

CHAPTER - 4

TOBACCO

A. HISTORY

It is believed that native American Indians were the first to discover tobacco. In 1492, Christopher Columbus found that they smoked it in pipes. Columbus brought the tobacco seeds to Europe where farmers grew them for medicinal purpose to relax the body. In 1560, a French diplomat Jean Nicot from whose name comes the botanical name *Nicotiana* and the term *nicotine*, introduced its use in France, France and Spain started smoking hand-rolled cigarettes in 1600.

RAISING TOBACCO

Tobacco is a plant whose leaves are used for the production of cigarettes and cigars. It is a fastidious plant that requires a proper soil and a moderate climate. It is an annual plant which means that it has only one crop a year. In countries where tobacco plants flourish, the temperature does not fall below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. It is grown in countries with a tropical or semi-tropical climate such as India, Cuba, Sumatra, Java, Jamaica and the Philippines. The leading producers of tobacco are China, India, Brazil, Russia and the United States. In their original home in the USA, tobacco leaves acquire characteristics that are accepted internationally and are popular. The time span from planting to shipment is about two years.

There are four phases in the manufacture of tobacco:

1. Planting
2. Harvesting
3. Curing
4. Manufacture

Manufacture

Freshly cured tobacco has a sharp aroma and bitter taste. Most tobacco is re-dried to cool the tobacco leaves completely. Tobacco is stored in barrels to age for 2-3 years. before manufacturing tobacco products. During this period some water is added to maintain the moisture content to prevent the leaves from becoming brittle. During this period the tobacco goes through a chemical change called fermentation that gives the tobacco a sweeter, milder flavour and aroma with reduced nicotine content. Flavourings can be added like honey, liquorice, menthol and sugar for different brands. Glycerine is added to moisten tobacco.

VARIETIES OF TOBACCO

Latakia and Perique: *Latakia* is a dark strong variety of tobacco made from plants grown in Syria and other Eastern countries. This is smoke cured by the fire of the Asiatic oak, which turns it into a dark shade. Sometimes camel or cow dung is used as fuel for the fire. *Perique* is another of the same variety grown in Louisiana, USA. Blends are used to strengthen the tobacco.

B. Processing for cigarettes, pipe tobacco & cigars

Pipe tobacco: Pipe tobacco is made in a large and airy building. The cured leaves are spread out on the floor in a lightly compressed mass as they are too dry for immediate use.

Bundles of tobacco are separated and put in steam heated chambers in which the temperature is raised to anything between 120 degrees and 160 degrees Fahrenheit. The stalks and the mid-ribs are removed by hand or machine. The stripped leaves are left in ordinary heaps for about 24 hours during which they moisten making them supple and usable. Blending is done by experts who know the exact proportion in which stronger tobaccos like

Cigarette tobacco: Virginia leaves are blended with other mixtures. As in pipe tobacco, bundles from the warehouses are received and stripped of the mid-ribs by machine or hand. The leaves then go to a machine which cuts them into fine shreds. Excessive moisture and impurities are removed from the tobacco. The tobacco is left for a day or two to mature following which it goes to a cigarette manufacturing machine. The paper for cigarettes is unloaded from a disc and enters the machine that receives the flowing tobacco in a constant stream.

E. CIGARS – shapes, sizes, colours and brand names

CIGARS

The best leaf for the production of cigars is grown in Cuba, Jamaica, Borneo and Java. Less good tobacco but still acceptable to all but the true connoisseur, is produced in India, Japan, South Africa, Germany, Holland, Russia and Hungary. The plants are grown in the same way as other tobacco plants. There are three types of cigar leaf tobacco: (1) **cigar filler tobacco** which is used in the body of the cigar because of its sweet flavour and burns evenly. It constitutes 85% of the cigar; (2) **cigar binder tobacco** holds the cigar filler tobacco together and constitutes 10% of the cigar; and (3) **cigar wrapper tobacco** used for the outer wrapping of the cigar representing 5% of the cigar. It has high quality leaves that are smooth, thin and uniform in colour. It goes through an expensive process to produce such characteristics.

Shapes and Sizes of Cigar

Cigars are grouped according to their sizes and shapes, which together are known as the vitola. According to the shape, cigars are classified into two groups:

1. **PAREJO:** This is the common shape which has cylindrical body, straight sides, one end open, and a round tobacco - leaf cap on the other end.
2. **FIGURADO:** These cigars come in irregular shapes. The common shapes of Figurado are as follows.
 - Torpedo: Like parejo, but the cap is pointed
 - Pyramid: Broad foot and narrows to a pointed cap
 - Perfecto: Narrow at both the ends and bulged in the middle
 - Tuscanian: Also termed as cheroot- long, slim, tapered at the ends, and thickened in the middle.

All cigar manufacturers produce Parejo, and some of them produce both categories. Parejo shape sets the size formats (vitola) for all cigars.

Examples of cigar types and sizes

Type	Length in inches	Length in mm	Ring gauge
Torpedo and Pyramides	6–9	152–228	50–58
Belicoso	5–6	127–152	50–55
Robusto	4.5–5	115–127	50–55
Hermoso	5	127	48

Double Corona

7.5–8

190–203

47–52

Strength

The various **colour** or **shades** of wrapper are:

- **Claro** (light, golden brown)
- **Double Claro** (the result of picking the leaves before reaching maturity)
- **Candela** (light green)
- **Colorado** (reddish mid-brown)
- **Maduro** (darkest) and
- **English Market Selection/Natural** (lighter in colour than Maduro)

F. Care and storage of cigars

Storage

A fine cigar should be kept at between 15.5 °C and 18 °C (60 °F and 65 °F) and between 55 percent and 60 per cent relative humidity, with as little variation as possible. A cigar will pick up any smell or moisture in the air, or dry up and smoke like tinder.

When there is regular turnover, the best presentation and method of keeping cigars is in a humidor. This is a polished box with half a dozen sections, each holding a different size and type of cigar. On the inside of the lid is a pad which is kept damp, but not wet, to maintain the humidity.

Selection and smoking

- Cigar boxes should be opened carefully with a blunt instrument.
- To extract a cigar, press the rounded head and the cigar will tilt upwards for easy extraction.
- Cigars should not be handled before selection. Rolling a cigar near the ear, sometimes called 'listening to the band', says nothing at all about the cigar and simply damages it.

Famous Brands of Mild Havana Cigars:

Bolivar, Larranga, Romeo, Romeo-Y-Julietta, Upman, La Corona (outstanding), Bock, Havana, Henry Clay, Byrons, J.S. Murais, Chana