

A LITTLE TASTE OF CUBA

PIPE GLOSSARY

A

African Block Meerschaum

From Tanzania, Africa and is usually stained in varying shades of brown, black and yellow.

Air Cured

Dried naturally, sheltered from sunlight. This drying is carried out on the whole plant or as individual leaves reach maturity. There are generally five crops in a season. Sugar produced by the plants is degraded during the three months treatment.

Amber

A substance that is brittle, and feels like glass to the teeth - usually used for bits and stems with meerschaum pipes.

American Blend

A Blend having the following components: Virginia, Burley and Oriental in variable proportions to which a "sauce" consisting of humidifying and sugar elements is added. These blends are finally sprayed with aromatic flavors.

Apple

This pipe has a round bowl and as the name suggests - like an apple.

Aromatic

Originally mainly from Europe and America, these have been enthusiastically taken up by the younger smoker, with rich flavors like cherry, orange, chocolate, coffee, whisky and many more additives.

B

Bent

The bent pipe is either half bent or full bent. The bowl varies in shape and may be like another model, e.g., "bent Bulldog".

Billiard

The billiard is characterized by a fairly cylindrical bowl, canted very slightly forward, with a round shank, roughly as long as the bowl is tall, and either a tapered or saddle stem that makes up roughly half the overall length of the pipe. The Lovat is similar to a billiard, with a shank that is 1.5-2 times the height of the bowl, and generally much slimmer. The Lovat is always fitted with a saddle stem. A Liverpool can be thought of as a Lovat with a tapered stem.¹

Birdseye

Also called Crossgrain, Birdseye is the grain of the wood, seen on end.

Bit

The part of the pipe stem that fits in the mouth. Also called the mouthpiece.

¹ From the website glpease.com.

Bowl

The part of the pipe that holds the tobacco.

Bowl Coating

Bowl Coating is exactly that, something that a pipe maker coats the bowl, usually to help speed up break in.

Briar

The name is a corruption of the French word "bruyere", or heath tree, a low shrub found throughout Europe, though mainly around the Mediterranean. The true briar is only made out of the very hard, dry root of the mature shrub which may be anything up to 250 years old.

Bulldog

A squat pipe. There is an indentation around the widest part of the bowl. Has a square shank.

Burl

The burl is the dense mass of wood at the center of the root system of the Heath tree (*Erica arborea*). It is from the burl that pipes are carved.

Burley

Highly developed tobacco plants, the culture of which has recently expanded. This type of tobacco does not ferment like the "Dark", but generally "matures". Burley, though not very aromatic, is very useful in blending.

C

Calabash

A South African gourd, similar to a squash, grown specifically for use in pipes. The shape is determined as the gourd grows by placing small blocks under the stem, forcing it into a gentle curve. The mature gourd is cut and dried, then fitted with a cork gasket to receive a meerschaum bowl. The finished pipe offers one of the coolest, driest smokes available. Immortalized by Sherlock Holmes and in Jimmy Durante's signature line - "Good night Mrs. Calabash - wherever you are."

Canadian

This pipe is again similar to the Billiard but has a long shank and a short, oval stem.

Cake

A small layer of protective carbon allowed to form and remain in the bowl of a briar pipe. The cake protects the briar from burning but too much cake can split the pipe by causing uneven heating of the bowl.

Carnuaba

A wax, used to give pipes their shine.

Casing

An integral part of an aromatic tobacco blend. Casing, also referred to as "sauce," is the mixture of aromatic compounds, flavorings, and binding agents sprayed on aromatic blends.

Cavendish

Cavendish is a method of treating tobacco, not a type of tobacco. Cavendish is mainly produced from Virginia and Burley tobaccos, and happens by steaming the tobacco, and then storing it under pressure for several days (or weeks), to allow it to ferment.

Cherry Wood

The wood of the Cherry Tree. At one time, a popular wood for making pipes. Now only a few companies produce cherry wood pipes.

Churchwarden

A pipe with an extremely long stem.

Clay

A pipe made from Clay. There are two main varieties; hand-rolled and slip-cast. Hand-rolled are exactly that. The clay is rolled by hand into the shape of the pipe, and a wire inserted into it before firing to create a draw-hole. A Slip cast pipe is one made with a more liquid clay poured into a mold. In general, hand-rolled clays are held in higher regard.

