palace (Austin, TX) (retail)
- * 800 372-2069 Cigar Savor (accessory manufacturer)
- * 800 216-0480 Cigar Smoke Shop (Ft. Meyers, FL) (retail)
- * 888-303-4427 Cigar Source (Des Moines, IO) (retail)
- * 800 663-2485 Cigar Station (manufacturers / wholesaler)
- * 800 813-8588 Cigar Supply (wholesale)
- * 800 732-4077 The Cigar Vault (Arlington, VA) (retail)
- * 800 426-8924 Cigar Warehouse (Sherman Oaks CA) (retail)
- * 888 883-7711 Cigarwoman.com (web site)
- * 888 601-2442 Cigar Wrappers (retail/wholesale)
- * 888 244-2790 Cigars International (cigar-of-the-month club)
- * 800 946-4265 Cigars Online (retail)
- * 877-244-2778 Cigars on Wheels (wholesale)
- * 800 292-9921 Cigars Plus (Brick NJ)
- * 800 640-0300 City Cigars (Saddle Brook, NJ) (Retail/Wholesale)
- * 800 356-2523 Classic Imports-Cigarette Cards (Ramsey NJ)
- * 800 992-2621 CMT Cigars (Winston-Salem, NC) (wholesale/retail)
- * 800-556-7354 Colibri/Linden (lighters)
- * 888 539 4600 Connoisseur Imports, Ltd (Hatboro, PA) (manufacturer)
- * 800 683-8800 Consolidated Cigar (Ft Lauderdale, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 876-8789 Controlled Environments (San Marcos, CA) (manuf., humidors)
- * 888 458-2677 Copa Havana Cigars (Miami Beach, Florida) (wholesale)
- * 888 811 2672 Copahabana (Niagara falls, Canada)(importer, wholesaler)
- * 800-844-0894 Copan Direct Imports Inc. (McMurray PA) (dist)
- * 888 702-4427 Corona Cigar Co. (retail, wholesale)
- * 800 777-3378 Costa Rica Natural (Cigar Paper manufacturer)
- * 800 222-8976 Country Squire (Jackson MS) (retail)
- * 800 933-0774 Coyote Cigar Stuff of Las Vegas (retail)
- * 888 620-1090 Creations, Inc. (Tucker, GA) (Cigar-of-the-month club)
- * 888 934-6836 Creston Premium Cigars, Inc. (manufacturer, distributor)
- * 888 802-8226 Crown David International (Philadelphia, PA) (manufacturer)
- * 888 493-2411 Cu-Avana Cigars (distributor - cigars and acc.)
- * 800 992-4427 Cuba Aliados Cigars (Miami FL) (manufacturer)
- * 888 282-2367 Cubador Humidors (Canada) (humidor manufacturer)
- * 800 348-1412 Cuban Aliados Cigars Inc (Union City NJ) (manufacturer)
- * 800 207-7771 Cuban Cigar Co. (Miami, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 419-1009 Cuban Cigar Factory (San Diego, CA) (manufacturer)
- * 888 875-1091 Cuban Cigar Technologies, Inc. (manufacturer)
- * 800 647-3832 Cuban Leaf Cigar Factory (Key West, FL) (man. - La Liga)
- * 888 244-2713 Cullen Cigar Company (Minneapolis, MN) (wholesale, specialty)
- * 888 287-4361 Cupido Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 800 923-2889 Daniel Marshall, Inc (man - humidors)
- * 888 674-8307 Dave's Humidors (Humidor distributor/retailer)
- * 800 328-0039 Davidoff of Geneva (Beverly Hills, CA) (retail)
- * 800 548-4623 Davidoff of Geneva (New York, NY) (retail)
- * 800 328-4365 Davidoff Of Geneva (Stamford CT) (retail)
- * 800 645-8701 David's Briar Shop (Des Moines, Iowa) (retail)
- * 800 581-5076 Daydream Trading Company (retail)
- * 800 556-7111 Decatur Industries (Berne, IN) (humidors manufacturer)
- * 800 477-1884 Diamond Crown International (Tampa, FL) (man.- humidors, accessories)
- * 888 482-9113 Dominican Cigar Company (Boca Raton, FL) (man)
- * 800 970-6201 Dominican Premium Tobacco Ltd. (manufacturer)

- * 888 888-8313 Don Alberto (manufacturer)
- * 800 537-4957 Don Pablo Cigar Co. (Las Vegas NV) (manufacturer)
- * 888 366-8886 Don Tuto (Costa Rican) (manufacturer)
- * 800 353 9396 Don Yeyo (Las Vegas, NV) (retail)
- * 800 606-2071 Eastwold Smoke Shop (Sioux Falls SD) (retail)
- * 800 372-4427 Easyend Cigars (Mendham NJ)
- * 888 368-5329 Eb's Humidors (humidor manufacturer)
- * 877-375-3042 The Educated Cigar, LLC (Richland, WA) (retail)
- * 800 851-9020 Edward's Pipe & Tobacco (Richardson TX) (retail)
- * 800 257-6653 Edward's Pipe & Tobacco (Tampa, FL) (retail)
- * 800 724-2150 Elmira Distributing Company (Elmira N.Y.) (distributor)
- * 888 244-2763 Epicurean Company (Bloomfield Hills, MI) (retail)
- * 800 444-3741 The Epitome (New orleans, LA) (retail)
- * 800 369 5940 Essense of Smoke (Hollywood, FL) (retail, manufacturer)
- * 800 726-9481 El Credito (Miami FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 282-3539 Eli Witt Co (Tampa FL)
- * 800 244-2763 The Epicurean Co. (Berkley, MI) (retail)
- * 800 233-8907 The Epitome (New Orleans, LA) (retail)
- * 800 924-4271 The Everest Company (framed box art) (retail/wholesale)
- * 888 531-2442 Executive Cigar Company, Inc. (cigar-of-the-month club)
- * 800 999-3233 Fader's (Baltimore, MD) (retail)
- * 800 672-5544 Famous Smoke Shop Inc. (New York NY) (retail)
- * 800 221-0638 Finck Cigar Company (San Antonio TX) (retail)
- * 800 862-2211 Flor de Gonzalez (manufacturer)
- * 800 243-9377 Fred Stoker & Sons, Inc (Dresden TN)
- * 888 214-8059 Friday's Cigar Company (Wichita Falls, TX)(private lable)
- * 800 355-7473 Frontier's Tobacco Supply Stores (PA) (retail)
- * 800 411-3732 Four Vices Cigars (San Diego, CA) (retail)
- * 888-888-4287 Fuss N' Stuff Cigar and Coffee Shoppe (Mableton GA) (retail)
- * 800 610-0766 G&G Cigar Trading Co. (Greenville, SC) (distributor)
- * 800-241-2582 G.K. Cigar Club (cigar-of-the-month club)
- * 888 612-4427 Garmeister Cigars, (Eureka Springs, AR) (manufacturer)
- * 800 244-2771 Gary Scott Intl., Inc. (Haverhill, MA) (manufacturer)
- * 877 877-1212 Gem/Newman Associates Inc. (distributor) (midwest)
- * 800 843-4058 General Cigar Co (Dothan AL) (manufacturer)
- * 888 977-8425 Gerardino Cigars (distributor)
- * 888 244-2789 Geoffrey Tobacco Imports, Inc. (Chicago, IL)(distributor)
- * 800 345-1459 Georgetown Tobacco (Washington DC) (retail)
- * 888 715-5050 Gonzalez & Gonzalez Tobacco (Miami, FL) (wholesale)
- * 800 414-7473 Greybeard's (Rehoboth Beach, DE) (retail)
- * 888 226-7366 H&H Cigar Co. (Miami.FL) (wholesale - Campeones)
- * 800 424-4277 H J Bailey Co (Neptune NJ) (wholesale)
- * 800 826-2326 Havana Dan's Monthly Cigar Club (Libertyville IL)
- * 888 528-5538 Havana Premiere Cigars (wholesale, retail)
- * 800 581 7828 Havana Studios (Burbank CA) (club)
- * 800 227-0515 Hecho A Mano magazine (Philadelphia, PA)(publication)
- * 800 995-9229 Heroes and Legacies Cigar Lounge (Austin, TX) (Retail)
- * 800 523-1641 Holts Cigar Co. (Philadelphia, PA) (retail)
- * 800 793-9223 House of Cigars (Alexandria, VA) (retail)
- * 800 831-8893 House of Oxford Distributors (New York, NY) (wholesale)
- * 800 358-8100 Hugo Cassar Cigars Sales (Moorpark, CA) manufacturer)
- * 877 697-6653 Humidor Smoke Shop (RI) (retail)
- * 800 486-4367 The Humidor Store (?) (retail)

