

## **Cigar School:**

### **Tobacco growing regions:**

Today, fine tobacco is grown all over the world in almost every variation of soil. The finest is considered to be from Cuba's Vuelta Abajo area in the Pinar del Rio region of the country's western side. The tobacco is strong and full bodied with spices and aromatic flavors. Another prominent tobacco growing region is the Dominican Republic's city of Santiago in the northern half of the country. Most of their tobacco is derived from Cuban seeds; although it is not as strong it is quite full-flavored. Ecuador is another country that produces high quality tobacco. The country produces both filler and wrapper tobacco which is shade-and sun-grown. Their tobacco is mild and less robust in strength and flavor than the originals. The Central American Countries of Honduras and Nicaragua produce fine tobacco with high-quality Cuban seeds and Connecticut-seeds. They both produce full bodied tobacco with strong, spicy flavors. In Mexico's San Andreas Valley is the famous sun-grown variant of Sumatra-seed tobacco which serves as a wrapper for many cigars. Cigars made in Mexico are usually made from 100 percent local tobacco. In the United States, north of Hartford, Connecticut the finest wrapper leaf in the world, the Connecticut, is produced. It is a brownish-yellow leaf that creates a mild to medium bodied smoke. Cameroon is another prominent area where high-quality tobacco wrappers are grown. Their colors range from greenish brown to dark brown. Cameroon usually uses Sumatra seeds imported from Indonesia. All Sumatra-variety tobacco comes from the Indonesian islands. They are used as wrapper leaves and are usually dark brown.

### **Cigar Terms:**

**Aficionado**-- Cigar smoker afflicted with delusions of grandeur.

**Amarillo**-- A yellow wrapper leaf grown under shade.

**American Market Selection**-- Abbreviated AMS, a seldom-used term created by the major importer of Cuban cigars in the 1950s to designate claro-colored wrappers. (Also see English Market Selection.)

**Amatista**-- A glass jar containing 50 cigars (occasionally 25), sealed to be sold "factory fresh."

**Band**-- A ring of paper wrapped around the closed head of most cigars. Legend says that cigar bands were invented by Catherine the Great or by Spanish nobles to keep their gloves from being stained. Others credit this invention to a Dutch advertising and promotion genius named Gustave Bock, who stated that the band helped keep the cigar wrapper together. Cigar bands are often printed with the name of the brand, country of origin, and/or indication that the cigar is hand-rolled. They also often have colorful graphics, which have made them popular collectors' items. In many folk tales, a cigar

band served as a wedding band in impromptu ceremonies. For the record, it is equally appropriate to leave the band on while smoking a cigar or to remove it, as long as the cigar's wrapper leaf is not torn when the band is removed.

**Barrel** -- The main body or shank of the cigar.

**Blend**-- The mixture of different types of tobacco in a cigar, including up to five types of filler leaves, a binder leaf and an outer wrapper.

**Bloom** (also called Plume)-- A naturally occurring phenomenon in the cigar aging process, also called plume, caused by the oils that exude from the tobacco. It appears as a fine white powder and can be brushed off. Not to be confused with mold, which is bluish and stains the wrapper.

**Blue Mold**-- *Peronospora tabacina* is a fast moving, airborne fungus that can ruin a tobacco field in just a few days. It flourishes in cool, cloudy weather with light rain and riddles tobacco leaves with small round blemishes.

**Boite Nature**-- The cedar box in which many cigars are sold.

**Book Style** (also, Booking)-- A rolling method by which the cigarmaker lays the filler leaves atop one another, then rolls them up like a scroll. Book style, or booking, is common in Honduras. The alternate style is based on the old Cuban method called entubar (see entry).

**Bouquet**-- The smell, or "nose," of a fine cigar. Badly stored cigars lose their bouquet.

**Box**-- The container used to package cigars. There are several traditional styles:  
-- cabinet selection refers to wood boxes with a sliding top, designed to hold 25 or 50 cigars.  
-- 8-9-8 refers to a round-sided box specifically designed to accommodate three rows of cigars-- eight on top, nine in the middle, eight on the bottom.  
-- flat top, or 13-topper, is the flat rectangular box most popular today, with 13 cigars on top and 12 on the bottom. divided by a spacer.

**Box-pressed**-- The slightly squarish appearance taken on by cigars packed tightly in a box.

**Bullet Cutter**-- A cigar punch to open a cigar.

**Bull's-Eye Piercer**-- A device for opening the closed head of a cigar before smoking. It creates a circular opening like a target's bull's eye.

**Bulk**-- A large pile of tobacco leaves in which fermentation occurs.

**Bunch**-- Up to four different types of filler tobacco that are blended to create the body of

the cigar. The bunch is held together by the binder.

**Bundle**-- A packaging method, designed with economy in mind, that uses a cellophane overwrap. It usually contains 25 or 50 cigars, traditionally without bands. Bundles, oftentimes seconds of premium brands, are usually less expensive than boxed cigars.

**Burros**-- The piles, or bulks, in which cigar tobacco is fermented. They can be as tall as a person and are carefully monitored. If the heat level inside them gets too high (over 110°F), the burro is taken apart to slow the fermentation.

**Cabinet Selection**-- Cigars packed in a wooden box rather than the standard cardboard or paper-covered cigar boxes. These are preferable when buying cigars for aging.

**Candela**-- A bright green shade of wrapper, achieved by a heat-curing process that fixes the chlorophyll content of the wrapper while it's still in the barn. Also referred to as double claro.

**Cap**-- A circular piece of wrapper leaf placed at the head of the cigar to secure the wrapper.

**Capa**-- The cigar's wrapper.

**Carotene**-- A naturally occurring compound found in aged cigars.

**Case**-- In the cigar production process, workers "case," or slightly moisten, aged tobacco so that it will be easy for hand rollers to work with.

**Cedar**-- The kind of wood that is used to make most cigar boxes and humidors.

**Chaveta** (roller's knife)-- The knife used in a cigar factory for cutting the wrapper leaf.

**Cigarillos**-- Favored by some aficionados and scorned by others, these thin, three-inch cigars, popular in Europe, are generally machine-made, and many brands use homogenized wrappers or binders.

**Clear Havana**-- A cigar made in the United States prior to the embargo with Cuban tobacco.

**Corojos**-- Plants that are chosen to provide wrapper leaves and are grown under a gauze sunscreen.

**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.

**Cuban Seed**-- Usually refers to plants grown in non-Cuban countries with seeds from

Cuba.

