

## How to Buy Cigars as a Gift

Is there a cigar aficionado on your gift list? Wondering how to choose a decent cigar for a friend or loved one? Even if you know nothing about cigars or choosing a good cigar, just learning a few basics can help you sniff out (sometimes literally) a good cigar to give to a friend.

Fortunately, cigars have now entered the mainstream. Once the symbol of the rich and powerful, it's easier than ever for just about anyone to purchase a good cigar. Of course, you probably won't be able to buy your friend a box of top-tier Cuban cigars, but you can definitely buy them a good quality cigar that will put a smile on their face.

First, visit your local tobacconist or specialty smoke shop for the best quality and widest selection. Avoid 'drugstore' cigars. Although they may be inexpensive and convenient to purchase, drugstore cigars are usually filled with preservatives and generally of poorer quality. They may contain, at minimum, saltpeter, paper, glycerin, and other preservatives and irritants. You should make sure that the cigars you purchase are made of 100% tobacco. If you have any questions regarding the cigars ingredients, ask the salesperson. An experienced and knowledgeable sales clerk will be able to tell you extensive information about the ingredients.

Your local tobacco shop is a good place to shop because you will generally be allowed to smell and touch the cigars. Squeeze the cigar gently. A good quality cigar will give a little when squeezed. The cigar should be firm, with no excessively soft or hard spots. Never buy a lumpy cigar. Look at the wrapper. If you notice any drying or discoloration, best not to buy it. Ideally, the wrapper should be tight and smooth. Inspect the color of the tobacco to make sure it is even. Do this by inspecting the end of the cigar. Some color variation is normal, but if the color changes abruptly, chances are the cigar was not rolled properly. A cigar that is not rolled properly may result in an uneven burning and unpleasant odors.

If you're not sure how much your friend smokes, choose a longer cigar. Longer cigars tend to have a 'cooler' taste—an excellent choice for beginners. If you know your friend is an experienced and regular smoker, choose a cigar that is greater in diameter. These cigars tend to have a richer flavor that experienced smokers will appreciate.

