

Perelman's Pocket Cyclopedia of Cigars 2010

CIGAR BASICS

In this section:

1.01	About Cigars	page 1
1.02	Construction	1
1.03	Shapes and Sizes	2
1.04	Enjoying Cigars	4

1.01 ABOUT CIGARS

The joy of smoking rolled tobacco leaves began in the Americas hundreds of years ago and was introduced to Europeans after Christopher Columbus' return from his first voyage in 1492.

In the ensuing years, the popularity and sophistication of tobacco products has grown and the 1990s brought a significant increase in the popularity of cigars in the United States. Despite much controversy, the status of cigars as a luxury product in American culture is secure.

The important technical elements to be appreciated in cigars include their construction and the many shapes and sizes.

1.02 CONSTRUCTION

What goes into cigars? The answer to this question is the key to assessing the quality of a specific cigar. All but the thinnest cigars include three elements: (1) the filler tobacco at the center, (2) a binder leaf which holds the filler together and (3) the outer wrapper, which is rolled around the binder.

Cigars which are made by hand use “long filler” tobacco: leaves which run the length of a cigar. In a handmade, the filler, binder and wrapper are combined manually.

Machine-made cigars utilize high-speed machinery to combine “short filler” tobacco – usually scraps or pieces of tobacco leaves – or a mixed filler of long and short pieces with a binder and wrapper. Because of the tension placed on the tobacco by the machines, the binders and wrappers are often made of a “homogenized tobacco leaf” product (called “HTL” or “sheet”) which is stronger than natural leaves and can be produced in a variety of flavors, strengths and textures.

A few brands combine machine-bunching (using long-filler tobacco) with hand-rolled wrappers; this practice has been very properly dubbed “hand-rolled” as opposed to handmade by cigar expert Rick Hacker in *The Ultimate Cigar Book*. And some larger cigars use “mixed” or “combination” filler of long-filler and short-filler tobaccos.

The most obvious characteristic of most cigars is the color of the exterior wrapper. While not the only factor in the taste of a cigar, it is an important element and a key in many people's purchase of specific cigars. Although manufacturers have identified more than 100 different wrapper shades, six major color classifications are used herein, as noted below:

CIGAR BASICS

<i>Color</i>	<i>Abbrev.</i>	<i>Description</i>
Double Claro	“DC”	Also known as “American Market Selection” [AMS] or “Candela,” this is a green wrapper. Once popular, it is only occasionally found today.
Claro	“Cl”	This is a very light tan color, almost beige in shade; usually from Connecticut.
Colorado Claro	“CC”	A medium brown color found on many cigars, this popular shade is also referred to as “Natural” or “English Market Selection” [EMS]. It is also associated with Connecticut-grown and Connecticut-seed leaves.
Colorado	“Co”	This shade is instantly recognizable by the obvious reddish tint.
Colorado Maduro	“CM”	Darker than Colorado Claro, this color is often associated with leaf from Cameroon, or with Havana Seed tobaccos grown in Honduras or Nicaragua.
Maduro	“Ma”	Very dark brown or black. Tobacco for Maduro wrappers is primarily grown in Connecticut, Mexico, Nicaragua and Brazil.
Oscuro	“Os”	This is black...really black. This shade of wrapper reappeared with more frequency in 2001 and is now in our listings again.

The listing of cigar brands in this book assumes that, unless otherwise noted, handmade cigars utilize long-filler tobacco and machine-made cigars use short-filler.

1.03 SHAPES AND SIZES

There are cigars of every shape and every size for every occasion. From tiny, cigarette-like cigarillos to giant monsters resembling pool cues, there is a wide variety to choose from.

Certain sizes and shapes which have gained popularity over the years and have become widely recognized, even by non-smokers. Cigar shape names such as “corona” or “panatela” have specific meanings to the cigar industry, although there is no formally agreed-to standard for any given size.

The following table lists 20 well-known shapes, and is adapted from Paul Garmirian's explanation of sizes in *The Gourmet Guide to Cigars*, an important work which debuted in 1990 and has been updated many times since.