Corncob

A pipe made from the interior cob of an ear of corn.

Cube

A particular cut of tobacco, in which the leaf is cut into small roughly square chunks. A popular cut for Burley tobacco.

Curing

Curing is the process of drying newly harvested tobacco. Curing takes many forms, such as air curing, flue curing, fire curing, etc.

D

Delrin

Delrin is an outstanding general purpose mechanical plastic, and is popular for its versatility in industry today. It is used by some pipe makers for tenons.

DGT (Delayed Gratification Technique)

DGT is an acronym that stands for "Delayed Gratification Technique." The idea is that some tobaccos improve if they are lit, allowed to go out, and left to stand for a period of time, either minutes or hours, before relighting and finishing the bowl. Virginias are most popular for this method of smoking. In my experience, Latakia mixtures do not fare as well, and tobaccos incorporating cigar leaf (such as my own Robusto) are generally not the best candidates. (You wouldn't put a cigar down for an hour, hoping to come back to a rich, wonderful cigar. The same holds true with the cigar leaf in a pipe blend.) If you enjoy an English or Balkan mixture, light it, smoke it, enjoy it. Leave the DGT for Virginias.²

Dottle

Unburned tobacco left in the heel of a pipe.

Dublin

A pipe having a half-ellipse (parabola) bowl and any kind of shank and stem, bent or straight.

E

English

An English blend is usually one which has as its base a Virginia tobacco, to which are added Oriental tobaccos, Latakia, and perhaps some Perique. In common usage, 'English' also denotes a tobacco that is free from artificial flavoring.

² This definition also comes from glpease.com.

Ebonite

A variety of Lucite patented and used solely by Ashton of England. It is argued that it is more durable than vulcanite and more comfortable than Lucite

F

Ferrule

A ring or band around a pipe's shank. Commonly seen materials for pipe ferrules are acrylic, silver, horn and bone.

Fill

Places where a wood filler has been used to smooth over surface defects. Generally regarded as lessening the pipe's value.

Finish

The techniques, stains and waxes applied to the exterior surface of a pipe. Common finish terms are: smooth, rusticated, sandblasted, natural.

Fire Cured

Kentucky fire-cured tobacco is Stalk-Cured under controlled humidity in barns with a series of gentle smoldering hardwood fires throughout. Considerable care is taken to achieve proper yellowing; firing requires considerable skill so as not to "burn" the tobacco or cause tobacco rot through too high humidity. The resultant tobacco possesses a powerful smoky note reminiscent of smoked meats and provides a rich "smoky & sweet note" in tobacco products. Fire-Cured Tobacco is much less pungent than Latakia, a sun-cured & smoke-cured tobacco produced in the mid-east with a unique fuel source.

Flake

A type of tobacco produced by being compacted under great pressure and heated for days at a time, producing cakes of tobacco which when taken from the press are guillotined into thin slices.

Flame Grain

Flame grain is the name applied to grain on a pipe that is almost 'straight grain' but displays some variation in the thickness of the grain, resulting in a "tiger's eye" type of look.

Flue Cured

Flue-cured tobacco is lemon, orange, or mahogany in color, with high sugar content and medium-to-high nicotine content. Flue curing requires a closed building equipped with a system of ventilation and a source of heat. When heat and humidity are controlled, leaf color changes, moisture is quickly removed, and the leaf and stems dry.

Freehand

Used to refer to any pipe shape that is outside of the 'normal', meaning named, styles of pipe making. These were popularized by Danish carvers in the first half of the twentieth century, but now every region of pipe making has at least one producer of freehand shapes, and many traditional carvers occasionally create a freehand or two.

G

Gourd

Gourd refers to a Calabash actually made from that gourd, to distinguish it from a briar pipe carved in the general shape of a calabash. Often used as 'gourd calabash'.

H

Heath

Erica Arborea, the heath tree is the source of briar burls, from which briar pipes are carved. It grows best in the arid soils of the Mediterranean and Asia Minor.

Heel

The bottom of the inside of the pipe bowl.

Humidor

A thing in which to store tobacco. Ideally - cheap and air-tight (try Tupperware) - one places fresh tobacco in it and once sealed, it will maintain the tobacco in a smokable consistency indefinitely. A major alternate use of a humidor is the "re-moistening" of dried out tobacco. For this action one adds a source of moisture to the tobacco in the humidor before sealing.