**Cubatabaco**-- Formerly the worldwide distribution company for Cuban cigars; now called Habanos S.A.

**Draw**-- The amount of air that gets pulled through a lit cigar. It can be too easy (hot) or too tight (plugged).

**English Market Selection**-- Abbreviated EMS, a term used to designate a natural color wrapper, not claro or lighter shades, nor maduro or darker shades. In the United Kingdom, an EMS sticker found on boxes of Cuban cigars refers to inventory that has been vetted by Hunters & Frankau, cigar distributors. (Also see American Market Selection.)

**Entubar**-- A rolling method that originated in Cuba. Rather than booking (see entry above) the filler leaves, the roller folds each individual filler leaf back on itself, then bunches the leaves together. Proponents of this method say it creates superior air flow through the cigar, which results in an even draw and burn.

**Escaparates**-- Cooling cabinets in which cigars are kept at the factory for a few weeks after they have been rolled.

**Fermentation**-- After harvest, workers gather the tobacco leaves in large bulks (or piles), moistening the leaves and allowing them to ferment. Temperatures may reach 140°F before the bulk is broken down and restacked until fermentation stops naturally. This process, called working the bulk, releases ammonia from the tobacco.

**Figurado**-- A Spanish term that refers to cigars with shapes sizes, such as belicosos, torpedos, pyramids, perfectos and culebras.

**Filler Leaves**-- The individual tobacco leaves used in the body of the cigar. A fine cigar usually contains between two and five different types of filler tobacco.

**Finish**-- A tasting term. It refers to the taste that lingers on your palate after a puff. Mild cigars do not have much finish, either in terms of length or complexity. But stronger, more full-bodied cigars have distinctive flavors that linger for a while.

**Flag Leaves**-- An extension of the wrapper leaf shaped to finish the head of a cigar; used instead of a cap. Flags are sometimes tied off in a pigtail or a curly head.

**Foot**-- The end of the cigar you light. Most often it is pre-cut, except in the case of torpedos and perfectos.

**Gorda**-- Spanish for "fat," as in the corona gorda shape, a "fat" corona. The traditional size is 5 5/8 inches with a 46 ring gauge.

**Gran Corona**-- A very big cigar; generally 9 1/4 inches by 47 ring gauge.

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

**Habano**-- A designation which, when inscribed on a cigar band, indicates that a cigar is Cuban. (Note: not all Cuban cigars are marked with "Habano" or "Havana.")

**Habanos S.A.**-- the worldwide distribution company for Cuban cigars; formerly called Cubatabaco.

**Half-wheel (media ruedas)**-- A bundle of 50 cigars. Cigar rollers usually use ribbon to tie the cigars they produce into half-wheels.

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

**Handmade**-- A cigar made entirely by hand with high-quality wrapper and long filler. All premium cigars are handmade. Hand-rollers can generally use more delicate wrapper leaves than machines.

**Hand-rolled**-- A cigar made entirely by hand with high-quality wrapper and long filler.

**Havana**-- Capital of Cuba. The traditional center of manufacturing of Cuban cigars for export, and a term widely used to designate Cuban cigars. Also refers to the tobacco types grown from Cuban seed in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua. Also known as Habana.

**Head**-- The closed end of the cigar; the end you smoke.

**Holder**-- Cigar holders are an interesting affectation and collectible, but true aficionados let nothing come between their lips and the head of a cigar they're smoking.

**Homogenized Binder**-- Binder made of chopped tobacco leaf and cellulose. Scorned by purists, it facilitates machine production and can facilitate the burn of certain products.

**Hot**-- Describes a cigar that is underfilled and has a quick, loose draw. Can cause harsh flavors.

**Humidor**-- A room, or a box, of varying sizes, designed to preserve or promote the proper storage and aging of cigars by maintaining a relative humidity level of 70 percent and a temperature of approximately 65°F to 70°F.

**Hygrometer**-- A device that indicates the humidity, or percentage of moisture in the air; used to monitor humidor conditions.

**Inhale**-- What you don't do with cigar smoke.

**Igloodor**-- A (usually large) insulated storage container for cigars.

**Lance**-- A cutter used to pierce a small hole in the closed end of a cigar. Also called a piercer.

**Lector**-- Traditionally, the person who reads to the cigar rollers while they work.

**Ligero**-- One of the three basic types of filler tobacco. The name means light in Spanish, but this aromatic tobacco lends body to a blend.

**Long Filler**-- Filler tobacco that runs the length of the body of the cigar, rather than chopped pieces found in machine-made cigars.

**Machine-made**-- Cigars made entirely by machine, using heavier-weight wrappers and binders and, frequently, cut filler in place of long filler.

**Media Ruedas**-- See Half-wheels

**Mini Cigarillo**-- Another term for cigarillo.

**Mold**-- 1. The wooden form used in cigar making to give shape to a finished bunch. It has two parts, which, when assembled, are placed in a press. 2. A potentially damaging fungus that forms on a cigar when it is stored at too high a temperature.

**Oil**-- The mark of a well-humidified cigar. Even well-aged cigars secrete oil at 70 to 72 percent relative humidity, the level at which they should be stored.

**Olor**-- A variety of Dominican cigar tobacco known for its big leaves; it is used as filler tobacco and especially as binder tobacco.

**Parejos**-- Straight-sided cigars, such as coronas, panetelas and lonsdales.

**Partido**-- A prime tobacco growing area in Cuba.

**Piercer**-- A cutter used to pierce a small hole in the closed end of a cigar. Also called a lance.

**Piloto Cubano**-- A popular variety of Cuban-seed tobacco grown in the Dominican Republic.

**Planchas**-- Boards on which tobacco leaves are spread before fermentation.

**Plug**-- A blockage that sometimes occurs in the tobacco that can prevent a cigar from drawing properly. A plug can sometimes be alleviated by gently massaging the cigar.

**Pre-Castro Cigar**-- A Cuban cigar made before Fidel Castro's rise to power in January 1959.

**Pre-embargo Cigar**-- A Cuban cigar made before President Kennedy enacted the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba in 1962.

**Primings**-- The rows of leaves on a tobacco plant. The number of primings varies, but six is average. The first priming is closest to the ground, the sixth is near the top. The higher the, priming the stronger the tobacco.

