

A History Of Cigars

Ever wonder where cigar smoking began? So have I so I decided to look into it, here's what I found. Cigars have been around for over 1,000 years! The original native population of the various islands in the Caribbean as well as the rest of Mesoamerica began making and smoking cigars as early as 900 AD. How do we know this? Archaeologists discovered a ceramic vessel at a Mayan dig site in Uaxactun, Guatemala which was painted with the likeness of a man smoking a cigar.

The explorer, Christopher Columbus who found the Americas by accident when looking for a shorter trade route to India, is credited with introducing smoking to Europe and even with the actual discovery of smoking even though just like his "discovery" of the Americas, the true credit belongs to someone else which in this case would be the indigenous people of the Caribbean. Two of his crewmen from his 1492 voyage, Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis Torres reportedly went ashore in Cuba and smoked tobacco wrapped in husks made from maize and were therefore the first Europeans to smoke cigars.

By the 19th century cigar smoking had become commonplace, while cigarettes were still relatively rare. The manufacturing of cigars had become an important industry and many people were employed by cigar makers in factories before the ability to mechanize the process became available. As a side note, remember this though, all modern high quality cigars are hand rolled with some cigar boxes still bearing the phrase "Hecho a Mano" , which means made by hand, to prove the cigars were handmade.

Unfortunately for cigar connoisseurs, the cigar got mixed up in the politics of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 when John F. Kennedy and Fidel Castro were butting heads and Kennedy wanting to impose sanctions on Castro's Communist government, ordered a trade embargo against Cuba which is still in place as of this writing in February of 2006.

Americans were not allowed to buy the Cuban cigars which are still considered by most to be the finest cigars available. One interesting tidbit is that before signing the executive order putting the embargo into effect, Kennedy had his press secretary Pierre Salinger go to Cuba and pick up 1,000 Petit H. Upmanns Cuban cigars. Once Salinger delivered the cigars Kennedy signed the order.

The cigars which were bought before the embargo were considered legal and were known as "pre-embargo Cubans". It is still to this day illegal for Americans to buy or import Cuban cigars, however as usual with embargoes or prohibition there is a large scale smuggling trade where they can be obtained and in addition with the use of home computers and the internet it has become very easy for Americans to get Cuban cigars from other countries like Canada where no embargo exists.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

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