

Cigars: An Interesting Overview

I must admit I have smoked a few cigars, but never really liked them. I have a neighbor who smokes them semi-regularly; a friend who chews on them (Swisher Sweets), but never smokes them; and another friend, one who claims that his cigar use has had personal health benefits, such as reducing colds. He never chews or smokes it but keeps it in his mouth for some time. Well, why an article on cigars? It was a trip to the Pérez Art Museum in Miami, Florida and talking with the docent that helped make this article happen. It is also attributed to my friends and a relative.

Cigars have been around for thousands of years. Central American Mayans (Guatemala or the Mexican Yucatan) in or before the 10th century were the first to use tobacco in the form of a rudimentary cigar by wrapping tobacco in either palm or plantain leaves. "The name 'cigar' possibly derives from the Mayan word '*sicar*,' meaning to smoke rolled tobacco leaves." <cigaraficionado.com> <holts.com>

There were reports of Christopher Columbus being offered dried tobacco in 1492 in Cuba from the Taino natives. Sailors who brought it back to Europe started growing the plants. Smoking became popular in Spain and Portugal. In the late 1500s a Spanish doctor claimed that tobacco had medicinal potential. The popularity of tobacco was seen during the 1600s when it was even used as money. <cigaraficionado.com> <finckcigarcompany.com> <academicdayton.edu> <holts.com>

Tobacco is, of course, the root of the cigar experience and The Boston University Medical Center in a community outreach information on the history of tobacco wrote:

"Tobacco is a plant that grows natively in North and South America. It is in the same family as the potato, pepper and the poisonous nightshade, a very deadly plant. The seed of a tobacco plant is exceedingly small. A 1-ounce sample contains about 300,000 seeds! It is believed that Tobacco began growing in the Americas about 6,000 B.C.! As early as 1 B.C., American Indians began using tobacco in many ways, such as in religious and medicinal practices. Tobacco was believed to be a cure-all, and was used to dress wounds, as well as a pain killer. Chewing tobacco was believed to relieve the pain of a toothache!" <academicdayton.edu>

"Spain was the first to manufacture cigars, but Cuba became an ideal place to grow tobacco. The Philippines was another place for tobacco growers, and like Cuba, the Philippines were Spanish colonies at one time. The French ambassador to Portugal, Jean Nicot, from whose name comes the word 'nicotine,' introduced tobacco and cigars to France in the late 1500s. The A La Civette tobacco store opened in 1716 in Paris and is still there today." <finckcigarcompany.com> <holt.com>

Later as time passed and the popularity of smoking cigars grew, manufacturing cigars began in Key West, Florida and small manufacturers were found in places like New York City apartments. As health concerns grew there were attempts to ban the manufacture of cigars, but it did not work. King Phillip II of Spain (1556-1598) and King James I of England (1603-1625) denounced smoking as people began to see a negative correlation regarding smoking and health. <finckcigarcompany.com>

As cigars, like cigarettes grew in favor, society began to distinguish the many types of cigars:

"The most common one is the Parejo, which was probably the original cigar shape created by the Mayan Indians. It is a simple cylinder, the exact same shape in which modern cigarettes are made. There are over a dozen different types of Parejo cigars, such as the Toro, Corona, and Carlot. Some Parejo cigars, such as the Churchill, Rothschild, and Lonsdale, were named after famous people who smoked publicly and thus helped to popularize cigars. Figurado cigars were popular in the 1800s but are not as common in modern times. Their irregular shape makes them unique, and they are expensive to manufacture and purchase."

I had a wonderful relative who immigrated from Italy, worked in the hard coal mines in Pennsylvania, who later ran a small store with his wife, an excellent gardener, and a skilled weather interpreter. He lived into his 80s who claimed that he had smoked Parodi cigars since he was young man.

"Parodi cigars are dry-cured, machine-made cigars blended with 100% American-grown tobaccos from Tennessee and Kentucky. Highly respected since their introduction in 1913, the blend of leaves includes not less than three different crop years, which contributes to the medium-bodied flavor of these cigars. Parodi cigars are made in the good ol' U.S. of A in Scranton, PA by the same folks who make Avanti cigars." <famous-smoke.com>

Cuba, as previously noted, has been the place to acquire its famous cigar made from its fertile land and favorable climate. The end process is made up of three types of tobacco leaves for the wrapper, filler, and binder. Spain at one time had a monopoly on Cuban tobacco. It lasted until 1817. During the 1800s cigar popularity soared. Cuban cigar-makers migrated to Tampa, Florida. Tampa became known as "Cigar City" by the end of the 1800s. <content.time.com>