- * 800 743-9243 Imperial Trading Co. (Harahan,LA.) (retail)
- * 888 766-5387 Indian Tabac Cigar Co. (manufacturer)
- * 800-729-9717 International Cigar Club (cigar of the month)
- * 888 783-2427 International Cigar Factory Outlet (South Norwalk, Ct) (ret)
- * 800 247 6666 International Spirits (New York NY) (retail)
- * 888-892-9122 International Tobacco (Houston, TX) (retail, wholesale)
- * 800 680-9701 Island Smoke Shop (Key Largo, FL) (retail)
- * 800 621-1457 Iwan Ries Co (Chicago IL) (retail)
- * 800 357-9800 The Internet Smoke Shop (OH) (retail)
- * 888-649-1411 J. Burke & Sons Tobacconists Ltd. (Victoria,BC,Can.) (retail)
- * 888 452-6783 J. Cortes Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 800 477-1884 J.C. Newman Cigar Co. (Tampa, FL) (manufacturer and distributor)
- * 877-324-4277 J & D Cigar Company (Canada) (distributor)
- * 888 572-8878 J&J Imported Cigars (Cliffside Park, NJ) (retail, wholesale)
- * 800 572-4427 J R Tobacco (Fairfield NJ) (retail)
- * 888-825-3522 Jerri's Tobacco Shop (Denver, CO) (retail)
- * 888-338-6273 Jocelyn Lemieux Fumare (Dundee, IL) (manuf. - humidors)
- * 888 564-6871 John T's (Fairfield, CA) (Retail)
- * 888 742-4427 Jolly Roger Smokeshop (Providence, RI)(retail)
- * 800 432-6886 K&B Cigars (Huntington Beach, CA)
- * 800 217-4884 Key West/Havana Cigar Co. (retail)
- * 800 801-2697 Klafter's Inc. (New Castle, PA) (retail)
- * 888-676-3549 Knoxville Cigar Company (retail)
- * 800 246-2771 LNB Cigar Wholesalers & Distributors, Inc.
- * 800 728-4082 La Cobra Cubana Cigars (Austin, TX) (manufacturer)
- * 888 529-5442 La Concha Reserve Cigars (Key West, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 888 441-2447 La Perla Habana Cigars (manufacturer/distributor)
- * 800 432-4277 Las Vegas Cigar Co (Las Vegas NV) (manufacturer)
- * 888 880-2210 Leaf & Tinder Inc. (Whittier, CA) (retail - accessories)
- * 888 514-1919 Leon and Predator Cigars (distributor)
- * 800 862-2220 Liberson's International Tobaccos (Toluca Lake CA) (retail)
- * 800 853-3941 Lighters Galore Plus (retail)
- * 800 706-2480 Lil Brown Smoke Shack (Yakima WA) (retail)
- * 888 728-1111 Lil' Habanas Smoke & Ware(Ontario,Canada)(retail,wholesale)
- * 888-366-7420 Litz International Group (Seminole, FL)(importer, Don Rico)
- * 800 940-1635 L.J.'s Fine Tobacco & Wine Shop (North Palm Beach, FL)
- * 888 762-4427 L. Lynn Cigars (retailer)
- * 800-586-9653 Lone Wolf International Cigar Co. (manufacturer)
- * 800 837-2375 Ludovic Baine Cigar Society (New York, NY)
- * 800 822-4427 Luis Martinez Cigar Co. (Tampa FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 624-5495 M. Marsh & Son. (Wheeling WV) (manufacturer)
- * 800 662-4145 Maison Edwards Tobacconist (Ann Arbor MI) (retail)
- * 800 567-MAKO Mako Publishing (Cigar Dossier)
- * 800 662-4427 Male Order Enterprises (Auburndale MA) (retail)
- * 888-952-2350 Marca De Casa Cigar Company (distributor, private label)
- * 800 905-2441 Marcos Miguel (TX) (importer)
- * 888 682-4427 Masterpiece Cigar Company, Inc. (Irwindale, CA) (distributor)
- * 800 981-2834 Maverick Humidors (Humidor manufacturer)
- * 888 629-6742 Mayorga & La Cosecha Cigars (retail, distributor)
- * 888 467-6077 Mercator Cigar (Lexington, Ky.) (dist- MayanKings)
- * 800 962-4427 Mikes Cigar Distributors Inc (Miami Beach FL) (distributor)
- * 800-658-3235 Michael Ashton Tobacco Chandler (Hanover, PA) (retail)
- * 800 423-2134 Michael's Cigars (Asheboro, NC) (retail)

- * 800 831-8893 Mom's Cigar (Carringtons) (New York NY) (retail)
- * 888-266-1145 Montana Sport Cigars (retail, wholesale)
- * 800 221-4134 Montecruze Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 800 368-7301 Moore & Bode Cigars (Miami FL) (manufacturer)
- * 888 676-6478 Mr. Moisture (humidifier manuf.)
- * 800 606-4469 Mr. Stogy's (retail)
- * 800 785-0955 Napa Humidors (Orlando, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 692-4427 Nat Sherman (New York NY) (retail)
- * 800 321-0247 National Cigar Corporation (Frankfort, IN) (manufacturer)
- * 888 882-1131 New Hampshire Tobacco (Nashua, NH) (Retail, Distributor)
- * 800 432-7473 New Tradition Pipe Co (Pinellas Park FL) (retail)
- * 888 893-3344 Nichalex Corp. (distributor)
- * 888-642-5797 Nick's Cigar Company (Miami, FL) (manufacturer, distributor)
- * 800 621-1453 Old Chicago Smoke Shop (Chicago, IL) (retail)
- * 888 845-6111 Old Morris Tobacconist LTD. (Victoria, BC Canada) (Retail)
- * 888 467-4662 Orinico Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 800-844-7755 Owl Shop of Worcester (Worcester, MA) (retail)
- * 888-477-7405 Payless Cigars New Orleans, LA) (retail)
- * 800 780-7473 The Pipe Den and Cigars (Vero Beach, FL)
- * 800 842-2401 Pheasant International (leather accessories)
- * 888 757-6653 PJ Smokes (Princeton, NJ) (retail)
- * 800-859-7564 Pocket Humidor (manuf., cigar pouches)
- * 800 455-9449 P.O.P. Humidor Mfg. (manufacturer)
- * 800 272-8656 Premier Marketing Incorporated (St. Louis, MO) (man., dist.)
- * 800 748-2784 Premium Cigar (Harleysville PA)
- * 800 537-8623 Premium Cigar Lady (Richmond, VA) (retail)
- * 888 774-6397 Prime Commodities, (distributor/retailer Tabacalera Cigars)
- * 800-386-0925 Princes Bay Cigar Company (retail)
- * 888 874-2442 Puff The Magic Cigar Lounge (Hyannis, MA)
- * 800 598-6333 Puff and Stuff Cigars (Tampa, FL) (wholesale)
- * 800 428-1428 Purofino Tobacco Inc. (manufacturer)
- * 888-283-7374 Quality Fresh Cigars (retail)
- * 888-772-4427 Reserva Del Rey Cigar Co. (retail)
- * 800 947-6225 Royal Hawaiian Cigar Company (retail, distributor)
- * 800 311-1818 Royal Hawaiian Tobacco Company (Manufacturer)
- * 800 578-5541 Royal Tobacco, Inc. (manufacturer and distributor)
- * 800 766-5395 Royalty Leisure Products (retail - accessories)
- * 800 669-1527 Rich's (Portland OR) (retail)
- * 800 782-8499 Rubovits Cigars (Chicago IL) (retail)
- * 888-825-2681 St. Jorge Tobacco Shoppe (St. Augustine, FL)
- * 800 352-1092 Sal's Smokeshop (Plantation, FL) (retail)
- * 800-224-0737 Segal Wholesale (distributor)
- * 800 643-6880 Shriver Humidors, Ltd., Longmont, CO (manufacturers)
- * 888 577 5717 Sid Gottlieb Cigars and Tobacco (Springfield, VA) (retail)
- * 888-822-4857 Silver Smoke (manuf., cigar cases)
- * 800-947-3737 Simply Cigars (Retailer) (MI, MA, IL, OH and CT) (retail)
- * 888-766-5371 Smoke Inn (Tequesta Florida) (retail)
- * 888-766-5373 Smoke Inn (Akron Ohio) (retail)
- * 888-766-5375 Smoke Inn (Houston Texas) (retail)
- * 888 296-8736 Smoker's Depot (Albuquerque, NM) (retail)
- * 800-604-5900 The Original Smokers' Haven (Columbus, OH) (retail)
- * 800 633-9508 Smokers' World (Miami FL) (retail)
- * 888-669-5273 Smokey's Smoke Shop (Ardsley New York) (retail)

- * 877 616-8899 Smokin' (Lee, NJ) (retail)
- * 800 752-4427 Smokin' Joe's Tobacco (Knoxville TN) (retail)
- * 888-802-3322 SmokeshopDesigns.Com
- * 888 773-2532 The Speakeasy Cigar Company (manufacturer)
- * 800 782-9495 Springfield Smoke Shop (Springfield OR) (retail)
- * 888 902 4429 Sterling Wholesale International (distributor)
- * 888 786 4432 Stewart-Beckwith Humidor Cabinets (manuf., humidors)
- * 800 811-2442 Stogies (Rogers, AR) (retail)
- * 888 271-9887 Stogie's International (FL) (private label manufacturer)
- * 888 822-4427 Stogies Online (Ft Lauderdale, FL) (retail)
- * 888-797-9265 Swank Cigar Co. (Tampa, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 299-8229 Tabacco Shop, The (Scottsdale Az) (retail)
- * 800 551-8750 Tabacceria (Merritt Island FL) (retail)
- * 888 560-8821 Tahoe Cigar Company (Lake Tahoe, NV) (manufacturer)
- * 800 213-0646 Tampa Vista Cigars (Largo, FL) (manufacturer)
- * 800 367-6653 Taylors Pipe & Tobacco Shop (Ft Smith AR) (retail)
- * 888-424-4274 Texana Cigar & Coffee Company (Chappell Hill, TX) (retail)
- * 800-357-9800 TheSmokeShop.Com (Concord, OH) (retail)
- * 888-788-5839 Three Little Indians Cigar Co. (Wholesale and Retail)
- * 888-284-8545 Timmy Tobacco, Inc. (Naples, FL) (retail)
- * 800 777-7240 Tinder Box International (Indianapolis, IN)
- * 800 382-4427 Tinder Box International (St. Louis, MO) (retail)
- * 888 710-9195 Tinder Box International (New York, NY) (retail)
- * 800 237-2559 Thompson Cigar Co, (Tampa, FL) (retail)
- * 888 244-2785 T.J. Cigars Co.(Miami, FL) (manufacturer private-labels)
- * 800 776-7148 Tobacco Bar Ltd., The (Madison, WI) (retail)
- * 800 934-2424 Tobacco Barn Pipe Shop (Lake Forest CA) (retail)
- * 800 999-6882 Tobacco Barns (VA) (retail)
- * 888 624-7473 Tobacco Haus (New Braunfels, TX) (retail)
- * 800 476-8583 Tobacco Leaf (Montgomery, AL) (retail)
- * 800-404-9940 The Tobacconist (Temple Terrace, FL)(retail)
- * 800 274-1908 Tobacco Plaza (Little Neck, NY) (retail)
- * 800 232-3997 The Tobacco Shop (Indianapolis, IN) (retail)
- * 888 278-8822 Tobacco Valley Cigar Co. (West Springfield, MA) (wholesale)
- * 800 926-5991 Tobacco Village (Wilmington, DE) (retail)
- * 800 867-3483 Top Five Selections (Erie, PA) (retail)
- * 800 966-8677 Topper Cigars (CT) (manufacturer)
- * 888-839-9875 Towle Humidor
- * 877 224-4272 Town & Country Cigars (retail)
- * 800 451-5656 Tuttle's (Grand Rapids MI) (retail)
- * 888 458-8244 U.S. Cigar exchange, Inc. (NJ, Manufacturer/Distributor)
- * 888-604-2378 Uncle Ernie's Humidiiifying Solution
- * 800-341-9820 United Smoke Shop (Rhinebeck, NY) (retail)
- * 877-951-8212 Unlimited Fine Cigars (Birmingham, AL) (retail)
- * 877-238-1172 Uptown Cigar Company
- * 800 821-1668 Valley Blends Tobacco & Coffee (Mt Vernon WA) (retail)
- * 888-382-4427 Vancouver Cigar Company (Vancouver, BC, Canada) (retail)
- * 888-766-5318 Vancouver Cigar Company (Whistler, BC, Canada)(retail)
- * 800 685-2568 Veracruz Cigars (Winchester, MA) (manufacturer)
- * 800 434-3994 Victory Cigar Limited (private lable cigars, accessories)
- * 888 244-2772 Vincent & Tampa Cigars (manufacturer)
- * 888 367-0153 Virtual Cigar Shop (?) (retail)
- * 800-299-7459 Wabash Cigar Store, Inc (Terre Haute, IN) (retail)

