

<http://www.tobaccopipes.com/blog/cellaring-tobacco-the-dos-and-donts/>

Many pipe smokers consider cellaring tobacco a dividing line between the true connoisseur and a casual smoker.

When you hear a pipe smoker talking about his tobacco cellar your thoughts are usually one of the following:

“What in the world is a tobacco cellar?”

“This guy/girl must really be an expert tobacconist!”

“How do I become that smoker?”

Cellaring tobacco is a particularly individualistic routine . Every person’s stash and setup is different in its own way. There is not a set way to cellar pipe tobacco. There is plenty of room for improvisation.

While there is space for improvisation and opinion, there are a few guidelines to follow if you want to ensure the best experience from aging and storing your pipe tobacco.

Consider this a beginner’s How To Guide to cellaring your favorite blends. Or, for the experienced collector, a refresher course to ensure your stock pile stays in tip top shape.

Why Cellar Pipe Tobacco

There are many benefits to aging and storing our tobacco.

The main reason cellaring tobacco is a great idea is because tobacco--just like wine and wisdom--improves with age.

When stored properly, the flavors and aroma of the blend are locked up with the tobacco. This gives chemistry time to perfect and meld together all aspects of the blend into itself.

For example, the Sutliff Private Stock Kasimir contains Latakia, Orientals, Virginian, and cube Burley tobacco. By allowing this tobacco to age, each of these tobaccos absorb the flavor of one another, causing the blend to harmonize. **Age brings uniformity and clarity to tobacco blends.**

UPDATE OCTOBER 2015: The Sutliff Kasimir Blend has been discontinued, however the comments on the benefits of aging this type of blend remain relevant.

Another reason why cellaring tobacco should be practiced is because I believe we are living in the golden age of tobacco blends.

Brian Levine, host of the Pipes Mag radio show, states that this is the cheapest pipe tobacco is ever going to be in our lifetime. With government regulations, inflation, and fewer farms, the price of tobacco is only going to go up.

With this in mind, cellaring tobacco is a very clear and wise investment in the future of your favorite hobby, smoking a pipe. If you are a committed pipe smoker and plan to continue for years to come, it might not be a bad idea to stock up now. Think of it like a savings plan for your future happiness.

Tobacco's Reaction To Aging

Different tobaccos will react differently to the aging process. Here are a few quick examples:

- **Virginia Tobacco** - The natural sugar content and unique chemical structure make Virginia ideal for aging. No matter how long it is aged, its quality will only increase with age, at least in our lifetime.
- **Orientals** - After a few years in the cellar, Oriental tobaccos will move away from the intrinsic spice and begin picking up flavors of fruit. There is no universal "sweet spot" time for aging Orientals; they all age differently. However, it is safe to say that the peak will be sometime around 30-40 years in the cellar, and will

henceforth decrease in flavor.

- **Burley Tobacco** - Burley is almost always blended with Virginia tobacco, so the same rules of aging apply. **WARNING:** be careful in aging certain aromatics. Some tobacco companies put a heavy coating on their Aromatic blends. This coating, if too heavy, will actually hurt the tobacco with age.
- **Latakia** - Like Orientals, Latakia will mellow out after a few years. It will start to lose its punch. This could be a good or bad thing, depending on the blend. If what we affectionately know as, “Lat Bombs” are your thing, don’t age it. If you prefer a milder experience, aging will take the rough edges off.

How To Cellar Tobacco - The Do's

Cellaring tobacco is much easier than you may think. By following these simple steps, you will be on your way to building up your own personalized pipe tobacco storehouse!

Control The Temperature And Humidity

Controlling the temperature and humidity of your tobacco is the key to proper aging. Here’s how to do it:

- Store your tobacco in a place that is somewhere between 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit. Too much heat will spoil the tobacco (a lot like meat), while not enough will prevent the aging process from really

beginning.

- Store your tobacco in a place that has the lowest amount of humidity possible. Storing your tobacco in places of high humidity can threaten the seal of your cans, jars, or whatever you store with. If the metal corrodes and the seal is broken, your tobacco can no longer age properly.

Store Your Tobacco In A Dark Place

Limiting the light exposure will protect your containers, thus protecting your tobacco.

Personally, my cellar consists of multiple cardboard boxes in my office. Your system doesn't need to be fancy, do what is practical for you. Closed cardboard boxes protect the tobacco from light exposure. They also work well because a closed cardboard box will absorb the humidity before it has time to corrode the metal in my jars and tins.

Use Unopened Tins Or Sealed Glass Jars For Storing

Having an unopened tobacco tin is ideal. However, if you are storing bulk tobacco or did not buy a spare tin, I suggest using canning jars, such as mason jars. Canning jars easily create airtight seals. And they happen to look really good stuffed with tobacco!

Create A Plan For Smoking Your Tobacco

I recommend always taking taste notes. Not only will this be helpful, but also brings more meaning to the hobby.

Have a set time you will open your aged tobacco. I suggest to let tobacco age periods of six months, one year, two years, five years, and 10 years. It is here the taste notes will be helpful. Not many people can clearly remember the nuances of a tobacco five years after they smoked it.

Don'ts Of Cellaring Tobacco

Do Not Store With Cigars Or In A Humidor

Pipe tobacco and cigars are both very aromatic. The last thing you want is for your tobacco and cigars to start taking on the taste of each other as they age.

A humidor is the exact opposite of what you want to happen to your tobacco. You will want to keep your cans in a low level of humidity; a humidor is meant to keep the humidity level up.

Do Not Store In Plastic

One of the worst crimes a smoker can commit is to store their tobacco in plastic long term.

People believe it is OK to store tobacco in plastic, mostly because when they buy tobacco from their local tobacconist, they store the tobacco in a plastic bag. The intent behind that bag is that you take it home and store it in a jar, or that you smoke it relatively quickly. We are never given plastic bags to keep as storage containers.

The chemicals in the tobacco will begin to erode part of the plastic. This is then absorbed into the tobacco (not good). On top of that, the plastic will itself absorb the tobacco. It will begin to ghost (change colors). Just like how you store chili in a tub container, and after a few weeks the container is no longer clear, but brown, your tobacco will do the same.

“Pounds of tobacco are often delivered to shops in plastic”, you may say.

The truth is is these plastic bags have been chemically engineered to store tobacco for up to five years. So they are safe from the effect.

Do Not Add Moisture

If you add moisture to your tobacco, chances are after only a few months, you will find that your precious aged

tobacco has molded. It is now ruined.

The tobacco has been stored and sold with the moisture content at the level the blender would like it to be sold at. It is my personal opinion that if you want to get the most out of your tobacco you should smoke it the way its inventor intended.

Do Not Be Afraid To Begin Cellaring

Cellaring tobacco is a fun part of the pipe smoking hobby. Many of us become very passionate about our collection.

The work, research, and patience it takes to build a commendable cellar can seem daunting. But just as any other collection worth acquiring , there is little reward for little work. Now go out there and start organizing a cellar that represents you as a smoker!