

Cutting Your Cigar

Watch the actors in old movies and you'll see that there are a host of ways to open the closed end of a cigar before smoking it. Some characters used a pocket knife to cut a neat V-shaped notch. Others used horseshoe nails as piercers. Certain film stars in tough-guy roles bit off the end and spat it out. Some people today still use these methods but, for the most part, cutting cigars has become a bit less colorful, and a bit more elegant.

The better the cigars you smoke, the more attention you'll want to pay to the cut. A bad cut will ruin a cigar.

The object of the cut is to create an ample, smooth opening for smoking without damaging the cigar's structure. With most cigars, this means cutting away part of the cap or flag leaf that closes the cigar, while leaving some of it glued around the end to keep the filler leaves together. If you are making a wedge cut or a bull's-eye cut, it means not penetrating too deeply into the cigar. You want to create a large, exposed surface of cleanly cut filler leaves that will allow equal draw from the core and the rim of the cigar.

On most cigars, you'll want to make the cut about one-sixteenth of an inch (about two millimeters) from the end. When you aren't carrying a precision measuring device, you can simply look for the shoulder--the place where the curved end of the cigar starts to straighten out--and make your cut there.

Another alternative is to make a V-shaped wedge cut in the end of the cigar. This style of cut exposes a lot of surface area and makes it easy to draw smoke through the cigar. Unfortunately, the draw is sometimes too good, and the cigar will smoke too hot. Wedge cuts are a particularly bad idea for people who tend to chew their cigars. If they chomp down hard enough while the wedge is horizontal, the opening may collapse and tear the structure of the cigar, closing off the draw.