- * 800 221-0638 Wally Frank (San Antonio TX) (manufacturer)
 - * 800 892-5597 Wallys (Los Angeles, CA) (retail)
 - * 877-387-1891 Walper Tobacco Shop Ltd. (Kitchener On. Canada) (retail)
 - * 800 776-0096 Western Humidor (Las Vegas NV) (Humidor Manufacturer)
 - * 800 316-2156 Westport Cigars (Westport, CT) (retail)
 - * 800 942-7310 The Wharf (Dayton, OH) (retail)
 - * 877 971-9663 Wood Projections, Inc. (commercial display humidors)
 - * 800 279-4441 The Woodworkers Store (Medina, MN)(Humidor parts)
 - * 888 889-5180 ZGK Designer Products (High Point,NC) (dist/man)
-
- * 800 340-3007 ZT Cigars (wholesale)

Free catalogs are also available from the following mail-order retailers.

Bernardo's Fine Cigars	1-888-284-8978
Cigar Exchange Int.	1-800-871-6077
Cigar Express	1-800-922-1233
Cigar Max	1-888 638-1755
Corona Cigar Co.	1-888-702-4427
Cullen Cigar Co.	1-888-244-2713
Famous	1-800-672-5544
Finck Cigar Company	1-800-221-0638
Georgetown	1-800 345-1459
Holts	1-800-523-1641
JR Cigars	1-800-572-4427
L. Lynn Cigars	1-888-762-4427
Mike's Cigars	1-800-962-4427
Michael's Cigars	1-800-423-2134
Mom's Cigars	1-800-831-8893
Montana Sport Cigars	1-888-266-1145
Nat Sherman	1-800-692-4427
Quality Fresh Cigars	1-888-283-7374
Sid Gottlieb Cigars	1-888 577 5717
SJI Tobacco	1-800-752-4427
TheSmokeShop.Com	1-800-357-9800
Thompson's	1-800-237-2559
Two Guys	1-888-224-4272

8.2 Seconds (segundos)

- *What IS a second? How are these different from "Premiums"?*

There are several types of "seconds" in the industry, and no real standard for determining them from company to company. Many (most?) cigars sold in quantity as seconds were designated that way before they were "born"!

There's a lot of variation in a natural product such as cigars. Bulk tobacco is sold in different grades, but within a bale there is a great deal of variation of leaf quality. As the tobacco is sorted and bunched for premium cigars, a certain percentage of this leaf is determined to be sub-standard for the particular cigars which it was purchased for.

Unfortunately, the manufacturer paid as much for this leaf as the good ones. This leaf is set-aside, and used in rolling seconds.

Often newer (but still trained and skilled) rollers are used to create cigars from this supply to keep costs down. This sort of second is often sold at a greatly discounted price - basically to recover costs.

Lately there have been a rash of new "factory seconds" produced by major suppliers in their rush to train rollers and increase production. Many of these manufacturers intentionally order a much cheaper grade of tobacco than their "name-brand" lines would use. Why waste the good stuff on the trainees? As a result, some "Seconds" are simply low quality cigars rolled with inferior leaves by inexperienced rollers. Their only relation to the name-brand they're associated with is that someday, if they're good enough, the rollers would be promoted to work on the "real" production line (with the better tobacco). Beware of this type of "seconds", which are becoming increasingly common...

Then there are final, or "factory" seconds. Cigars with blemished wrappers, or those caught by an inspector as too firm or soft. Cigars are often weighed (by the bundle) and compared to a standard. If too heavy or light, there might be a problem with the construction. Often this sort of second is simply destroyed - the variable inconsistencies make this a very poor choice for a product.

So don't think those seconds you're smoking are reduced in price because of some minor blemish. Although often very good smokes, *somebody* at the factory most likely considered the tobacco in them slightly inferior for their standard production...

From: VikTheK@ix.netcom.com (Viktor Nehring)

Pride of Copan = Zino

the following are guesses made by me

PoC 1 6 3/4	x 50	= Zino Veritas cut 1/4"
PoC 2 6	x 44	= Zino Tradition cut 1/4"
five other sizes		

Old Fashioned = Macanudo and Partagas

the following is from various catalogs and my own observations:

OF #250 6	x 31	= Macanudo Claybourne
OF #300 7 3/4	x 31	= Macanudo Somerset
OF #350 7	x 34	= Macanudo Portofino
OF #500 5 1/2	x 42	= Macanudo Duke of Devon
OF #550 5	x 50	= Macanudo Hyde Park
OF #600 6 3/4	x 38	= Macanudo Lonsdale
OF #700 6 1/2	x 42	= Macanudo Baron de Rothschild
OF #745 7	x 45	= Macanudo Sovereign
OF #749 7 1/2	x 49	= Macanudo Prince Philip
OF #1200 5	x 38	= Macanudo Petit Corona
OF # 31 6 3/4	x 43	= Partagas No 1
OF # 32 5 3/4	x 43	= Partagas No 2
OF # 33 5 1/4	x 43	= Partagas No 3
OF # 40 7 1/2	x 49	= Partagas No 10

Te-Amo Segundos = Te-Amo (real clever, huh?)

San Andres segundos = ?

Kings Dominican = Casa Blanca

Roller's Choice = Fonseca

From: Doug Rabin

According to a handwritten sign in my local Smoker's Haven, the "Super Premium 2nds" [the label burned into the wooden boxes] they sell are Dominican Romeo y Julieta Vintage 2nds. I can't confirm this independently and have never had RyJ 1sts; but it's plausible in the sense that the ones I tried were pretty good, and they're not dirt-cheap even as 2nds. I saw five sizes, #100 - #500.

From: Edward N Blue (eblue@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu)

Macanundos come in seconds/ seen as unlabelled or JR 5 star seconds Partagas come in seconds/ In the Famous Smoke Shop Catalog the Macs and Partagas are labeled as world famous seconds. By deduction and size matching you know that the Connecticut wrapper belongs to the Macanudo and the Camaroon wrapper belongs to Partagas.

Punch Seconds are sold in unlabelled bundles. Casa Blanca Jeroboams are sold as seconds/ You can't miss these.

8.3 Web Sites

The Internet Cigar Group's Master Web List...

As our list of web sites grows, it has become impractical to represent each and every one of them here. To that end, our Master Web List now resides on a series of pages of its own, available at <http://www.cigargroup.com/weblist>, or you may click on any of the links below...



As always, any additions, corrections, or comments are appreciated.
Email any corrections to: weblist@cigargroup.com

8.4 Glossary

- **Barrel** - The main body or shank of the cigar.
- **Binder** - Binder leaves are the intermediate leaf used to hold the bunch of filler tobacco together
- **Bloom** - Also referred to as plume, this is a white film or spots caused by the oils in the tobacco rising to the surface of a cigar's wrapper. It is harmless, and usually indicated a strong tasting smoke.
- **Bunch** - the intermediate cluster of filler tobacco in a cigar
- **Cap** - The small flag of wrapper leaf that the roller lays down and seals to the head of the cigar with a vegetable gum based glue.
- **Credo** - Originally a specific manufacturer of PG based humidification devices for humidors, the term credo is now often used for any humidification devices which chemically regulated the humidor's environment.
- **Filler** - The bunch of tobacco found at the center of the cigar. There are two types of filler: long filler, which contains the whole leaf running from the head to the foot of the cigar, and short filler, comprised of scraps of tobacco (often the trimmed ends of long fillers).
- **Foot** - The end of the cigar that you light.
- **Hand Made** - A cigar that is bunched, bound and wrapped entirely by hand with no machines being used in the

fabrication process (excluding the mold).