**Propylene Glycol (PG)** -- (1,2-Propanediol; methyl glycol; C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>O<sub>2</sub>; molecular weight 76.09.)... A hygroscopic, viscous liquid. Slightly acrid 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.

**Puro**-- A Spanish term used to distinguish a cigar from a cigarette. Modern usage refers to a cigar blended with tobaccos from a single country. (All Cuban cigars use 100 percent Cuban tobacco, so all Cuban cigars, according to modern usage, are puros.)

**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**-- A measurement for the diameter of a cigar, based on 64ths of an inch. A 40 ring gauge cigar is 40/64ths of an inch thick.

**Rosado**-- A Spanish term that means "rose-colored." It is used to describe the reddish tint of some Cuban-seed wrapper.

**S.A. (as in "Habanos S.A.")** -- "Sociedad Anonyma", the typical Spanish-language equivalent of "Inc."

**Seco**-- The Spanish word for dry, seco is a type of filler tobacco. It often contributes aroma and is usually medium-bodied.

**Shade-grown**-- Wrapper leaves that have been grown under a cheesecloth tent, called a

tapado. The filtered sunlight creates a thinner, more elastic leaf.

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

**Shoulder**-- The area of a cigar where the cap meets the body. If you cut into the shoulder, the cigar will begin to unravel.

**Short Filler**-- Used mainly in machine-made cigars, it consists of chopped scraps of leaf. Short filler burns quicker and hotter than long filler.

**Special Solution**-- A solution of 50 percent water, 50 percent propylene glycol. Added to your humidification device every three to six months, its presence will keep water from evaporating beyond 70 percent relative humidity.

**Spill**-- A strip of cedar used to light a cigar when using a candle or a fluid lighter, both of which can alter the taste of the cigar.

**Sugar**-- Sugars occur naturally in tobacco. Darker wrappers, such as maduros, contain more sugar, making them sweeter.

**Sun-grown**-- Tobacco grown in direct sunlight, which creates a thicker leaf with thicker veins.

**Tapado**-- A cheesecloth tent under which shade-grown wrapper leaf is cultivated.

**Tercios**-- The large, palm bark-wrapped bales in which fermented tobacco is shipped to cigar factories.

**Tooth**-- The grain pattern characteristic of less smooth wrapper leaf, such as leaf from Cameroon.

**Torcedores**-- Cigar rollers.

**Totalmente a Mano**-- Made totally by hand; a description found on cigar boxes. Much better than "Hecho a Mano" (made by hand, which can mean it is filled with machine-bunched filler), or "Envuelto a Mano" (packed by hand).

**Tubos**-- Cigars packed in individual wood, metal or glass tubes to keep them fresh.

**Tunneling**-- The unwelcome phenomenon of having your cigar burn unevenly. To prevent it, rotate your cigar now and then.

**Tupperdor** -- A air-tight plastic container used for storing cigars.

**Value Hunter**-- Someone who would rather see their dollar go up in smoke a little at a time.

**Vega**-- A tobacco plantation.

**Vein**-- A structural part of a leaf; prominent veins can be a defect in wrappers.

**Vintage**-- When a vintage is used for a cigar, it usually refers to the year the tobacco was harvested, not the year the cigar was made.

**Viso**-- A glossy wrapper leaf grown under cover.

**Vitola**-- A factory term for a cigar shape. Robusto and corona are two examples of vitolas.

**Vuelta Abajo**-- The valley in Cuba that many believe produces the best cigar tobacco in the world.

**Volado**-- A type of filler tobacco chosen for its burning qualities.

**Wrapper**-- A high-quality tobacco leaf wrapped around the finished bunch and binder. It is very elastic and, at its best, unblemished.

**Wedge Cut**-- A V-shaped cut made in the closed end of a cigar.

## **HOW TO BUY GOOD CIGARS AS A GIFT**

- 1.** Visit specialty smoke shops or stores with separate cigar sections to get the best quality and selection.
- 2.** Make sure that the cigars are made from 100 percent tobacco. Many packaged cigars include non-tobacco products, such as paper, saltpeter or glycerin. If you're not sure, ask the salesperson to vouch for the quality.
- 3.** Base size and strength of the cigar on the level of smoking experience. In general, the larger the diameter, the richer the flavor (best suited for more "expert" smokers). Choose longer cigars, which allow for a cooler smoke, for novice smokers.
- 4.** Squeeze the cigar gently to be sure it gives a bit. Check for lumps or soft spots, and refrain from purchasing a lumpy cigar.
- 5.** Inspect the wrapper for any drying, or for major discoloration. The wrapper should be smooth and tight, with only very small "veins."
- 6.** Look carefully at the exposed end of the stogie. Be sure that the tobacco is also evenly colored. Extreme tobacco discoloration.

### **TIPS**

1. Three of the best brands for novice cigar smokers Davidoff, Ashton, and Art. Fuente.
2. Include a [cigar cutter](#) or an ashtray in your package to create a deluxe smoker's gift.
3. Consider purchasing a [humidor](#) to include with the cigars. Humidors improve the quality of the cigars by maintaining humidity levels throughout their shelf life.

## HOW TO SMOKE A CIGAR

After lighting the cigar, allow it to cool down for about a minute. A cigar that's too hot tastes bitter.

After the cool-down, take a puff no more than once or twice a minute. Any faster and your cigar will overheat, causing bitterness and an acidic mouth burn. Unpleasant stuff, so slow down. It's not a cigarette.

Do not inhale any smoke and never swallow the residue of any tobacco product; it will eventually make you ill.

Don't smoke too slowly either. The cigar may go out on you and then you've got a minor crisis on your hands since relighting a cigar is a process all to itself and rarely will your cigar taste as good the second time around.

If your cigar starts to burn unevenly, turn the slowest burning part towards the bottom when you hold it. There is more oxygen at the bottom of a cigar as all the exhaust is at the top. If this doesn't work, hold the slowest burning part over a flame (without touching the flame) to get the wrapper burning again. This should even things out.

Don't hold your cigar like a cigarette. Hold it instead between your second and third fingers, resting on your third finger.

Let your ash get long before you flick it. Basically it should fall on its own. Long ash helps cool the cigar as it creates a sort of air block which cools the smoke.

Band on or band off? In the U.S. either is acceptable, though in the rest of the world, etiquette dictates that the band should be removed before smoking.

When you start, the angle you hold the cigar at should be roughly 30°, not all that steep. Too steep an angle will cause the flame to shoot right up the entire length of the cigar. That's bad!