On January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro ousted the Batista regime. His takeover and his leanings toward communism caused a 46-year-trade embargo on Cuban cigars. Castro, a long-time cigar smoker, (his favorite Cohibas) took over cigar and cigarette plants and top tobacco growers on the island. Fleeing Cuba was their own recourse. Castro lived to be 90 years old, he died in November 2016. The embargo ended in 2015. The announcement of easing restrictions on trade and travel with Cuba had mixed reactions. Cigar, rum, and leisure travelers were pleased, but Cuban ex-patriots voiced a negative reaction. <content.time.com> <emcigars.com> <Investopedia.com>

There are two articles one should take time to read. They are:

NPR's article, "6 Things You Should Know About Cuban Cigars," is worth reading, especially about Castro and the status of Cuban cigars as an industry. <npr.org>

Verywellmind.com's article, "Cigar Smoking Trends and Risk Factors." <verywellmind.com>

Today cigar smoking is an individual choice. There are always two sides to an issue and smoking has them. There are many organizations that speak about choice, health, and rights regarding smoking. The cigar industry organizations such as Premium Cigars Association and Cigar Association of America, Inc. support small operations, machine-rolled to higher-end premium cigars. Health organizations such as the AACR (American Association for Respiratory Care) Coalitions include such organizations Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the American Lung Association, and the American Cancer Society/Cancer Network. There are more than 50 organizations whose goal is to protect public health and reduce the incidence of smoking in the US. <aarc.org> <cigarassociation.org> <premiumcigars.org>

The history of cigars is not new, nor uncontroversial. The following photos are from the Miami museum. Cigars and some history in relation to those who manufactured cigars for those who wished to smoke them. Note the museums lights are reflected in some of the photos.



Two brands of premium cigars and cigarillos, one produced in Cuba for Habanos SA, (cigar to left) the Cuban state-owned tobacco company, and the other produced in La Romana (Dominican Republic) for the Franco-Spanish tobacco conglomerate Altadis SA, a division of Imperial Brands.(cigar to right). <enwikipedia.org>

"In 1935, Alonso Menendez purchased the Particulares cigar factory with hopes of creating a new premium cigar brand. During this time, it was common among torcedores (cigar rollers) to have the famous Alexandre Dumas novel "The Count of Monte Cristo" read by a lector on the cigar rolling floor. Inspired by this tradition, Menendez gave life to one of the most well known cigar brands today." <montecristo.com>



Hoyo de Monterrey is the name of two brands of premium cigars, one produced on the island of Cuba for Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco company (cigar to left) and the other produced in Honduras by General Cigar Company, now a subsidiary of Swedish Match (cigar to right). en.wikipedia.org

"Don Jose Gener y Batet, (emigrated to Cuba 1831-died 1900 in Spain)-originally a leaf grower and eventually the founder of one of the greatest Cuban cigar factories (1851) on the Island of Cuba, began producing the great [Hoyo de Monterrey](#) brand in 1960. The 'El Hoyo' series was added to the commercial cigar market in the mid-seventies. The name translates roughly as "the valley of Monterrey", which is a particularly fertile area of land in the "Vuelta Abajo" area of South west Cuba. Gener farmed in this valley for many years during the late 1800's." en.wikipedia.org cubaheritage.org



La Gloria Cubana is the name of two premium cigar brands, one produced on the island of Cuba for Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco company (cigar to left), and other produced in the Dominican Republic by El Credito Cigar Company for General Cigar Company, now a subsidiary of Swedish Match. La Gloria Cubana was sold to General Cigar Company by Ernesto Perez-Carrillo in 1999 (cigar to right). en.wikipedia.org

"Born from Cuban roots, dedicated to honoring the cigar craft and guided by an innovative spirit, La Gloria Cubana was a boutique cigar long before there was such a thing as a "boutique cigar." lafloriacubana.com

"The original non-Cuban La Gloria Cubana blend was created in Miami in 1972 at the El Credito cigar factory but wasn't the focus until cigarmaker Ernesto Perez-Carrillo took over the company in 1980. It gained a cult following and, by the 1990s, eventually grew into a national brand causing Perez-Carrillo to move his production to the Dominican Republic to meet demand. La Gloria Cubana got the attention of General Cigar, which purchased the brand in 1999." cigaraficionado.com

A boutique cigar is not usually found in cigar stores and not mass manufactured. boutiquecigarbrands.com



Punch is the name of two brands of cigars, one produced on the island of Cuba for Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco company (cigar to left), and the other produced in Honduras for General Cigar Company (cigar to right). en.wikipedia.org