- **Head** - The capped end of the cigar that you put into your mouth.
- **Humidor** - Any box used for storage of cigars in a controlled humidity. The term humidor usually refers to wooden boxes, with unfinished interiors (also see tupperdor, Igloodor)
- **Hygrometer** - A device used for exact (?) measurements of relative humidity.
- **Igloodor** - A (usually large) insulated storage container for cigars.
- **Lacioderma** - Tobacco Beetle larva. Nasty destroyer of precious cigars.
- **Long Filler** - Tobacco leaf that is long enough to run the entire length of a cigar's bunch.
- **Propylene Glycol (PG)** - (1,2-Propanediol; methyl glycol; C₃H₈O₂; molecular weight 76.09.)... A hygroscopic, viscous liquid. Slightly acid taste. Miscible with water, acetone, chloroform. Soluble in ether. Will dissolve many essential oils, but is immiscible with fixed oils. It is a good solvent for rosin. Under ordinary conditions propylene glycol is stable, but at high temps it tends to oxidize giving rise to products such as propionaldehyde, lactic acid, pyruvic acid, and acetic acid. LD50 in rats is 30grams/kg. It is completely miscible with water and dissolves in many essential oils. It is used as a solvent for oral and injectable drugs, and is also employed in cosmetics, lotions, and ointments, as well as in the humidification of tobacco products.
- **Relative Humidity** - Relative humidity (RH) may be defined as the amount of moisture in the atmosphere as compared with that of complete saturation at a given temperature. Water exposed to air gradually evaporates until it reaches a saturation point, i.e. 100% humidity. At 21 degrees centigrade (approx. 70deg F) and a normal atmospheric pressure, the amount of evaporated water is approximately 11 grams per cubic meter at a RH of 70%. Note: DO NOT confuse relative humidity with absolute moisture content!
- **Ring Gauge** - The diameter of a cigar's barrel, expressed in 64ths of an inch. A 32 ring is 32/64" (1/2"), for example.
- **S.A. (as in "Habanos S.A.")** - "Sociedad Anonyma", the typical Spanish-language equivalent of "Inc."
- **Shoulder** The area where the head of the cigar meets the barrel.
- **Tooth** - Those little "bumps" of oil on a fine quality Cameroon wrapper.
- **Tupperdor** - A air-tight plastic container used for storing cigars.
- **Wrapper** - The outer leaf - generally high quality, first grade tobacco which is wound around the binder of the cigar. It is chosen for its complexion, elasticity, silky texture and delicate veins.

8.5 Reference books:

This section contains resources for further study. As with all sections of the FAQ, your contributions are welcome!

"The Art of the Cigar"; Zino Davidoff...

"The Art of The Cigar Label"; Joe Davidson. Wellfleet, Secaucus, N.J.: 1989.

"The Book of the Havana Cigar"; Orbis Publishing, London 1983.

"Buying Guide to Premium Cigars"; Marvin Shanken, Editor. M. Shanken Communications, Inc. NY NY

"Cigar Almanac"; Rothman, Lew. Education Systems and Publications, Belleville, N.J.: 1979.

"Cigar Aficionado Magazine"; Marvin Shanken, Pub., Quarterly, NY NY

"The Cigar Companion: A Connoisseur's Guide"; Anwer Bati, Running Press, Philadelphia, PA., 1993

"Cigars: Know the Cigar"; E. P. Publishing, 1973.

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"The Gentle Art of Smoking"; Alfred H. Dunhill. Max Reinhardt, London, 1972

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8.6 Cuban Cigars references...

(special thanks to Rafael Bernardo (rafaelb@csatelite.es) for most of section 8.6 - a tremendous resource of information on Cuban cigars! Check out Rafael's great online pronunciation guide of Cuban cigar brands and box art at <http://www.cigargroup.com/pronoun>

8.6a Cuban Authenticity

One of the topics most frequently asked about Cuban cigars is that related with their authenticity.

All top quality products suffer from fraudulent imitations, and Cuban cigars have not escaped to these practices.

For this reason, manufacturers use several methods to help distinguishing real from counterfeit cigars.

1) The Cuban Government's Warranty Stamp.



Established by Law of July 16, 1912, there is a "Sello de garantía nacional de procedencia" that seals the opening of every cigar box. It is printed in four languages with green ink on a white paper (the green shade is not always the same), and there are at least three different sizes:

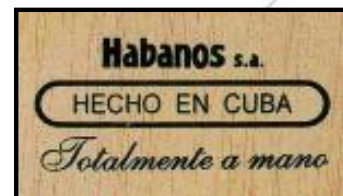
183x64mm (7.20x2.52") - 97x34mm (3.82x1.34") - 60x21mm (2.36x0.83")

It is possible to find one of the two bigger sizes glued to the box, while the smallest one is self-adhesive and is used for carton packs of five cigars.

If the cigar box comes packed inside a carton box (as, for instance, Partagas 8-9-8 and some other varnished boxes), the seal is adhered to the opening of the carton box and not to the wooden box.

2) The "irons"

There are three inscriptions printed -or more or less deeply engraved or burnt- on the bottom of the box, taking a rectangular surface of approximately 65x35mm (2.56x1.38"). They are usually printed in black ink, although it is possible to see them in golden ink (ie. Montecristo "A").



- The first, "Habanos s.a." is the name of the Cuban export company from October 1, 1994.
- The second, "HECHO EN CUBA" (in an oval) was added in 1960 to substitute the former text in English ("MADE IN CUBA").
- The third, "Totalmente a mano" (in script), was introduced in 1989 to differentiate the Cuban traditional manufacturing process from other methods (the European Union accepts the "made by hand" denomination for cigars partially made by machine).

Boxes manufactured between 1985 and 1994 have the inscription "CUBATABACO" instead of "Habanos s.a.", as well as a tobacco leaf logo on top of it, taking a surface of 65x45mm (2.56x1.77"). But this is only in theory, because it is possible to find boxes manufactured at the end of 1995 with the old Cubatabaco inscription, and they are completely genuine.

3) The "Habanos" sticker

Boxes manufactured starting from 1994 are also sealed diagonally across one of their top corners with a white strip with gold borders and the leaf emblem and the word "Habanos" in red and yellow. The sticker is self-adhesive and rectangular, measuring 102x20mm (4x0.79").



4) The factory and date codes

In addition to the three guarantee proofs described above, Cuban cigar boxes are stamped on the bottom with the factory and date codes in blue or purple ink. Depending on the Factory, these stamps can take one or two lines, and can be enclosed or not in a rectangle.

Varnished boxes packed in a carton box wear the stamp imprinted on the carton, and not on the wood.

The codes of the best known Cuban factories are as follows:

BM	Briones Montoto (Belascoain 852, Havana) -Fomerly Romeo y Julieta
CB	Carlos Balino (San Carlos 816, Havana) -Fomerly El Rey del Mundo
EL	El Laguito (2302 Calle 146, Marianao, Havana)
FL	Por Larranaga (Carlos III no. 713, Havana)
FPG	Fernando Perez German (Industria 520, Havana) -Fomerly Partagas
FR	Miguel Fernandez Roig (Zulueta 106, Havana) -Fomerly La Corona
HM	Heroes de Moncada (13402 Ave. 57, Marianao, Havana)
JM	Jose Marti (Amistad 407, Havana) -Fomerly H. Upmann
TLP	Lazaro Pena (group of factories in San Antonio)
CFGS	Cienfuegos (regional facility in Cienfuegos)
PR	Francisco Donatien (regional facility in Pinar del Roi)
SS	Sancti Spiritus (regional facility in Sancti Spiritus)
VSC	Villa Santa Clara (regional facility in Santa Clara)
TTB	Granma (regional facility in Bayamo)
TTH	Holguin (regional facility in Holguin)

What Brands are made in which factory (hand made brands only)

Cohiba:	EL, FPG, JM, BM
TRINIDAD:	EL
MONTECRISTO:	HM, JM, SS, VSC, BM, FPG, TTB, TTH, TLP, CFGS, PR, FR
ROMEO Y JULIETA:	HM, JM, SS, VSC, BM, FPG, TTB, TTH, TLP, CB, PR, FR
PARTAGAS:	HM, JM, VSC, BM, FPG, TLP, CB, FR, TTH, PR
H.UPMANN:	HM, JM, VSC, BM, TTB, TTH, TLP, FR
HOYO DE MONTECERRAY:	HM, JM, VSC, BM, FPG, TLP, FR
PUNCH:	HM, JM, SS, VSC, BM, FPG, TTB, CB, TLP, CFGS, FR
BOLIVAR:	HM, JM, SS, VSC, BM, FPG, TTB, CB, TLP, CFGS, FR
ROBINA:	JM
SANCHO PANZA:	HM, JM, SS, BM, FPG, VSC, TLP, CFGS
LA GLORIA CUBANA:	FPG
RAFEL GONZALES:	HM, SS, VSC, BM, TLP, CFGS, TTH
EL REL DEL MUNDO:	HM, SS, VSC, BM, FPG, TLP, CFGS
RAMON ALLONES:	HM, JM, VSC, CB, TLP, FR, TTB, FPG
SAN LUIS REY:	SS, BM, TLP
FONSECA:	TLP, CB
LA FLORA DE CANO:	HM, CB, TLP, VSC, FR, SS

QUAI D'ORSAY: HM, BM, TLP

The following brands are purely machine made cigars.

QUINTERO Y HERMANO

LOS STATOS

TROYA

POR LARRANAGA (Coronas, Petit Coronas, Lonsdales and Panetelas (Monte Carlo) only)

As for the date of manufacturing, it is represented by a four letter coded text. The first two letters correspond to the month and the last two to the year of manufacture, ie. "MMYY". Once "Cigar Insider" has unveiled its meaning, I feel free to reproduce here the translation from the coded letters into clear figures:

N	I	V	E	L	A	C	U	S	O
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

For instance, a box of Punch Double Coronas with the code "FR - OESA" printed on its bottom indicates that it was manufactured at the La Corona factory in April, 1996.

**A special thanks to [Morad Farahmand](#) ("ESP" from the ICG Cigar Message Boards)
for the following updated information:**

City of Havana	2000.....1999....1999.....1985-'98
(most sought after factories).....	Jan-Nov...5-12/99..1-5/99....'85-'98
.....	(4).....(3).....(2).....(1)

Briones Montoto (Romeo y Julieta)....	PEL.....xx.....	EDC.....	BM
Carlos Balino (El Rey del Mundo).....	----.....xx.....	EGD.....	CB
El Laguito.....	LOME.....xx.....	EUN.....	EL
Francisco Perez German (Partagas)....	OSU.....xx.....	EAT.....	FPG
Heroes del Moncada.....	----.....xx.....	ENI.....	HM
Jose Marti, formerly H. Upmann.....	ECA.....xx.....	ECA.....	JM
Juan Cano Sainz (Por Larranaga Miguel)---xx.....	EEO.....	PL*
Fernandez Roig, formerly La Corona...SUA.....	xx.....	EOG.....	FR

Dates:

(1) Old "Year & Month Codes" (1985-1998): NIVELACUSO=1234567890

Example: OCSC=07/97

NIVEL ACUSO

12345 67890

(2) (01/99-5/99)

1st half of 1999 Year Codes: CODIGUNETA=9876501234(this year code got stock to the CC=1999 only - Habanos changed by July '99!)