A nice butane lighter is a good investment because you usually can't light a cigar properly with just one match, even the 3" ones. Get a butane lighter where you don't have to hold the button down.

If you must puff on the cigar after all this to get it going, use quick, short, easy puffs. And never light anyone else's cigar!

## CUTTING AND LIGHTING YOUR CIGAR

Preparing to smoke a cigar can be a wonderful experience in itself. You will be spending quality time with a quality product, and it will be to your benefit to reflect upon its creation before lighting up. Unlike cigarettes, you do not simply pull out a cigar, light the tip and start puffing. First of all, almost every premium cigar has a closed head that must be cut before you can begin to smoke. Also, you would do well to use something other than a paper match for your source of ignition. There are several ways to cut a cigar, the best being what suits the individual. However, there is only one way to effectively light a cigar.

### CUTTING YOUR CIGAR

Watch the actors in old movies and you'll see that there are a host of ways to open the closed end of a cigar before smoking it. Some characters used a pocket knife to cut a neat V-shaped notch. Others used horseshoe nails as piercers. Certain film stars in tough-guy roles bit off the end and spat it out. Some people today still use these methods but, for the most part, cutting cigars has

become a bit less colorful, and a bit more elegant.

The better the cigars you smoke, the more attention you'll want to pay to the cut. A bad cut will ruin a cigar.

The object of the cut is to create an ample, smooth opening for smoking without damaging the cigar's structure. With most cigars, this means cutting away part of the cap or flag leaf that closes the cigar, while leaving some of it glued around the end to keep the filler leaves together. If you are making a wedge cut or a bull's-eye cut, it means not penetrating too deeply into the cigar. You want to create a large, exposed surface of cleanly cut filler leaves that will allow equal draw from the core and the rim of the cigar.

On most cigars, you'll want to make the cut about one-sixteenth of an inch (about two millimeters) from the end. When you aren't carrying a precision measuring device, you can simply look for the shoulder--the place where the curved end of the cigar starts to straighten out--and make your cut there.

Another alternative is to make a V-shaped wedge cut in the end of the cigar. This style of cut exposes a lot of surface area and makes it easy to draw smoke through the cigar. Unfortunately, the draw is sometimes too good, and the cigar will smoke too hot. Wedge cuts are a particularly bad idea for people who tend to chew their cigars. If they chomp down hard enough while the wedge is horizontal, the opening may collapse and tear the structure of the cigar, closing off the draw.

### **CUTTING TOOLS**

There are a number of devices that will help you cut your cigar in a single, swift motion that minimizes the chances of tearing the wrapper. Many aficionados have several cutters, from compact wafer-thin cutters that nestle in a pocket to more massive cutters that are less likely to be misplaced.

Suggested strategy: buy yourself your first cutter and drop gift hints for the rest. Engraved initials make sure that valuable cutters find their way back to you after they have been borrowed.

Of course, you already have a set of cutters: your teeth. But there are a few drawbacks to the biting method. First, it's hard to see what you're doing. Second, your teeth aren't as sharp as a cutter's razor blade. And third, you end up with an unsightly wad of tobacco in your mouth.

Knives, on the other hand, are easy to keep sharp. But it takes great skill and very steady eyes and hands to cut cigars properly with a knife. If you do choose this method, you'll want to avoid cleansing your pocketknife with oils, which may pollute your cigar.

Piercers, sometimes called lances, are intriguing, but hard to use. If a cigar is pierced too deeply, a tunnel may form that causes the center of the cigar to burn too hot. Moreover, the area opened by piercing has two drawbacks: 1) the smoker may not get the even draw that would give him or her the full benefit of all the different leaves blended into the bunch in the cigar; 2) since tars and nicotine tend to accumulate at the openings that channel the smoke, the small hole produced by a piercer will likely concentrate these nasty substances even further, sending more of them into the smoker's mouth and air passages.

Double- and single-bladed cutters, scissors and desk-top devices are designed to make a cut across the end of the cigar. These are generally the best options.

When you are using a single-bladed cutter, the cigar should be placed against the far side of the opening--away from the blade--and the blade brought down to touch the cigar before you make the cutting stroke. This keeps the cigar properly positioned, and prevents motion that might lead to tearing or to the cut happening in the wrong place. Once the cigar is in position, cut boldly, using swift, even pressure. A true aficionado cuts like a surgeon: quickly and confidently.

With single-bladed cutters it's important to make sure the compartment that sheaths the blade

doesn't fill up with bits of tobacco. This will gum up the works and impede quick, clean cuts. All cutters should be kept as sharp as possible. Note that it is more difficult to sharpen some of the smaller, more intricate cutters.

The advantage of double-bladed cutters is that the cutting proceeds from both sides simultaneously. There is less chance that the cigar wrapper will be torn as it's pushed against a dull surface. Again, the technique is to rest the cigar against a blade before clicking the cutter shut.

Special cigar-cutting scissors can make extremely clean cuts and are an elegant accessory, but they must be wielded with some care. The fit and balance of cigar scissors is important and as unique to an individual as those of golf clubs. Try a pair out before investing in them. They should balance easily in one hand so that you'll be able to hold them steady through the cutting motion while you hold a cigar in the other hand. If the handles and blades don't balance with each other when you hold them, the scissors aren't for you. Also, if the hinge is placed so that you cannot move your fingers without stretching past your hand's normal span, then try another pair.

It's worth investing in a good cutter. Remember that a bad cut will ruin a good cigar, and it doesn't take a lot of ruined cigars to add up to the cost of even a very elegant cutter.

### **HOW TO LIGHT A CIGAR**

Lighting a cigar is not like lighting the tip of a cigarette or the wick of a candle--it takes longer. Light your cigar the same way you would toast a marshmallow over a campfire--keep the cigar above and near the flame, but don't let them touch. Burning a cigar directly in a flame makes it too hot. And, as with a marshmallow, you'll want to rotate the cigar so all parts of its tip are equally heated. Be patient, and keep at it until there's a glowing ring all the way around the cigar's tip. Once the cigar is lit, gently blow on the embers to create a smooth, completely rounded ash.

Then, raise the unlit end of the cigar to your mouth and take the first puff. The question is, which way to puff? Many aficionados blow the first puff out through the cigar in order to avoid unsavory flavors such as sulfur from matches or gasses from lighters. No one, of course, should ever apply more than one outward puff.