"Punch cigars were founded in 1840 by Manuel Lopez and they are the second oldest Havana brand still in production. They were named after the popular 19th century English puppetry character." The product was predominately for the British market. onlinehavanacigars.com finestcubacigars.com

The history of this cigar began by a German named Stockmann who named it after a European puppet show character named Punch. There were many owners since 1840. An owner fled Cuba after the embargo to the United States. Cuba nationalized the tobacco business and Punch continued to operate under a multi-local market system. en.wikipedia.org

	<p>Partagás is the brand name of two lines of cigars made by two independent and competing entities, one produced on the island of Cuba for Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco company (cigar to left); the other, containing no Cuban tobacco, produced in the Dominican Republic for General Cigar Company, a division of Scandinavian Tobacco Group of Denmark (cigar to right). The Cuban version is the original and among the oldest cigar brands, established in Havana in 1845. <en.wikipedia.org></p> <p>Don Jaime Partagás founded Partagás Y Compañía in 1845. He bought the tobacco fields in Havana. He built his factory La Flor De Tabacas De Partagás for efficiency and quality. He died in his fields in 1868, shot by who was believed to be a rival. Ramón Cifuentes, Sr. Cifuentes purchased the company from Bances in 1900. In doing so, not only was the business savvy Cifuentes ready to resurrect Partagás, but he would also begin the Cifuentes lineage of leadership. <paratagas.com></p>
	<p>Romeo y Julieta is the name of two brands of premium cigar, one produced on the island of Cuba for Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco company (cigar to left), and the other produced in La Romana, Dominican Republic for Altadis SA, a division of Imperial Tobacco (cigar to right). <en.wikipedia.org></p> <p>Founded in Havana in 1875, Romeo y Julieta Cuban cigars were named for the lead characters in one of Shakespeare's most enduring plays. The Romeo y Julieta brand quickly became one of the most popular Cuban cigars – as well as Winston Churchill's favorites. But after the Cuban embargo, production of some RyJ cigars moved to the Dominican Republic. Today one of the most popular cigars in America, Romeo has stepped up the game with the House of Capulet edition: a sharper, sleeker blend of Honduran and Nicaraguan fillers, Nicaraguan binder, and Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, and a best-in-class contender for smoke night with your pals. <famous-smoke.com></p>

Sources: Pérez Art Museum Miami, <https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/a-brief-history-of-the-cigar-industry-16667>, <http://www.finckcigarcompany.com/cigar-advisor/the-history-of-cigars/>, <https://academic.udayton.edu/health/syllabi/tobacco/history.htm>, <https://www.holts.com/clubhouse/cigar-culture/the-history-of-cigars-when-were-cigars-invented>, <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1869320,00.html>, <https://www.havanahouse.co.uk/cigar-icons-fidel-castro-blog/>, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/12/18/371675130/6-things-you-should-know-about-cuban-cigars>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fidel_Castro, <https://www.egmcigars.com/blogs/the-cuban-cigars-blog-by-egm-cigars/the-enduring-effect-of-castros-nationalisation-of-cuban-cigars>, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/022415/impact-ending-us-embargo-cuba.asp>, <https://premiumcigars.org/>, <https://academic.oup.com/ntr/article/20/12/1457/4159211>, <https://www.cigarassociation.org/>, <https://www.aarc.org/advocacy/aarc-coalitions/tobacco-partners/>, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-the-risks-of-cigar-smoking-2824740>, <https://montecristo.com/>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montecristo_\(cigar\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montecristo_(cigar)), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoyo_de_Monterrey, <http://www.cubaheritage.org/articles.asp?IID=1&artID=615>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Gloria_Cubana_\(cigar\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Gloria_Cubana_(cigar)), <https://www.cigaraficionado.com/brand/la-gloria-cubana-non-cuban>, <http://lagloriacubana.com/>, <https://www.boutiquecigarbrands.com/boutique-cigar-faq.php>, <https://www.holts.com/clubhouse/cuban-cigars/history-punch-cigars>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punch_\(cigar\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punch_(cigar)), <http://www.onlinehavanacigars.com/pages/cigars/punch.htm>, <https://www.finestcubancigars.com/brands/all-cigar-brands/punch-1.html>, <https://www.famous-smoke.com/cigaradvisor/cuban-cigar-exiles-the-9-top-cuban-heritage-cigars>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_y_Julieta_\(cigar\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_y_Julieta_(cigar)), and <http://partagas.com/legends/blog/>.