Months: UN,UE,UT,UA,UG,UI,UD,UO,UC,NU,NN,NE (JAN, FEB,DEC)

Example: EUN CC UN=El Laguito Jan 1999

CODIG UNETA

98765 01234

There are loads of provincial factories in addition to the ones shown above.

(3) (05/99-12/99) 2nd half of 1999 codes: Factory codes unknown!! Second half of '99= big mess!
EPOO=May99,ESOO=Jun99,EUOO=July99,EAOO=Aug99,E000=Sep99,
LEOO=Oct99,LLOO=Nov99,LROO=Dec99

Some where also a mix up between the two systems(of 1st and 2nd half!:(
Example from mix up - a cab. 50 of Por Larranaga PC code (month "LE" is from second half, date "CC" from first half):
TENCCLC = Artemisa I, 1999 Oct (BTW great cigar putting many of the Havana factories to shame;)

(4) 2000 Date Codes are:
ENE,FEB,MAR,ABR,MAY,JUN,JUL,AGO,SET,OCT,NOV,DIC
JAN,FEB,MAR,APR,MAY,JUN,JUL,AUG,SEP,OCT,NOV,DEC
YEAR: 00=2000, 01=2001 etc.
Example, ENE00=January 2000

Cracking the 2000 factory codes by vitolas exclusive to them (see CA web site):
LOME = El Laguito (all slender Cohibas: Lanceros, Coronas Especiales and Panetelas also Trinidad)
PEL = Romeo y Julieta (Cuaba)
ECA = H. Upmann (José Martí), (Diplomaticos), Upmans etc.
OSU = Partagas (Not Exclusive for any one brand - but most cabinets of ... Partagas Lusitanias, Bolivar Belicosos and Ramon Allones Specially Selected as well as La Gloria and CiFuentes)
SUA = La Corona (San Cristobal) although... looking at Hoyo & Punch...

Pre 1985 Notes:
Cubatabaco started date codes in 1985 - i.e., Cuabatabaco logo plus above noted factory/date codes. (later in 1994 they changed Cubatabaco logo to Habanos S.A.). In 1989, Cubatabaco introduced: "Totalmente a Mano" (Totally by Hand).
Pre '85: From 1961 the stamp read: "HECHO EN CUBA" that replaced: "MADE IN HAVANA-CUBA" that appears underside of the pre - revolutionary boxes.

1 Pre Revolutionary Years / Cubatabaco / Habanos S.A.
pre-revolutionary boxes were stamped: "MADE IN HAVANA-CUBA"
1961 this stamp was changed to: "HECHO EN CUBA"
1985 Cubatabaco started using date codes
1989 Cubatabaco introduced the stamp: "Totalmente a Mano"
1994 Cubatabaco changed to the Habanos S.A. logo.

2 NIVELACUSO

2.1 Date Code

N I V E L A C U S O
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

2.2 Factory Code

Havana Factories

BM Briones Montoto (Belascoain 852, Havana) - Romeo y Julieta
CB Carlos Balino (San Carlos 816, Havana) - El Rey del Mundo
EH El Habanero
EL El Laguito (2302 Calle 146, Marianao, Havana) - Cohiba
FL/PL/PO Por Larranaga (Carlos III no. 713, Havana)
FPG Francisco Perez German (Industria 520, Havana) - Partagas
FR Miguel Fernandez Roig (Zulueta 106, Havana) - La Corona

HM Heroes de Moncada (13402 Ave. 57, Marianao, Havana) - Jose Peidra
JCS Juan Cano Sainz - Por Larranaga
JM Jose Marti (Amistad 407, Havana) - H. Upmann
LM Las Mambisas (sub contractor only)

Provincial Factories

CFG Cienfuegos
CFGS Cienfuegos (regional facility in Cienfuegos) - Quintero y Hno
FD/PR Francisco Donatien (regional facility in Pinar del Rio)
LV Las Villas
MAM ??? Las Mambisas ???
PR Francisco Donatien (regional facility in Pinar del Rio)
RD Ricardo Donatien (regional facility in Pinar del Rio)
SLR ??? Las Mambisas ???
SS Sancti Spiritus (regional facility in Sancti Spiritus)
TLP Lazaro Pena (group of factories in San Antonio)
TTB Granma (regional facility in Bayamo)
TTH Holguin (regional facility in Holguin) - not a good factory to buy from, bodhank)
VC Villa Clara
VSC Villa Santa Clara (regional facility in Santa Clara)

3 NETAGIDOCU

3.1 Date Code

N E T A G I D O C U

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

3.2 Factory Code

Ciudad de La Habana - Havana
EGD Carlos Baliño - El Rey del Mundo
EDC Briones Montoto - Romeo y Julieta
EUN El Laguito
EAT Francisco Pérez Germán - Partagás
EOG Miguel Fernández Roig - La Corona
ENI Héroes de Moncada
ECA José Martí - H. Upmann
EEO Juan Cano Sainz - Por Larrañaga
Cienfuegos Province
OTC Cienfuegos I
OAI Cienfuegos II
OOG Cruces
OET Cumanayagua
OIN Lajas
Granma Province
NAT Bayamo
NOO Jiguaní
Holguín Province
UNG Antilla
UDI Gibara
UAN Holguín I
UCE Holguín II
UET San Andrés
La Habana Province
TEN Artemisa I

TEC Artemisa II
TND Bejucal
TOU Güines
TAE Güira I
TDC Güira II
TIO Quivicán
TCI San Antonio I
TNG San Antonio II
TGT San Antonio de las Vegas
TUD San Nicolás de Bari
TTA Santa Cruz del Norte
Pinar del Río Province
GDI Candelaria
GAO Consolación del Sur
GCN Piloto
GNU Pinar del Río
GOC San Juan (Río Seco)
Sancti-Spíritus Province
CEG Arroyo Blanco
COT Cabaiguán
CGI Fomento
CNE Guayos
CTO Jatibonico
CUN Perea
CID Sancti-Spíritus
CDU Taguasco
CAC Trinidad
CCA Zaza del Medio
Santiago de Cuba Province
AGE Santiago de Cuba
Villa Clara Province
DNU Báez
DDE Camajuaní
DIT Esperanza
DEC Manicaragua
DGC Placetas
DAI Quemado de Güines
DOD Ranchuelo
DCO Remedios
DTA Santa Clara I
DAT Santa Clara II
DNC Santo Domingo
DUN Vueltas

4 Newer Code

?GOO 05/99
EPOO 05/99
ESOO 06/99
EUOO 07/99
EAOO 08/99
EOOO 09/99
LEOO 10/99
LLOO 11/99

LROO 12/99

CCUG 05/99

CCES 06/99

CCEU 07/99

CCAЕ 08/99

CCNU 10/99

CCNN 11/99

CCNT 12/99

ELOO 01/2000

5 Newest Code

The new codes are a 5 digit alphanumeric. The first 3 digits are alpha and indicate the month. The last two digits are numeric and correspond to the last two digits of the year made. Thus, December 2000 will be DIC00, January 2001 will be ENE01.

5.1 Date Code

January ENE

February FEB

March MAR

April ABR

May MAY

June JUN

July JUL

August AGO

September SET

October OCT

November NOV

December DIC

5.2 Factory Code

ECA / SCo José Martí - H. Upmann

LOME El Laguito

OSU Francisco Perez German - Partagas

PEL Briones Montoto - Romeo y Julieta

SUA La Corona

5) The COHIBA case

Due to the sensitivity that COHIBA always carries when speaking about fakes, I'll try to clarify some aspects involved with their authenticity:

5.1) The boxes

All Cohibas (excluding carton packs of 5) come in *natural wood boxes* varnished on all sides except the bottom. There are three different kinds of boxes where Cohibas are packed:

a) BN (Boite Nature with brooch). This is the box where the three initial 1982 vitolas came (Lanceros, Coronas Especiales and Panetelas). It can hold 25 or 50 cigars, placed in conventional layers, and its corners are softened.

b) SBN-B (Semi Boite Nature with Brooch). This box is used to hold two of the three 1989 vitolas, ie. Esplendidos and Exquisitos. The corners are sharp, and the lid is flat. Cigars come in two conventional layers.

c) SLB (Slide Lid Box). This kind of box is used to keep the Robustos plus the five "1492 LINE" or SIGLO Series vitolas. Cigars come in a bundle of 25 encircled by a wide yellow cloth ribbon

The boxes must wear the authenticity seals and proofs mentioned earlier. Also, Cohibas in boxes of 25 or 50 are not cello wrapped (at least I have never seen them) and the physical appearance of the cigars (color and size uniformity, touch softness, etc.) must be impeccable. In fact, cello helps to dissimulate all kinds of imperfections. So no white boxes exist for Cohiba Lanceros, nor are they cello wrapped!

5.2) The bands

All Cohibas are banded with the classical and well-known checkered black & white top, orange bottom and the word COHIBA in the middle (with black ink over a white rectangular background) bands. "La Habana, Cuba" is printed on the center of the orange stripe from the end of 1994.

5.3) The cigars

All Cohibas are parejos, ie. no irregular shapes, but there are two of them with a clear differentiation: Lanceros and Coronas Especiales caps are finished as a "pig tail" (curly heads).

Cohiba Lanceros are the most counterfeited Cuban cigars. Their format (7 1/2" x 38) makes them very difficult to manufacture even for the best rollers with the best tobacco leaves, so a bogus is much more difficult to make... and to smoke!. False Lanceros have generally a so tight draw that makes them nearly impossible to smoke.