### **TO RELIGHT, OR NOT TO RELIGHT**

Some purists think that it's shameful to ever have to relight a cigar. Realistically, even the best cigars will go out on those occasions when the conversation becomes so absorbing that you forget to take a puff for a couple of minutes. It's no worse to have to relight a cigar than it is to have to fish a bit of cork out of a fine glass of wine. It will generally take you less time to relight an already-warm cigar than it does to light one for the first time.

Do not, however, intentionally let your cigar die out and then relight it the next day. This will lead to stale, harsh flavors that will ruin your fine memories of the first few puffs.

If you have to relight a cigar several times, you may have a badly rolled cigar. Premium cigars are made by hand, not by machine, and they are made from organic materials that retain much of their natural, irregular structure and character. Despite dedicated quality control efforts, a substandard cigar occasionally makes its way to the market. Don't hesitate to bring a badly rolled cigar back to your tobacconist. Most will happily replace it.

### **CHOOSING YOUR FLAME**

Never light a cigar with a flame from a source that will alter the essence of your cigar. Using a candle, for example, is a temptingly theatrical gesture, but the burning candlewax can add an odd flavor to your cigar. So can the fluid from an isobutane cigarette lighter. Many smokers also object to the sulfur used in most match tips.

If you insist on using a candle or a fluid lighter, use it to light a strip of cedar, called a spill, and use that to light the cigar. If you insist on matches, try to get extra-long, wooden sulfurless ones. If you can't find them and are using regular, short matches, be prepared to use a number of them. Be sure to let the sulfur burn off before starting the lighting process and try lighting two at a time, so

you get a broader flame.

Cigar lighters are the easiest way to get an even light. What makes a lighter a cigar lighter? A cigar lighter uses odorless gas, and often "fatter" flame, or even two adjacent flame sources, and adjustable flame heights.

Cigar lighters come in a wide range of designs and materials, so it will be easy to find one that's an appropriate accessory for your sense of style. Your first requirement should, of course, be performance. A good lighter, like a good pen, should fit your hand. The cap should open easily, and swing back so the whole flame is available for lighting.

## **CIGAR SHAPES AND SIZES**

A cigar shape can vary greatly in size from brand to brand, so describing a cigar by its size as well as shape is important. Cigars are measured by two factors: length, which is given in inches, and "ring gauge," a designation of a cigar's diameter broken into 64ths of an inch. A cigar with a 42 ring gauge, for example, is 42/64 of an inch in diameter.

There is no correlation between the size of a cigar and its strength. An 8-inch cigar made with mild tobaccos will be mellow, while a thin, short cigar rolled with powerful tobaccos will be full bodied. While a cigar's strength is determined by the tobacco it is rolled with, thin cigars have a tendency to burn hotter than fatter ones. Also important to note is that there is no consistency of strength from brand to brand: one company's corona is likely to taste very different from another's.

### **PAREJOS**

Parejos are straight-sided cigars; most have an open foot for lighting and need to be cut before smoking. They may be either round or box-pressed, meaning that the sides of the cigar were pressed square prior to packing or, in some cases, by pressure in the box.

#### **Corona**

This is the benchmark size against which all other sizes are measured. The traditional dimensions are 5 1/2 to 6 inches with a ring gauge of 42 to 44. Example

#### **Petit Corona**

Basically a miniature corona, this cigar generally measures about 4 1/2 inches, with a ring gauge of 40 to 42.

#### **Churchill**

A large corona format. The standard dimensions are 7 inches by 47 ring gauge. Example: Romeo y Julieta Churchill.

#### **Robusto**

A short, fat cigar that has become the most popular cigar size in America. The size is generally 4 3/4 to 5 1/2 inches by 48 to 52 ring gauge.

#### **Corona Gorda**

Also called a toro, this cigar is steadily growing in popularity. The traditional measurements are 5 5/8 inches by 46 ring gauge, but cigars of 6 inches by 50 ring have also become popular.

#### **Double Corona**

The standard dimensions are 7 1/2 to 8 1/2 inches by a 49 to 52 ring gauge.

#### **Panetela**

Long, thin and elegant, this size's popularity has decreased in recent years. Still, it is an elegant size, with a wide length variation of 5 to 7 1/2 inches with a ring gauge of 34 to 38. Cigars longer than 7 inches in this category are often referred to as "gran panetelas."

#### **Lonsdale**

A lonsdale is generally longer than a corona but thicker than a panetela, with a classic size of 6 1/2

inches by 42 ring.

## **FIGURADOS**

Although the majority of cigars are parejos, a growing number of cigar companies are broadening their portfolios with more creatively shaped smokes. These cigars are called figurados, and they include any cigar that is not a straight-sided cylinder. Although cigar-makers' interpretations of the shapes vary as widely as the flavors inside their cigars, the basic categories of figurados are as follows:

### **Pyramid**

Pyramids are cigars with cut feet, like parejos, but with heads tapered to a point. Generally the cigars measure from 6 to 7 inches in length, with ring gauges of about 40 at the head widening to 52 to 54 at the foot. The pyramid is treasured because the tapered head allows the complex flavors of the cigar to meld in the mouth.

### **Belicoso**

Traditional belicosos are short pyramids, often with a slightly rounded pyramid head. They often measure from 5 to 5 1/2 inches, with ring gauges of about 50. Today's belicosos, however, are often coronas or corona gordas with tapered heads. Recent years have also seen the production of mini-belicosos, short cigars with small ring gauges and tapered heads.

### **Torpedo**

Although many companies include cigars called torpedos in their portfolios, the cigars are often pyramids. A true torpedo is a rare cigar today, a smoke with a closed foot, a head tapered to a point, and a bulge in the middle.

### **Perfecto**

Like the torpedo, the perfecto has a closed foot and a bulge in the middle. Unlike torpedos, though, the head of a perfecto is rounded like the head of a parejo. Perfectos vary greatly in length, from a diminutive 4 1/2 inches to unwieldy 9-inch cigars, with ring gauges from 38 to 48.

### **Culebra**

More popular in the past than it is today, the culebra is perhaps the most exotic shape of cigar made. It consists of three panetelas braided together and tied with string, sold as one cigar. The three parts are then unbraided and smoked separately. Usually 5 to 6 inches long, culebras most often have a 38 ring gauge. Since they are difficult to come by today, you might consider sharing the other two braids of the cigar with two friends, turning the smoking of a culebra into a special occasion.

