

Cutting Tools For Your Cigars

There are a number of devices that will help you cut your cigar in a single, swift motion that minimizes the chances of tearing the wrapper. Many aficionados have several cutters, from compact wafer-thin cutters that nestle in a pocket to more massive cutters that are less likely to be misplaced.

Suggested strategy: buy yourself your first cutter and drop gift hints for the rest. Engraved initials make sure that valuable cutters find their way back to you after they have been borrowed.

Of course, you already have a set of cutters: your teeth. But there are a few drawbacks to the biting method. First, it's hard to see what you're doing. Second, your teeth aren't as sharp as a cutter's razor blade. And third, you end up with an unsightly wad of tobacco in your mouth.

Knives, on the other hand, are easy to keep sharp. But it takes great skill and very steady eyes and hands to cut cigars properly with a knife. If you do choose this method, you'll want to avoid cleansing your pocketknife with oils, which may pollute your cigar.

Piercers, sometimes called lances, are intriguing, but hard to use. If a cigar is pierced too deeply, a tunnel may form that causes the center of the cigar to burn too hot. Moreover, the area opened by piercing has two drawbacks: 1\ the smoker may not get the even draw that would give him or her the full benefit of all the different leaves blended into the bunch in the cigar; 2\ since tars and nicotine tend to accumulate at the openings that channel the smoke, the small hole produced by a piercer will likely concentrate these nasty substances even further, sending more of them into the smoker's mouth and air passages.

Double and single-bladed cutters, scissors and desktop devices are designed to make a cut across the end of the cigar. These are generally the best options.

When you are using a single-bladed cutter, the cigar should be placed against the far side of the opening--away from the blade--and the blade brought down to touch the cigar before you make the cutting stroke. This keeps the cigar properly positioned, and prevents motion that might lead to tearing or to the cut happening in the wrong place. Once the cigar is in position, cut boldly, using swift, even pressure. A true aficionado cuts like a surgeon: quickly and confidently.

With single-bladed cutters it's important to make sure the compartment that sheaths the blade doesn't fill up with bits of tobacco. This will gum up the works and impede quick, clean cuts. All cutters should be kept as sharp as possible. Note that it is more difficult to sharpen some of the smaller, more intricate cutters.

The advantage of double-bladed cutters is that the cutting proceeds from both sides simultaneously. There is less chance that the cigar wrapper will be torn as it's pushed against a dull surface. Again, the technique is to rest the cigar against a blade before clicking the cutter shut.

Special cigar-cutting scissors can make extremely clean cuts and are an elegant accessory, but they must be wielded with some care. The fit and balance of cigar scissors is important and as unique to an individual as those of golf clubs. Try a pair out before investing in them. They should balance easily in one hand so that you'll be able to hold them steady through the cutting motion while you hold a cigar in the other hand. If the handles and blades don't balance with each other when you hold them, the scissors aren't for you. Also, if the hinge is placed so that you cannot move your fingers without stretching past your hand's normal span, then try another pair.

It's worth investing in a good cutter. Remember that a bad cut will ruin a good cigar, and it doesn't take a lot of ruined cigars to add up to the cost of even a very elegant cutter.