6) Other clues

When receiving a box of Havanas, if any of the marks mentioned in paragraphs 1 to 4 is missing, you can be sure that it does not contain genuine hand made cigars. Counterfeit Havana cigars are made not only in Cuba, but in Dominican Republic and other countries.

The cedar sheet that separates the two layers of cigars in a 25 cigar box, must fill completely the opening of the box and one of its corners should be curvilinearly stripped. A shorter sheet with a straight cut corner is a symptom of falsification.

Fake Havanas can wear authentic bands. Check for their perfect alignment in the box, as well as for the uniformity of colour tones in their wrappers.

The final (and traumatic) test: If the doubt still persists, you can always sacrifice one of your stogies and perform an autopsy that for sure will tell you the truth (g).

8.6b Cuban Cigar Sizes, Brands, Names

There are not less than 80 different formats of hand-made and machine-made Havana cigars, most of them are described in this section. Their lengths vary from 3 7/8 to 9 1/4 inches, while their ring gauges vary between 26 and 52.

Some of the cigar names, like Panetelas, are used to denominate vitolas in different Havana brands, although their measures are not always the same. For instance, a Romeo y Julieta Panetela measures 4 5/8" x 34, while a Cohiba Panetela measures 4 1/2" x 26.

On the other hand, cigars of the same format receive different commercial names. For example, a 7" x 47 cigar, usually known as Churchill, can be named as Prince of Wales, Coronas Gigantes or Esplendidos depending on whether has it being manufactured by Romeo y Julieta, Bolivar or Cohiba, respectively.

Fortunately, there is a comprehensive relation of names for each Havana format, that used by the people who makes them at the factory. They employ a unique denomination or "VITOLA DE GALERA" to distinguish each type of cigar.

Here are 73 of these denominations, divided into two groups. The first group corresponds to the vitolas made exclusively by hand, while the second group includes those vitolas made by hand and/or machine. In both cases they are listed in alphabetic order. A list of hand-made Cuban cigars currently manufactured follows the first group, while the second group includes some examples of different brands for each type of vitola.

Take into account that not all the brands/names are worldwide distributed, so their availability depends on the respective commercialization areas.

Ia. HAND MADE ONLY VITOLAS

=====

- 1) ALMUERZOS - 5 1/8" x 40 (130 x 15.88 mm)
- 2) BRITANICAS - 5 3/8" x 46 (137 x 18.26 mm)
- 3) CADETES - 4 1/2" x 36 (115 x 14.29 mm)
- 4) CAMPANAS - 5 1/2" x 52 (140 x 20.64 mm)
- 5) CARLOTAS - 5 5/8" x 35 (143 x 13.89 mm)
- 6) CAROLINAS - 4 3/4" x 26 (121 x 10.32 mm)
- 7) CAZADORES - 6 3/8" x 44 (162 x 17.46 mm)
- 8) CERVANTES - 6 1/2" x 42 (165 x 16.67 mm)
- 9) CORONAS - 5 5/8" x 42 (142 x 16.67 mm)
- 10) CORONAS GORDAS - 5 5/8" x 46 (143 x 18.26 mm)
- 11) CORONAS GRANDES - 6 1/8" x 42 (155 x 16.67 mm)
- 12) COSACOS - 5 3/8" x 42 (135 x 16.67 mm)
- 13) DALIAS - 6 3/4" x 43 (170 x 17.07 mm)
- 14) DELICADOS - 7 1/2" x 38 (192 x 15.08 mm)
- 15) DELICADOS EXTRA - 7 1/4" x 36 (185 x 14.29 mm)
- 16) ENTREACTOS - 3 7/8" x 30 (100 x 11.91 mm)
- 17) ESPECIALES - 5 1/4" x 45 (134 x 17.86 mm)
- 18) EXQUISITOS - 5 3/4" x 45 (146 x 17.86 mm)
- 19) FAVORITOS - 4 3/4" x 42 (121 x 16.67 mm)
- 20) FRANCISCANOS - 4 1/2" x 40 (116 x 15.88 mm)
- 21) FRANCISCOS - 5 5/8" x 44 (143 x 17.46 mm)
- 22) GENEROSOS - 5 1/4" x 42 (133 x 16.67 mm)
- 23) GRAN CORONA - 9 1/4" x 47 (235 x 18.65 mm)
- 24) HERMOSOS No.4 - 5" x 48 (127 x 19.05 mm)
- 25) JULIETA 2 - 7" x 47 (178 x 18.65 mm)
- 26) LONDRES - 5" x 40 (126 x 15.88 mm)
- 27) MAREVAS - 5 1/8" x 42 (129 x 16.67 mm)
- 28) MINUTOS - 4 3/8" x 42 (110 x 16.67 mm)
- 29) NINFAS - 7" x 33 (178 x 13.10 mm)
- 30) (LAGUITO) No.1 - 7 1/2" x 38 (192 x 15.08 mm)
- 31) (LAGUITO) No.2 - 6" x 38 (152 x 15.08 mm)
- 32) (LAGUITO) No.3 - 4 1/2" x 26 (115 x 10.32 mm)
- 33) PALMAS - 6 3/4" x 33 (170 x 13.10 mm)
- 34) PALMITAS - 6" x 32 (152 x 12.70 mm)
- 35) PANETELAS - 4 5/8" x 34 (117 x 13.49 mm)

- 36) PANETELAS LARGAS - 6 7/8" x 28 (175 x 11.11 mm)
 37) PAREJOS - 6 1/2" x 38 (166 x 15.08 mm)
 38) PERLAS - 4" x 40 (102 x 15.88 mm)
 39) PETIT BOUQUET - 4" x 43 (102 x 17.07 mm)
 40) PIRAMIDES - 6 1/8" x 52 (156 x 20.64 mm)
 41) PLACERAS - 4 7/8" x 34 (125 x 13.49 mm)
 42) PROMINENTES - 7 5/8" x 49 (194 x 19.45 mm)
 43) ROBUSTOS - 4 7/8" x 50 (124 x 19.84 mm)
 44) SEOANE - 5" x 36 (126 x 14.29 mm)
 45) SUPERIORES - 5 3/4" x 40 (146 x 15.88 mm)
 46) TACOS - 6 1/4" x 47 (158 x 18.65 mm)
 47) TRABUCOS - 4 3/8" x 38 (110 x 15.08 mm)

Ib. LIST OF HAND MADE CUBAN CIGARS

NOTES

Cigar Names are generally referred to in plural, while their formats are written in singular (exceptions are Londres, the Spanish name for London, and Cervantes, the Spanish writer).

Some of the cigars mentioned here can have different presentations under the same name (with or without band, wrapped or not in cellophane, tubed, etc.) and in some cases can also be made by machine. In such a case there is always a difference between hand- and machine made cigars, as in their names, format and/or presentation. Examples:

- 1) R&J Romeo Nos. 1, 2 & 3, when made by hand, are denominated "de Luxe" (their formats are also slightly different from those made by machine).
- 2) Hand-made Punch Petit Coronations are Franciscanos (4 1/2" x 40), while their Machine-made counterparts are Coronitas (4 5/8" x 40). Both cigars come in aluminum tubes.
- 3) H-M R&J Panetelas correspond to the Panetela format (4 5/8" x 34), while the M-M version correspond to the Sport format (4 5/8" x 35) and come cello wrapped.
- 4) H-M H.Upmann Medias Coronas are Marevas, while the M-M are Eminentes.

Here is the list of Hand-made Cuban cigars currently manufactured. This relation is mainly based in catalogues published by Habanos, s.a. and the sizes of the cigars are described in terms of their vitolas de galera that have just been described:

BRAND =====	NAME =====	VITOLA DE GALERA =====
BOLIVAR	Belicosos Finos	Campana
	Bonitas	Londres
	Coronas	Corona
	Coronas Extra	Francisco
	Coronas Gigantes	Julietta 2
	Coronas Junior	Minuto
	Demi Tasse	Entreacto
	Gold Medal	Cervantes

Inmensas
 Lonsdales
 Palmas
 Petit Coronas
 Regentes
 Royal Coronas
 Suprema Churchill

Dalia
 Cervantes
 Ninfa
 Mareva
 Placera
 Robusto
 Julieta 2

COHIBA

Coronas Especiales
 Esplendidos
 Exquisitos
 Lanceros
 Panetelas
 Robustos
 Siglo I
 Siglo II
 Siglo III
 Siglo IV
 Siglo V

Laguito No.2
 Julieta 2
 Seoane
 Laguito No.1
 Laguito No.3
 Robusto
 Perla
 Mareva
 Corona Grande
 Corona Gorda
 Dalia

CUABA

Exclusivos
 Generosos
 Tradicionales
 Divinos

Exquisito
 Generoso
 Favorito
 Petit Bouquet

LA FLOR DE CANO

Coronas
 Diademas
 Gran Corona
 Short Churchills

Mareva
 Julieta 2
 Corona Gorda
 Robusto

FONSECA

Cosacos
 Delicias
 Fonseca No.1
 Invictos
 K.D.T. Cadetes

Cosaco
 Standard-Mano
 Cazador
 Especial
 Cadetes

LA GLORIA CUBANA

Cetros
 Medaille d'Or No.1
 Medaille d'Or No.2
 Medaille d'Or No.3
 Medaille d'Or No.4
 Minutos
 Tainos
 Tapados
 Sabrosos

Cervantes
 Delicado Extra
 Dalia
 Panetela Larga
 Palmita
 Franciscano
 Julieta 2
 Cosaco
 Corona Grande

H. UPMANN

Amatistas
 Cinco Bocas
 Connoisseur No.1
 Coronas
 Coronas Major
 Coronas Minor
 Cristales

Superior
 Cervantes
 Hermoso No.4
 Corona
 Mareva
 Franciscano
 Cosaco

Lonsdales
Magnum 46
Medias Coronas
Monarcas
Monarchs
Noellas
Petit Coronas
Petit Palatinos
Royal Coronas
Short Coronas
Sir Winston
Super Coronas
Upmann No.1
Upmann No.2
Upmann No.3
Upmann No.4