### **Diadema**

Diademas are enormous, 8 1/2 inches or longer. The head is tapered, though often not to a complete point, usually with a 40 ring gauge. The cigar then tapers down to a foot that can be open like a parejo or closed like a perfecto, usually with a ring gauge of 52 or greater. This is a cigar to be enjoyed when time is no object.

## **CIGAR COLORS**

Cigar wrappers come in a wide array of colors, from the palest of greens and yellows to dark black. Just as there are seven basic colors that make up the rainbow, there are seven basic color distinctions among wrappers, with an infinite number of shades between each color. A simple way to begin understanding the color designations is to remember that, just as the state of Colorado is in the middle of the United States, the color "colorado" comes in the center of the color range.

Wrapper leaves vary in color due to the many methods for processing tobacco and the variety of tobacco strains used. Additionally, sunlight can play a factor: a wrapper grown

in sunlight is typically darker than a shade-grown wrapper of an equivalent seed strain.

From light to dark, the seven commonly used wrapper color descriptions are:

**Double Claro** (also called Candela)

This wrapper is light green, a hue created by a quick-drying process using heat that locks in the green chlorophyll of the tobacco. Years ago, this wrapper was tremendously popular in the United States, and it was a point of amusement for Europeans.

**Claro**

A light tan color, most commonly achieved by growing in shade under cheesecloth tents, picking the plants early and air-drying the leaves. Flavorwise, these wrappers have little to offer, and allow the flavors of the filler tobaccos to dominate the taste of the cigar.

**Colorado Claro**

Light reddish-brown; often grown in direct sunlight, and given longer to mature before picking.

**Colorado**

The center of the color scale. These cigars are medium-brown to brownish-red and full flavored, though soft and subtle in their aroma. These wrappers are often shade grown.

**Colorado Maduro**

Darker than colorado, lighter than maduro.

**Maduro**

This shade can vary from a deep reddish-brown to almost black. Maduro means "mature" in Spanish, which refers to longer time needed to cure this color wrapper than wrappers that are lighter. For maduros, leaves are either toasted in a pressure chamber or fermented longer in above-average heat. A maduro wrapper lends significant flavor to a cigar: it tends to be mild in aroma, but to have robust, almost sweet flavor.

**Oscuro**

This black-as-night wrapper shade is achieved by leaving the leaves on the plant as long as possible, by using only the leaves from the top of the plant, and by fermenting them for an especially long time. Most often Brazilian or Mexican in origin, oscuro wrappers are often very rough, a result of the extra fermentation. This category is sometimes referred to as "black," "negro" or "double maduro."

## **ASHING 101**

**Q: What is the proper way to tap the ash from a cigar?**

**A:** Ashing involves more of a turning than a tapping. There's no need to repeatedly tap or flick a

cigar's ash like that of a cigarette. Handmade cigars are crafted from long-filler tobacco, which holds a far longer and sturdier ash than a cigarette, whose ash flakes and end up in your lap if left to any length. Fiddling with the ash with too much force can break off the ember, or "cherry," of the cigar, which will leave you having to relight.

The best thing is to first have patience. Wait until the ash is about an inch long, or until you see a crack develop, before disposing of it in your ashtray. (If you wait a very long time, the ash will no doubt drop on your shirt or pants or on the floor. And while some say ash on the carpet is a preservative, on the whole, it is considered bad form.)

When it is time to ash, rest the cigar against the side of the ashtray and gently press the end of the cigar against its bottom, turning or rotating the cigar at the same time. Take care not to press too hard. This will allow the ash to break off evenly, and you'll avoid any of the pitfalls mentioned above. If the ash is not breaking off, rest it on the side of the ashtray for a second, then repeat the process.

### **What does "ring gauge" indicate?**

Ring gauge is used to indicate the diameter of a cigar. It's actually not that complicated, as the whole measuring scale is based on 64th of an inch. Therefore, a cigar with a ring gauge of "50" is actually 50/64th of an inch in diameter, and a cigar with a ring gauge of "64" is 64/64th of an inch, or 1 inch, in diameter.

- When storing many different singles (sticks) together, we leave the cellophane on.
- When we have them in their original box, we always take off the cellophane, and keep them in their original box in our humidors. (This isn't always possible, depending on the size of your humidor.)
- If they are only going to be in our humidor a few weeks max, we take off the cellophane no matter what, and let them adapt to the environment as quickly as possible.

### **What is the white substance I occasionally find on my cigars?**

If it looks like powdered sugar and wipes off easily it's probably "bloom." Bloom is crystallized oils that form in properly aging wrapper leaf. Simply wipe it off. If, on the other hand, what you're looking at is fuzzy or blue/green and is on the foot of the cigar in the filler tobaccos (also can be on the wrapper) it is most likely mold. If your cigars are moldy they're basically ruined.

### **What difference does the origin of tobacco leaf and wrapper make?**

The Dominican Republic has for a number of years been considered the source of the world's most consistently high quality tobaccos: Piloto Cubano, a Cuban-seed tobacco used as a long-filler for its rich pungent flavors, and Olor, a native Dominican tobacco used as long filler and as a binder because of its zesty and spicy character.

Brazilian tobaccos have a dark, pungent and peppery, yet slightly sweet flavor profile. The leaf is black in color, once the fermentation is done.

The San Andres Valley of Mexico is world-renowned for its sun-grown variety of Sumatra-seed tobacco used for wrappers, especially Maduro wrappers. Dark,

peppery and slightly sweet tobaccos are also grown and utilized as long fillers and binders because of the excellent burning qualities.

The Central African Republic and the West African Republic of Cameroon grow a distinctly unique tobacco used primarily for wrappers because of the dark, oily texture of the leaf and its neutral flavor tones. The leaf originated from Sumatra seeds imported from Indonesia.

Nicaragua also produces high-quality Connecticut-seed and Cuban-seed tobaccos with rich and peppery, full-bodied flavors and heady aromas, reminiscent of the finest Cuban tobaccos.

The tobacco strain grown in the Philippines is very aromatic, but light and mild in terms of strength.

The U.S. Connecticut Valley produces the world's finest wrapper tobacco, "Connecticut Shade," noted for its smooth, light texture and elasticity. Connecticut broadleaf tobacco is also grown here. Its darker, heavy-veined leaf is used primarily on Maduro cigars. Both tobaccos create a mild to medium-bodied smoke with a mellow, nutty flavor.

