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A WORD FROM...

Kacper Hamilton - The Art of the Cigar

'If there is a secret to the cigar, it is in the slow, dignified, measured gesture of a cigar smoker' - Zino Davidoff
One of my favorite stories about cigars is of how the 'Montecristo' cigar company came

to be named. At the time when Menendez purchased the Particulares factory in 1935, *The Count of Montecristo* by Alexander Dumas was read aloud by the lector and was particularly popular amongst the torcedores (cigar rollers). The company was therefore named after this renowned story - a cigar and its origin should evoke rich feelings and memories from the past, present and future.

Smoking a cigar is a personal experience and indulgence, but one in which certain etiquette and rules can certainly increase the enjoyment. Every cigar is unique in shape, size, taste and colour. The art of smoking starts from the moment when carefully selecting a cigar. This is by no means an easy task; the cigar must match the mood of the time, climate and one's particular palette; it can therefore take a particularly keen aficionado a while to find their ideal smoke for the occasion.

Following the selection, the act of cutting the head of the cigar is a further vital part of the ritual. I often use a double bladed guillotine cutter, which creates an even round cut giving a smooth thick draw, which also helps prevent tar accumulation.

Lighting the cigar is best done using a wooden match, gasoline lighter or wood shavings providing a natural and odorless taste. Each step of this ceremony should be well respected and celebrated. When a cigar comes to the end of its life (about two-thirds through), it should not be crushed like an insignificant bundle of dry leaves, but should be left to slowly self-extinguish with dignity.

The cigar is a sacred object, living and developing with time, a subject of passion, grown by nature and eloquently cultivated by hand; therefore it should always be treated as such. So for some, smoking a cigar can be a rather private affair; such whom would probably not appreciate being asked for a cigar from their stocks, or for someone else to request to try their already lit cigars.

The cigar has the power to demand respect; it has the soul of a nobleman. The deep rich aroma of the fermented tobacco leaves enchants one not only in its ignited form, but also when aging in a well-maintained humidor. Created to stimulate all the senses, smoking a cigar is sensorial as well as philosophical, where ceremony plays a significant aspect of the experience. One must not be hasty with the ritual, but show well-deserved respect by allocating enough time to feel, reflect, ponder and meditate.

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