Cervantes
Corona Gorda
Mareva
Julieta 2
Julieta 2
Cosaco
Mareva
Cadetes
Corona
Cosaco
Julieta 2
Corona Gorda
Cervantes
Piramide
Corona
Mareva

HOYO DE MONTERREY

Churchills
Concorde
Coronations
Double Coronas
Epicure No.1
Epicure No.2
Hoyo Coronas
Jeanne d'Arc
Le Hoyo des Dieux
Le Hoyo du Dauphin
Le Hoyo du Depute
Le Hoyo du Gourmet
Le Hoyo du Maire
Le Hoyo du Prince
Le Hoyo du Roi
Longos
Margaritas
Odeon
Opera
Particulares
Petit Coronations
Royal Coronations
Short Hoyo Coronas
Versailles

Julieta 2
Julieta 2
Mareva
Prominente
Corona Gorda
Robusto
Corona
Carlota
Corona Grande
Laguito No.2
Trabuco
Palma
Entreacto
Almuerzo
Corona
Ninfa
Carolina
Laguito No.2
Corona
Gran Corona
Franciscano
Corona
Mareva
Palma

MONTECRISTO

A
B
Especial
Especial No.2
Joyitas
No.1
No.2
No.3
No.4
No.5
Tubos

Gran Corona
Cosaco
Laguito No.1
Laguito No.2
Laguito No.3
Cervantes
Piramide
Corona
Mareva
Perla
Corona Grande

PARTAGAS

8-9-8
 8-9-8
 Astorias
 Charlottes
 Churchills de Luxe
 Coronas
 Coronas A. Mejorado
 Coronas Grandes
 Filipos
 Lonsdales
 Lusitanias
 Palmas Grandes
 Partagas de Partagas No.1
 Petit Coronas
 Presidentes
 Ramonitas
 Royales
 Seleccion Privada No.1
 Serie D No.4
 Serie du Connaisseur No.1
 Serie du Connaisseur No.2
 Serie du Connaisseur No.3
 Shorts
 Tres Petit Coronas

Corona Grande
 Dalia
 Cosaco
 Carlota
 Julieta 2
 Corona
 Corona
 Corona Grande
 Placera
 Cervantes
 Prominente
 Ninfa
 Dalia
 Mareva
 Taco
 Carolina
 Londres
 Dalia
 Robusto
 Delicado
 Parejo
 Carlota
 Minuto
 Franciscano

POR LARRANAGA

Coronitas
 Small Coronas
 Mareva

Cervantes
 Franciscano

PUNCH

Black Prince
 Churchills
 Coronas
 Coronations
 Diademas Extra
 Double Coronas
 Gran Coronas
 Margaritas
 Monarcas
 Nacionales
 Ninfas
 Panetelas
 Panetelas Grandes
 Petit Coronas del Punch
 Petit Coronations
 Petit Punch
 Petit Punch de Luxe
 Presidentes
 Punchinellos
 Punch Punch
 Royal Coronations
 Royal Selection No.11
 Royal Selection No.12

Corona Gorda
 Julieta 2
 Corona
 Mareva
 Gran Corona
 Prominente
 Superior
 Carolina
 Julieta 2
 Cosaco
 Ninfa
 Panetela
 Ninfa
 Mareva
 Franciscano
 Perla
 Perla
 Mareva
 Panetela
 Corona Gorda
 Corona
 Corona Gorda
 Mareva

Seleccion de Luxe No.2
Souvenirs de Luxe
Super Selection No.1
Super Selection No.2
Tres Petit Coronas

Mareva
Londres
Corona Grande
Corona Gorda
Minuto

QUAI D'ORSAY

Coronas Claro
Coronas Claro Claro
Gran Corona
Imperiales
Panetelas

Corona
Corona
Corona Grande
Julieta 2
Ninfa

QUINTERO Y HERMANO

Churchills
Coronas
Coronas Selectas
Medias Coronas
Medias Coronas Selectas

Cervantes
Corona
Corona
Londres
Londres

RAFAEL GONZALEZ

Cigarritos
Coronas Extra
Demi Tasse
Lonsdales
Panetelas
Petit Coronas
Petit Lonsdales
Slenderellas
Tres Petit Lonsdales

Laguito No.3
Corona Gorda
Entreacto
Cervantes
Panetela
Mareva
Mareva
Panetela Larga
Franciscano

RAMON ALLONES

8-9-8
8-9-8
Allones Specially Selected
Coronas
Gigantes
Petit Coronas
Ramonitas
Small Club Coronas

Corona
Dalia
Robusto
Corona
Prominente
Mareva
Carolina
Minuto

EL REY DEL MUNDO

Choix Supreme
Coronas de Luxe
Demi Tasse
Elegantes
Gran Corona
Grandes de Espana
Isabel
Lonsdales
Lunch Club
Panetelas Largas
Petit Coronas
Petit Lonsdales
Senoritas
Tainos

Hermoso No.4
Corona
Entreacto
Panetela Larga
Corona Gorda
Delicado
Carlota
Cervantes
Franciscano
Panetela Larga
Mareva
Mareva
Laguito No.3
Julieta 2

ROMEO Y JULIETA

Cazadores

Cazador

Cedros de Luxe No.1
Cedros de Luxe No.2
Cedros de Luxe No.3
Celestiales Finos
Churchills
Clemenceaus
Club Kings
Coronas
Coronas Grandes
Exhibicion No.3
Exhibicion No.4
Julietas
Nacionales
Palmas Reales
Panetelas
Petit Coronas
Petit Julietas
Petit Princess
Plateados de Romeo
Prince of Wales
Romeo No.1 de Luxe
Romeo No.2 de Luxe
Romeo No.3 de Luxe
Shakespeares
Tres Petit Coronas

Cervantes
Corona
Mareva
Britanica
Julietta 2
Julietta 2
Mareva
Corona
Corona Grande
Corona Gorda
Hermoso No.4
Franciscano
Cosaco
Ninfa
Panetela
Mareva
Entreacto
Perla
Mareva
Julietta 2
Corona
Mareva
Franciscano
Panetela Larga
Franciscano

SAINT LUIS REY

Coronas
Lonsdales
Regios
Serie A

Corona
Cervantes
Hermoso No.4
Corona Gorda

SANCHO PANZA

Bachilleres
Belicosos
Coronas
Coronas Gigantes
Dorados
Molinos
Non Plus
Sanchos
Tronquitos

Franciscano
Campana
Corona
Julietta 2
Cervantes
Cervantes
Mareva
Gran Corona
Corona

VEGAS ROBAINA

Don Alejandro
Unicos
Clasicos
Familiares
Famosos

Prominente
Piramide
Cervantes
Corona
Hermoso No.4

II. HAND AND/OR MACHINE MADE VITOLAS

=====

48) BELVEDERES - 4 7/8" x 39 (125 x 15.48 mm)

BO Belvederes, HU Belvederes, PA Belvederes, PA Habaneros, PL

Belvederes, PU Belvederes, RA Belvederes, RJ Belvederes, RJ Favoritas,
RJ Regalias de la Habana

49) CHICOS - 4 1/8" x 29 (106 x 11.51 mm)
BO Chicos, PA Bonitos Extra Mild, PA Chicos, PL Curritos, PL Juanitos,
PU Cigarrillos, QU Puritos, RA Bits of Havana, RM Variedades

50) CONCHITAS - 5" x 35 (127 x 13.89 mm)
BO Panetelas, PA Panetelas, PA Princess, RA Panetelas

51) CONSERVAS - 5 3/4" x 44 (145 x 17.46 mm)
HU Royal Coronas, HM Royal Coronations, PU Royal Coronations

52) CORONITAS - 4 5/8" x 40 (117 x 15.88 mm)
HU Aromaticos, HU Coronas Minor, HU Singulares, HM Petit Coronations,
PA Coronas Junior, PA Regalias de la Reina Bueno, PU Petit Coronations,
RJ Clarines, RJ Regalias de Londres, RJ Romeo No.3

53) CREMAS - 5 1/2" x 40 (140 x 15.88 mm)
BO Champions, HU Especiales, HU Majestic, HM Palmas Extra,
PA Partagas de Luxe, PA Super Partagas, PU Palmas Reales, RA Ramondos,
RJ Romeo No.1

54) CRISTALES - 5 7/8" x 41 (150 x 16.27 mm)
FC Selectos

55) CULEBRAS - 5 3/4" x 39 (146 x 15.48 mm)
HU Culebras, PA Culebras, RJ Culebras

56) DELICIOSOS - 6 1/4" x 35 (159 x 13.89 mm)
HU El Prado, PL Largos de Larranaga, PL Montecarlos

57) DEMI TASSE - 3 7/8" x 32 (100 x 12.70 mm)
HU Preciosas

58) DEMI TIP - 5" x 29 (126 x 11.51 mm)
PA Demi-Tip

59) EMINENTES - 5 1/4" x 44 (132 x 17.46 mm)
BO Petit Coronas Especiales, HU Coronas Major, HU Medias Coronas,
PA Coronas Senior, PA Eminentes, PA Petit Coronas Especiales,
PA Petit Coronas Tubos

60) EPICURES - 4 3/8" x 35 (110 x 13.89 mm)
HU Epicures

61) INFANTES - 3 7/8" x 37 (98 x 14.68 mm)
PA Petit Bouquets

62) NACIONALES - 5 1/2" x 40 (140 x 15.88 mm)
LS Brevas, LS Cremas, LS Selectos, QU Brevas, QU Nacionales

63) NATURALES - 6 1/8" x 37 (155 x 14.68 mm)