Cuban filler tobaccos have long been renowned for their robust, spicy, and pungently aromatic flavors. In addition, extremely tasty and supple wrapper leaves are grown here. There has been some debate in recent years over the consistency and quality of Cuban cigars, but overall they are still acknowledged by many to be the world's finest.

### **What goes into making a cigar?**

Tobacco leaves are harvested beginning at the bottom of the plant. Volado, the bottom leaves, have an extremely mild, almost bland taste. Seco, the middle section leaves, have a medium flavor; and the ligero, the top leaves, are oilier and richer in flavor.

After harvesting, the leaves are separated into bundles according to size and texture and hung to dry in curing barns for six to eight weeks.

The curing process and the subsequent fermentation of the tobacco is necessary to release ammonia from the tobacco and reduces the overall nicotine content. The fermented tobacco is then allowed to age anywhere from 18 months to two years to enhance the taste and burning qualities of the tobacco. Poorly fermented cigars are harsh and bitter and burn unevenly.

Master blenders combine tobaccos from different countries or different regions of the same country to achieve a distinctive and balanced smoke. Depending upon its ring gauge, a cigar will contain a blend of between two and five different tobaccos.

At this point the torcedor, or cigar roller, is given the tobaccos to be used and the formula for their combination. The torcedor takes the filler leaves, compresses them, then places them on a binder leaf used to hold the filler together. Then they are rolled into a "bunch" and cut to the appropriate length before being placed into a

wooden mold for further compression.

After this step, the torcedor removes the bunch and wraps it with a supple, elastic wrapper leaf that has been cut in half. With much acquired skill, the torcedor rolls the wrapper around the bunch using constant pressure and applies a vegetable glue to bond the wrapper at the head of the cigar to prevent it from unraveling.

At this point, cigars are allowed to age again so that the different tobaccos' flavor profiles can "marry" before being graded and boxed for sale. This process can last as little as 21 days and up to 180 days, perhaps even longer.

## **How should my cigars be stored?**

In an attempt to recreate the conditions in terms of climate where cigar tobacco is grown, it is recommended that for optimum enjoyment cigars should be stored at a humidity level of between 68% - 72% and at temperature range of between 68 - 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

When purchasing a humidor, look for a box that has perfectly squared and fitted seams, a tight seal, and a Spanish cedar interior. Spanish cedar is the best wood used for lining a humidor for three reasons: tobacco beetles don't like it, it's unique in that it helps age cigars, and it is very good at retaining humidity. The cedar should be well aged, aromatic, and unfinished. When you close the box you should hear a quiet suction sound. If it clunks it isn't airtight and won't be able to maintain a constant level of humidity.

Maintenance of the cigars in a humidor is very simple. Use a humidifier. Humidifiers are available in many shapes and sizes. Most of them are made of "Oasis," the same material you find in floral arrangements. Oasis holds a lot of humidity. Be sure to buy a humidifier that is big enough for all the cigars in your humidor.

Another product you may wish to have is a hygrometer, which measures relative humidity. Digital hygrometers are the most accurate. Otherwise, the condition of the cigars is the perfect measure of your humidor's performance. If the cigars exhibit a slightly oily sheen and when gently squeezing the foot of the cigar with your fingers it springs back like a loaf of fresh bread then conditions are ideal. If they seem dry then add more distilled water.

Also be sure to keep your humidor away from windows, heating/air vents, and other heat sources to prevent warping or other undue stress.

Check your cigars every day until you break in your humidor. Eventually, you'll get to know your humidor and how often to refill your humidification device (always use distilled water). Even then, it's a good idea to check it every day. Also, a good idea would be to leave the box open for about 15 minutes a couple times a week to let some air circulate through the cigars, which will keep them from getting too moist or moldy. Another tip is to rotate the bottom row of cigars to the top every so often to make sure all of your cigars are humidified evenly.

To break in a new humidor, pour distilled water in your humidifier to activate it. Wipe down the interior of your humidor with a clean, slightly damp cloth. Again, use

distilled water. Put shot glasses or several small cups of distilled water inside the humidor and then let it sit for 24 to 48 hours. Remove the cups of water and add your cigars, being sure to check them every day.

A cigar storage alternative to a humidor is a food storage container, such as Tupperware. Place an appropriately sized humidification device in the container, remembering not to let the device actually touch your cigars. Tobacco does need to breathe in order to age properly. That's why wooden humidors are not hermetically sealed. You should open your container every few days (once a week at least) for about 15 to 20 minutes. It is even better if you can get some pieces of cedar to put in there with your cigars.

### **Should my cigars be stored with the cellophane on or off?**

This is one of the most common questions we get, and one of serious importance to cigar smokers and collectors. With the prices of cigars today you want to make sure you do everything in your power to take care of them. If you store your cigars without the cellophane, they will "enjoy" the environment in your humidor much more quickly, and age better as well. The problem with this is if you have many multiple types and brands of cigars, and store them all together without cellophane, they can adopt each other's flavors over time. We use these guidelines:

### **What do I do with my cigar when I'm finished?**

Don't stub out a cigar as this can create an unpleasant aroma. Just lay it in an ashtray, and it will go out of its own accord quite quickly.

## **Pipes**

At Churchills you will find pipes, tobaccos and accessories carefully selected to fit the needs of the pipe smoker. We strive to bring you the best quality and selection by diligently hand-selecting each individual pipe and by selling only tobacco and accessories of the highest quality.

Though a quality pipe does indeed make for a superior smoke, it is the aesthetic, the look and feel, of the pipe that immediately draws the attention of the discerning pipe smoker. A premium pipe has often and accurately been called useful art and it is our goal is to bring that wonderful useful art, the premium pipe, to you, the discerning man or woman of the briar.

Furthermore, you are ensured a pleasurable pipe, tobacco or pipe accessory shopping experience because we offer a full money back guarantee on all the merchandise we sell and our helpful, knowledgeable sales staff is happy to help you with any general or specific pipe and tobacco related questions you may have by e-mail or phone.

1. Sprinkle the tobacco loosely into the pipe until it fills up to the brim. Sprinkling loosely is a concept that escapes even the experienced pipe smokers. Sprinkle loosely until the bowl is full, then press it down until the bowl is half full. If you have a tapered bowl, you may wish to press down the tobacco two-thirds full. At this point, draw on the pipe. There should be little, if any, resistance.