The “classical” measurements for which this shape is known are given – most often determined by the

CIGAR BASICS

dimensions of famous Cuban cigars of that shape – along with a size and girth range for each size for classification purposes:

<i>Shape</i>	<i>Classical Lngth. x Ring</i>	<i>Length range</i>	<i>Ring range</i>
Giant	9 x 52	8 & up	50 & up
Double Corona	7¾ x 49	6¾-7¾	49 & up
Churchill	7 x 47	6¾-7⅞	46-48
Perfecto	none	all	all
Pyramid	7 x 36⇒54	all	flared
Torpedo	6⅞ x 52	all	tapered
Toro	6 x 50	5⅝-6⅝	48 & up
Robusto	5 x 50	3-5½	48 & up
Grand Corona	6½ x 46	5⅝-6⅝	45-47
Corona Extra	5½ x 46	4½-5½	45-47
Giant Corona	7½ x 44	7½ & up	42-45
Lonsdale	6½ x 42	6½-7¼	40-45
Long Corona	6 x 42	5⅞-6⅜	40-44
Corona	5½ x 42	5⅞-5¾	40-44
Petit Corona	5 x 42	3-5	40-44
Long Panatela	7½ x 38	7 & up	35-39
Panatela	6 x 38	5½-6⅞	35-39
Short Panatela	5 x 38	3-5⅜	35-39
Slim Panatela	6 x 34	5 & up	30-34
Small Panatela	5 x 33	3-5	30-34
Cigarillos	4 x 26	6 & less	29 & less

For the purposes of classification, the cigar models of the 1,473 brands profiled have been separated into these 20 major groups. With the great increase in shaped cigars, here are our classification criteria for *figurados*:

CIGAR BASICS

- ▶ Culebras, which is made up of three small cigars twisted together. This shape has returned to the U.S. market and a few manufacturers have this unique shape available (see section 2.04 for an up-to-date listing).
- ▶ Perfecto, which has two tapered ends. Until recently, there were just a few cigars which offered Perfecto “tips” on the foot, but true Perfectos have made their comeback. Of late, the Salomon, with a closed head and almost-closed foot, has become a size of wonder for many.
- ▶ Torpedo, which was traditionally a fat cigar with two fully closed, pointed ends, but has now come to mean a cigar with an open foot and a straight body which tapers to a closed, pointed head. This “new” torpedo was popularized by the Montecristo (Havana) No. 2. The Torpedo differs from “Pyramid”-shaped cigars, which flare continuously from the head to the foot, essentially forming a triangle.

Like the Torpedo, whose meaning has changed over time, the Royal Corona or Rothschild title is seen less and less on cigars now known as “Robustos.” This change has been rapid over the past 4-5 years, but some manufacturers still label their shorter, thicker cigars as Rothschilds or even as a “Rothchild” (an incorrect spelling of the famous German banking family name). A few manufacturers use both and label their 5-5½-inch, 50-ring models as “Robustos” and reserve the “Rothschild” name for shorter, but still 50-ring, cigars of 4-4¾ inches!

Many other shape names are used by manufacturers; some cigars even have multiple names. For convenience, the many types of small, very thin cigars are grouped under the “Cigarillo” title rather than distributed over a long list of names such as “Belvederes,” “Demi-Tasse” and others.

1.04 ENJOYING CIGARS

The enjoyment of cigars is a personal pleasure, which is as varied as the 1,473 brands profiled. However, there are certain matters which should be considered carefully by all smokers and which require attention.

- ▶ Foremost among these is storage and the usefulness of a humidor in proper working condition cannot be underestimated. The death of a quality cigar due to a lack of care is a sad occurrence indeed.
- ▶ For those carrying cigars on the go, travel humidors or leather cigar cases are important items to keep your cigars safe and in good smoking condition.
- ▶ Finally, the proper tools for cutting and lighting your cigar are necessary accessories for full enjoyment.

In addition, *an often under-utilized resource for the smoker is your local smokeshop.* Most are experienced, knowledgeable and have access to experts, manufacturers and the International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association (IPCPR) trade association. Use their expertise to help you!