HU Naturals

- 64) PERFECTOS - 5" x 44 (127 x 17.46 mm)
PA Perfectos, RJ Perfectos
- 65) PETIT - 4 1/4" x 31 (108 x 12.30 mm)
HU Petit Upmann
- 66) PETIT CETROS - 5 1/8" x 40 (129 x 15.88 mm)
HM Exquisitos, PA Aristocrats, PA Londres en Cedro, PA Londres Extras,
PA Londres Finos, PA Parisianos, PA Personales, PA Petit Partagas,
PU Exquisitos, RJ Coronitas, RJ Coronitas en Cedro, RJ Plateados de
Romeo, RJ Exquisitos
- 67) PETIT CORONAS - 5 1/8" x 42 (129 x 16.67 mm)
HU Aromaticos, HU Exquisitos, HU Kings, HU Regalias, HM Coronations,
HM Souvenirs de Luxe, PA Mille Fleurs, PL Lolas en Cedro, PU
Coronations, PU Souvenirs de Luxe, RA Mille Fleurs, RJ Club Kings, RJ
Excepcionales, RJ Mille Fleurs, RJ Romeo No.2
- 68) PREFERIDOS - 5" x 38 (127 x 15.08 mm)
- 69) SPORTS - 4 5/8" x 35 (117 x 13.89 mm)
RJ Panetelas, RJ Sport Largos
- 70) STANDARD - 4 7/8" x 40 (123 x 15.88 mm)
FC Petit Coronas, FC Predilectos Tubulares, FO Delicias,
LS Delirios, LS Dobles, PL Super Cedros, QU Londres, QU Londres Extra,
TR Coronas Club Tubulares
- 71) TOPPERS - 6 1/4" x 39 (160 x 15.48 mm)
PA Toppers, RA Delgados, RA Toppers, RJ Montagues
- 72) UNIVERSALES - 5 1/4" x 38 (134 x 15.08 mm)
TR Universales
- 73) VEGUERITOS - 5" x 37 (127 x 14.68 mm)
FC Preferidos, PL Panetelas, QU Panetelas, RG Panetelas Extra

The meaning of the Brand abbreviations is as follows:

BO: Bolivar
FC: La Flor de Cano
FO: Fonseca
HM: Hoyo de Monterrey
HU: H. Upmann
LS: Los Statos de Luxe
PA: Partagas
PL: Por Larranaga
PU: Punch
QU: Quintero y Hermano
RA: Ramon Allones

RG: Rafael Gonzalez
RJ: Romeo y Julieta
RM: Rey del Mundo
TR: Troya

9.0 The Readers Speak!

This section is dedicated to the "random" opinions of a.s.c.'s readers on their favorite smokes. I compiled these comments over the past year, and tried to include any short, positive comments which described a particular cigar's character in 25 words or less. Note that it is not intended to be a complete list of fine cigars, just some favorites...

As far as fine cigars go, I prefer Montecristo #4's, When I'm really celebrating, it's a #2...

I would suggest the Macanudo Portofino. Quite mild yet flavorful, readily available, consistent quality. A bit expensive (over \$3 here) but worth it IMO. When you are ready to move to something spicier try the Fuente (maybe the Maduro wrapper) or a Hoyo de Monterrey Excalibur, which I find *excellent* although the spiciness sometimes gets to me.

For consistency of taste and flavor, nothing beats a Macanudo or even a Partagas. The companies that own them are just too big and have lots of money so they can buy the many blends necessary to insure consistency.

The Partegas is a good cigar and the Vintage is even better. It's less harsh as it is aged much longer. It costs about \$8.00 though.

Here's what comes to the top of my head for favorites... Cuesta-Rey 1884 maduro, JR Ultimate double corona, double maduro, Punch (Cuban) double corona, Montecristo (Cuban) #2

Try a Macanudo Ascot. They are mild and are small in size. One could almost get away with smoking them in public (where smoking is allowed). It seems that a cigar of any size attracts a lot of attention and the Ascots are just a bit larger than a cigarette.

I would recommend a box of Royal Jamaican Maduro wrapped Coronas. I have only been smoking for about a year, but these medium priced smokes have remained my favorite non-Cuban cigar.

I ordered 20 El Ray del Mundo Robustos a few weeks ago. They were 2 bucks each. They are the best 2\$ smoke I've ever had. In fact, I'd rate them as one of the best cigars I've tried. Very smooth and flavorful.

Fonseca 8-9-8. Very smooth and very nice. Good tobacco flavors. Yet light enough for a first time smoke.

Griffins. 1000 is A great first time smoke. Creamy, smooth light. My personal favorite "light" smoke.

I just wanted to say that I smoked a Santa Rosa Lonsdale size cigar for \$1.95 and it was great. I often overlook Santa Rosa when I'm cigar hunting but I won't anymore. It has a pleasant aroma and is smooth for being Honduran.

To give you an idea of how much I like these cigars, I've gone through eight Padrons and three Rey del Mundos (I'm happily chewing on the third as I type) In the last 5 days, and I'm usually a cigar-a-day smoker.

I tried a Montecristo #1 from the Dominican Republic today, purchased at De La Concha on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. It was a pleasant-tasting cigar, but was tough to draw and had a bitter finish.

I tried a Carribean Cigar Signature Collection Torpedo recently - thought I was in heaven! Rich and creamy with a touch of chocolate and nuttiness, this was one great smoke!

Grabbed a pair of Series "D" Robustos for a change of pace from the Ashtons. Full flavor (no doubt due to the ring size) and an easy draw.

I have tasted chocolate very distinctly in several Cuban cigars, but never a non-Cuban. Try a Romeo Y Julieta Churchill - They taste just like Heath bars!

The Partagas. This is the cigar I can't quite get enough of. This cigar in a #10 is a permanent part of my humidor. I've tried the Partagas Limited Reserve (at over two times the price) and still come back to this cigar. A nice smoke indeed.

When I started, half the fun was trying different kinds. Many of the previous suggestions: Macanudos, Arturo Fuentes are great. I like Ashtons, Ramon Allones and Upmans. For a great smoke try Dianas, Avos, Zinos, etc. Montesino, and Ashton Vintage... Very nice cigars. Lots of that "toasty" flavor I like.

Hoyo de Monterrey (Havana) - A powerful smoke. Really rich. Like a super intense Fuente Hemmingway.

I started with an Arturo Fuente 8-5-8 in a maduro wrapper, and have yet to find a finer cigar for the money! They are wonderful.

I like almost all the Ashtons. The Vintage Cabinet Selection, is by far the best, but it is quite expensive. (I forget the exact price, maybe \$6-7.) The 8-9-8 is also excellent, and it is probably a better bargain for your money. These cigars are mild with an almost woody taste.

I tend to enjoy Macanudos myself, but I would also try a Partagas for a little different flavor. I would also have to suggest something in a Royal Jamaica.

My current favorite is the Nat Sherman Hunter (6 inches and about 43 ring gauge). A very satisfying smoke and I love the slightly sweet wrapper.

The Arturo Fuentes Masterpieces are all pretty good - and the Hemmingway series are really tough to beat, especially for the price. If you don't have quite the time needed for the bigger versions, try the Signatures. Delightful.

Yep, I sure like the Fuente Rothchilds, little 4.5" about 50 ring and white ash and quite nice smoke.

Canellas are wonderful Mexican cigars. I don't think they're available in the states. They also have a much inferior machine made that's lousy, of course. but the quality hand rolled are beautiful.

A Dominican Cigar, shipped to Paris for distribution. Pleiades are quite wonderful cigars, though extremely mild and delicate in flavor. I particularly like the Sirius (a classic lonsdale), the Pluton (a robusto) and the Aldeberon (a double corona of epic proportion). Lightly spicy, sometimes a bit herbaceous, nice toffee like notes with a a short, but pleasant finish.

If you're looking for stronger cigars, I think you should try a nice Honduran smoke. Hoyo Excaliburs are very nice, and I've had robustos made by Don Tomas. These are especially strong, I've found. I like them both.

Punch Presidente is a very rich and flavorful cigar. It represents the one of the finest Honduran cigars made. Significantly strengthened near the end. Very smooth draw and, quite a complex flavor.

By far IMO the A.F. Churchill is the best Dominican cigar that I've experienced. I was really impressed on how well it smoked. It was truly pleasurable, beautifully constructed, burned evenly and smoked very smoothly. I sensed hints of mint and cedar along with a warm coffee finish.

I had a Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure #1 (Havana) last year and it sent a blast, a big blast of taste from start to finish. The peppery spiciness really kicked in about half way down the cigar.

An old favorite of mine, and all time champ in unlit scent, is the Partagas Maduro.

Tonight I had my first A. Fuente double chateau and for an hour and a half I was in heaven.

The Te-Amo Robusto is one hell of a great cigar. It has everything I'm looking for in a full bodied heavy ring gauge cigar.

The Punch was wonderful. I have never smoked a cigar like it. It was like a combination of the flavors of an A.F. 8-5-8 and a J. R. Ultimate.

Arturo Fuente Don Carlos #3 (corona size). This cigar is heaven on earth!!! As good as the Cuban coronas I've smoked. The richest tasting cigar I've ever experienced.

El Rey del Mundo - Robusto Larga (maduro)...dark, beautiful wrapper, great draw and flavor (what I as a beginner would call complex and creamy for lack of the proper adjectives).

Henry Clay Brevia Fina. Nice wrapper, dark and oily for a natural. Strong taste. Rich flavors of roasted coffee with pepper and other spices. One of the strongest Dominicans I've tried.

I recently tried a Joya de Nicaragua No. 6 lonsdale in the natural wrapper. It was a very enjoyable cigar--medium to full bodied with a spicy, chocolatey flavor. I would heartily recommend it.

9.1 Letterman, Burns, and Limbaugh

Questions concerning these three popular cigar smokers come up all too often in alt.smokers.cigars. Just to set the record straight:

- David Letterman Smokes Cuban Cohibas. His favorite size is Robusto.
 - George Burns smoked El Productos. Why? Because they don't go out while he's smoking on stage.
 - In a recent radio broadcast, Rush Limbaugh mentioned the following as his "regular" smokes... Arturo Fuente (any Fuentes!), Partagas (particularly the #10), Davidoff Double-R, and La Gloria Cubanas...
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END OF DOCUMENT

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