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THE CIGAR PRIMER SELECTION

SELECTION: COLORS, SHAPES AND SIZES

Cigar colors and cigar wrappers:

The most obvious characteristic of most cigars is the color of the exterior wrapper. Whether a green Candela wrapper or a dark Maduro-wrapped cigar, the cigar wrapper 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, they can be grouped into seven major color classifications, as noted below:

▶ *Double Claro:*

Also known as “American Market Selection” [AMS] or “Candela,” this is a green wrapper. Once popular, it is rarely found today.

▶ *Claro:*

This is a very light tan color, almost beige in shade; often grown in Connecticut or from Connecticut seeds in Ecuador.

▶ *Colorado Claro:*

A medium brown found on many cigars, this category covers many descriptions. The most popular are “Natural” or “English Market Selection” [EMS]. Tobaccos in this shade are grown in many countries.

▶ *Colorado:*

This shade is instantly recognizable by the obvious reddish tint.

▶ *Colorado Maduro:*

Darker than Colorado Claro in shade, this color is often associated with African tobacco, such as wrappers from Cameroon, or with Havana Seed tobacco grown in Honduras or Nicaragua.

▶ *Maduro:*

Very dark brown to almost black. Tobacco for Maduro wrappers is primarily grown in Connecticut, Mexico, Nicaragua and Brazil. These dark wrappers – which usually offer a sweeter taste – are usually created by leaving leaves on the plant longer and then curing them for longer periods, but there are some who take shortcuts and boil or “cook” leaves to create the dark shade.

▶ *Oscuro:*

This is black . . . really black. This shade of wrapper reappeared with more frequency in 2001 after being almost off the market in the 1990s.

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Sometimes manufacturers will create cigars with more than one wrapper! The forms can be strange and include:

► *“Barber Poles” and “Candy Canes”*

These are cigars with two or three wrappers that are rolled so that the different colors are shown to look like a barber’s pole! The type of cigar was introduced into the American market by Kretek International in 1996 as the Hugo Cassar Diamond Dominican Mystique, using a light-colored Connecticut Shade wrapper and a dark Dominican brewleaf for a unique effect.

In 2004, a tri-colored cigar was introduced by Felipe Gregorio Tobacco World. Called the “Tres Capas,” it showcased a light-colored Connecticut leaf, a dark Indonesian-grown leaf and a candela-colored Nicaraguan-grown wrapper!

► *Dual-wrapper cigars*

Other manufacturers have introduced unique cigar models which use different wrappers for different parts of the cigar! The Honduran-made Black Pearl Black & Tab Shorts debuted in 2004 and the cigar features a light-colored Ecuadorian leaf and a maduro-colored Honduran leaf over one-half of the cigar.

In 2006, Litto Gomez introduced the La Flor Dominicana Ligerio Mysterio, a seven-inch-long perfecto wrapped primarily with a Nicaraguan leaf, but with each end wrapped with Connecticut Broadleaf!

Cigar 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*. The “classical” measurements for which this shape is known are given, 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	49-54
Churchill	7 x 47	6¾-7⅞	46-48
Perfecto	none	all	all
Pyramid	7 x 36→54	all	flared

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<i>Shape</i>	<i>Classical Lngth. x Ring</i>	<i>Length range</i>	<i>Ring range</i>
Torpedo	6½ x 52	all	tapered
Toro	6 x 50	5⅝-6⅝	48-54
Robusto	5 x 50	4½-5½	48-54
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	40-44
Long Corona	6 x 42	5⅞-6⅜	40-44
Corona	5½ x 42	5¼-5¾	40-44
Petit Corona	5 x 42	4-5	40-44
Long Panatela	7½ x 38	7 & up	35-39
Panatela	6 x 38	5½-6⅞	35-39
Short Panatela	5 x 38	4-5⅜	35-39
Slim Panatela	6 x 34	5 & up	30-34
Small Panatela	5 x 33	4-5	30-34
Cigarillos	4 x 26	6 & less	29 & less

Most of the “classical” measurements come from the factory sizes prescribed for specific shapes made in Cuba. However, don’t be confused if cigars which are sized as Churchills are called “Double Coronas” or something else. Manufacturers are not at all careful about what they call their cigars. One example: the Royal Corona or Rothschild title is seen less and less on cigars now known as “Robustos.” This change has been rapid since about 1990, 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 the sake of 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.

With the great increase in interest in shaped cigars, here are our classification criteria for the various kinds of *figurados* you will see:

► *Culebras:*

Spanish for “snake,” a Culebras is made up of three small cigars twisted together. It was created in the 19th Century as a way for manufacturers to let their rollers take three cigars home at night. By twisting three cigars together, the rollers got their cigars for smoking, but the manufacturers were also sure that those cigars could not be sold. Definitely an oddball, the Culebras returned to the U.S. market in the late 1990s and a few manufacturers have this unique shape available.

► *Perfecto:*

This shape has two tapered ends. Until the Cigar Boom of the 1900s, there were just a few cigars which offered Perfecto “tips” on the foot, but true Perfectos have made their comeback. For the bold, take a look at the Puros Indios Gran Victoria (10 inches long by 60 ring) to see a true “pot-bellied” cigar.

This style of cigar is sometime referred to as a “double figurado” referring to the two shaped ends.

► *Torpedo:*

This 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, which debuted in 1935. The Torpedo differs from “Pyramid”-shaped cigars, which flare continuously from the head to the foot, essentially forming a triangle.

And there are still wilder shapes out there: cigars shaped like baseball bats, champagne bottles, footballs, Saguaro cactus, whisk brooms and many others. In 2005, Felipe Gregorio introduced the 3 Tierras cigar, with two small cigarillos nestled together and wrapped into a single unit with a dark wrapper leaf; the finished cigar looked like the business end of a two-bore shotgun!

You’ll want to try different cigars of different sizes for specific occasions. Let your imagination be your guide!