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## **Cigars: luxury or popular passion?** **celebreMagazine**

by mb@admin  
5-6 minuti

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I never smoked a cigarette in my life and I had my first experience with cigars at the age of 21 during my international student programme in New York in 1975. I was never addicted to tobacco but since the first experience. I appreciated the taste and the pleasure that accompanies the moment of smoking. Rarely during the day, only in the evening or in the late evening, along with a moderate glass of matching drink such as Armagnac, aged Cognac, Ron (not Rhum) or single malt Whisky, Whiskey or Bourbon.



No ice, no soda, just the original peat. It takes time, while cigarettes, in my opinion, are consumed nervously and run out in a few minutes. I don't appreciate the tar or the paper that wraps the cigarette; cigars are made only with tobacco leaves with an uneven number of different flavours. The legend recounts that they not only are handmade but also rolled on the inner thigh of the women employed in the factories. Fascinating but to be closely checked.



In 1992 the editor of Wine Spectator proposed a new magazine Cigar Aficionado that I subscribed immediately. According to their records, I'm one of the few Italians with a complete collection of the issues, with a complimentary extension to 2025 due to the difficulties in the delivery during the first phase of the pandemic in 2020.



The consistency of a cigar is due to the process of manufacturing through three components:

- Filler: inner part of the trapa leaf

The tria (filler) or filling can consist of whole leaves, called premium in the most valuable cigars, or chopped tobacco.

- Binder: part that gives to the capote of the cigar

This is coated with an additional tobacco leaf called a binder or sub-band, whose function is to give the cigar a first shape.

- Wrapper: outer strap fastened with capa odorless plant resin

The tripa and canopy are in turn surrounded by another leaf called capa (wrapper) or fascia, specially stretched, processed and sealed to the body of the cigar with a completely odorless and tasteless plant resin. The head must be removed or pierced at the “head”.



Usually, best cigars are identified with Habanos, produced and in the past exported everywhere from Cuba. Today, all Caribbean Islands and Central American countries are recognized as the most famous and recognized perimeter for fine cigars because of the quality of tobacco and the long-lasting experience in the manufacture. As well known, since 1959 after the Cuban revolution, USA and some other countries banned imports of goods with an embargo that is still operative, nonetheless the tentative modification suggested by Barack Obama in 2014 but never approved by the US Congress. The current situation shows the persistency of US embargo together with a free import regulation for many other western countries like Italy.



A consequence of this singular condition is the level of prices that distinguish Center American and Cuban cigars produced and sold by the same companies with the same brand. Personally, I do not agree with the current mood of considering better by definition the second. Some blind tests organized often in USA certify that the difference of quality, especially after decades of production abroad, doesn't justify the high difference of price that you find especially in Great Britain, but also in Italy. Since few years ago there were some brands that were born after 1959 and that were manufactured only in Cuba. The most famous are Cohiba and Cuaba born in 1996. Currently both are produced also abroad from Cuba.

**Cigar Sizes (Length & Gauge)**



Turning to examine the Italian market, Sigaro Toscano is a very well reputed company with a wide variety of different brands. The image in the market is more popular, but personally, I consider them an adequate differentiation in my consumption. The best and most famous difference between Habanos and Latin American cigars is due to the particular and unregular shape without the binder support.

They are crooked, but the absence of the binder leaves the cigar to be lighted many times during the smoke, an opportunity that is very difficult with other cigars without impacting the flavour and the consistency of the cigar.



Not marginally I have to underline that currently, since 2010, is very difficult to smoke a cigar out of your personal home, because of the heavy limitations imposed by the current legislation. In New York is forbidden also in Central Park and you can only attend some special locations where you deposit your humidor or buy your preferred brands, paying an enrollment fee as a member. In my sporting club in Milan, there are only three small areas on 70 acres, where you can enjoy your cigar. Smoking after a good meal is virtually, impossible!



I cannot express a scientific opinion about the damages of smoking cigars, but my customary pace, 2 or 3 per week, diminishes but does not cancel well-known dangers, exalting the moment of tasting them!

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