2. Sprinkle loosely again until the bowl is full. Press the tobacco down evenly until the bowl is three-fourths full. Again, draw on the pipe. There should be a little resistance.
3. Sprinkle loosely once more until the bowl is full and then round up the top so a little mound of tobacco rests over the bowl. The mound should be less than a half inch tall and nicely rounded. Now press down the tobacco flat, and even with the brim of the bowl. Last time, draw on the pipe. Again, there should be a little resistance. The pipe is now ready for lighting.

## **Guide to Pipe Smoking**

The pipe smoker needs to try out a good range of tobaccos in the early stages. Many potential pipe smokers have given up too quickly through a combination of wrong tobacco and not appreciating that the experience during the first few times you smoke a new pipe is nothing like the real flavor which the "broken in" pipe will produce for you. Ask any regular pipe smoker.

So, you have your pipe and appropriate tobacco. Here are some easy steps to perfection:

- 1)** First, pick up your pipe and gently blow through the mouthpiece, to make sure that the air hole is clear.
- 2)** In order to get the full pleasure from your briar pipe, you will need to build up a carbonized lining to the entire bowl interior, which helps insulate the bowl for a cooler, more flavorsome smoke. Nowadays many pipes come from the factory pre-carbonized. However, with most pipes it helps to build up your own carbon lining by carefully smoking five to seven bowlfuls of tobacco with the bowl only half filled. Over months of smoking, this lining will gradually thicken and should be kept trimmed to about 1/16 of an inch for best results.
- 3)** Filling your pipe is the next (and most important) step. If done properly, your first bowlful should be quite pleasant, but if done incorrectly your pipe may burn hot and bitter. Beware of tongue bite! That stinging, painful sensation on the tip of your tongue, that makes many potential pipe smokers abandon the hobby prematurely, this is caused by not filling the bowl correctly and using tobacco that is too moist or too dry. Now to fill your pipe, holding the pipe upright, trickle in tobacco until overflowing. Tamp down gently and repeat the process two or three times, until the bowl is full, with a springy feel. Draw through the mouthpiece occasionally, to make sure it is not plugged up.
- 4)** Lighting the pipe should preferably be done with a gas pipe lighter or wooden match. The first light is called the charring light. Its purpose is to create a charred lid of tobacco that will hold the second light. When creating the charred light, move the flame around the tobacco, igniting it completely, but be careful not to scorch the bowl rim. Once completed tamp the charred lid down gently. Now you are ready for the second light. Puff slowly and rhythmically as you walk the flame over the charred tobacco. There! You've done it!
- 5)** Because tobacco is a natural product, it will go out if not puffed regularly so do not be afraid to use numerous matches throughout your course of pipe smoking. And it is only natural to hear (or taste) a little gurgle of moisture in your pipe, this is a by-product of combustion. In addition, some people smoke wet (saliva enters pipe stem) and these natural juices should be immediately removed by running a pipe cleaner down the air hole, re-tamping the tobacco, and relighting if necessary.
- 6)** It is very important to look after your pipe properly. Taken care of, your pipe will last for many years, improving with age. A pipe for every day of the week is desirable rather than necessary, but certainly two pipes are better than one. You should never refill a pipe when it is warm. Clean

the stem regularly by the simple process of pushing a pipe cleaner through it. For metal stemmed pipes the use of a chemical spray is recommended. As mentioned in point 2), the inside of the bowl will over months of smoking acquire a black coating of carbon. This is desirable and will ensure that you get the full flavor of your favorite tobacco. If the coating gets too thick however, the pipe will start to burn hot. When this happens the coating should be carefully shaved down with a smokers knife, not an ordinary penknife as this has a sharp point and will likely cut into the bottom of the bowl. You will find that a pipe reamer is a very useful aid to cleaning. Careful treatment and storage of your pipe will prolong its life.

### **How do I avoid "tongue bite" or "dottle"?**

If you are experiencing "tongue bite" or "dottle" at the bottom of your pipe bowl, chances are you are packing your pipe too tightly. Even if you do not smoke all the tobacco in the pipe, it probably isn't the pipe, but the packing! Please read the answer to "What is the best way to pack a pipe?" below to learn more about packing.

### **Does the quality of the pipe and/or the tobacco really make a difference?**

Yes, it is true that high grade pipes and tobaccos smoke better, but if you have a pipe that is finished with carnuba wax rather than varnish, and pipe tobacco that has no chemicals (additives or preservatives) you should have a very enjoyable smoking experience. It is important to remember that a pipe is basically a filter. The pipe absorbs the moisture, disperses the heat, and affects the flavor and clarity of the tobacco. The tobacco is best enjoyed when moist and chemical free. That means no drug store tobacco! A quality pipe contributes to your smoking enjoyment the most.

### **What is the best way to pack a pipe?**

Pipe packing is basically a 3-step process:

### **How do I keep my pipe lit?**

If you have problems keeping your pipe lit, even after packing it correctly, then take five or six puffs as you walk the flame around the whole bowl charring the entire area of the tobacco. Then tamp the ashes flat and even. Relight using another five or six good puffs and you should be on your way to an enjoyable, relaxing smoke! Many pipe smokers will pack and light their pipes correctly and still have problems keeping the pipe lit throughout the entire pipeful. The reason for this is likely tamping too hard. When tamping your pipe you should only be crushing the ashes flat and even; not pushing down tobacco. You may tamp as much as you like, but just push down the burning ashes onto the unburning tobacco. Keep it even and keep the draw consistent.

### **When should I clean my pipe and how?**

We recommend cleaning it before the next pipeful. If your pipe smells sour or tastes spoiled, it may be because you haven't been cleaning it regularly. As a rule, you should run a pipe cleaner through the stem and shank every time you smoke the pipe. Never pull the pipe apart while it is warm. Also make sure all the bits of tobacco are out of the bowl as this can lead to hot spots that will cause a burn out. Remember, because a pipe is a filter, it should be smoked only once a day. If you smoke three times a day you need three pipes. If you smoke it more than this, the moisture can build and spoil causing bad aroma and flavor. If this happens, take some whiskey or bourbon (the stronger the better) and pour it into the bowl. Let it

sit for 15 minutes, pour out the liquor, and swab out the bowl with a paper towel. Let the pipe sit for 24 hours before smoking it again. You'll be amazed at the difference!