L

Latakia

A city in Syria, for which a particular Oriental varietal tobacco is named. Latakia is now produced in both Syria and in Cyprus. Latakia is the result of a curing process involving fire curing the leaves over controlled fires of aromatic woods and fragrant herbs. Probably the most well-known spice tobacco. Mainly grown in Cyprus and northern Syria. After the leaves are harvested and dried, they are hung in tightly closed barns and smoke-cured. Small smoldering fires of oak and pine fill the barn with smoke, and covering the leaves with smoke particles.

Lovat

A billiard shape pipe with a saddle bit.

Lucite

Trade name for a very hard and durable plastic. It is commonly used as a material for pipe stems on both hand made and mass-produced pipes. Many makers favor Lucite because of its durability; however, many consider it not as comfortable in the mouth as vulcanite. It is particularly favored over vulcanite (which is softer) among Italian pipe craftsmen.

M

Meerschaum

"Meerschaum" is a German word meaning literally, "sea-foam," alluding to the belief that it was the compressed whitecaps of waves, just as it is said in mythology for the goddess of beauty - Aphrodite. Meerschaum is a hydrated magnesium silicate. Magnesium doesn't make it strong and the hydrogen and oxygen doesn't make it cool. It is the crystalline structure, the arrangement of the magnesium, silicon, oxygen, and hydrogen atoms in a rigid crystalline structure that makes sepiolite (the clay mineral that is identified by pipe smokers as meerschaum) so good for smoking. The average size of the meerschaum blocks extracted from the clay is about the size of a grapefruit.

Mixture

A mixture is a blend of different tobaccos, each chosen for their particular characteristics, assembled by a blender to achieve a particular tobacco taste or experience.

Mouthpiece

The mouthpiece is all of the pipe that is not, technically, the bowl. It is made up of the lip, the draft hole, and the tenon.

O

Oom Paul

The Oom-Paul (Boer for Uncle Paul) is a pipe shape named after Paul Kruger, President of the ZAR (Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek) during the late 1800's. It is defined as a bent pipe that has the end of the stem roughly in line with the top of the bowl.

Oriental

Oriental, or Turkish, is a spice tobacco known for its nutty, somewhat "sweet and sour" flavor. It's a main component in English blends, along with Latakia (which is itself an Oriental that's been flavored with smoke). This tobacco derives its name from the area in which it's grown: the Eastern Mediterranean. All of the varietals, in fact, are named after the towns or regions they come from. Thus Yenidje and Smyrna are Greek, Samsun and Izmir are Turkish, Drama is Macedonian, and Xanthe is from the region of Thrace, which is mostly in Greece. For all intents and purposes this is all one region, united for many years under Turkish rule (hence the interchangeable terms "Oriental" and "Turkish".) Oriental tobacco plants characteristically have a great deal of small leaves. The finished product ranges in color from yellow to brown, and is strongly aromatic. Its smell is reminiscent of used horse bedding, which could possibly explain why it's often mixed with Latakia.

P

Perique

Perique is a spice tobacco, usually used in Virginia blends. It has a dark, oily appearance, and a taste of pepper and figs. Its flavor is very strong, so it isn't usually found in high percentages in a blend. It can be smoked straight, but isn't intended to be. Its role as a complement to VA's is not just because of its flavor. Being highly acidic, it tends to alleviate alkaline tongue bite, which is so often a problem with Virginia tobacco. The process by which this tobacco is produced predates Columbus. The Choctaw Indians of (what would later be) Louisiana would make it by pressing it into hollow logs with a long pole, and securing it with weights. After the Acadians (Cajuns) settled the area in the mid-1700's, the Choctaws taught this process to a French colonist by the name of Pierre Chenet. The finished product was referred to as Perique, a Cajun variation on the word "prick". This referred either to the phallic shape of the carottes (the tight bundles of market-ready Perique), or Chenet himself, as it was his nickname!

Pipe

Narrow tube of clay, wood, etc. with bowl at one end for drawing in smoke of tobacco. - Oxford English Dictionary

Plug

Conditioned with water, the blend is slowly pressed in large steam presses for several days to meld the rich and varied aromas. The cakes are then divided into plug form, allowing the smoker to cut and rub it out to their own preference.

Poker

A pipe with poker bowl, a cylindrical bowl not rounded at the bottom; usually stem connects to bowl at abrupt angles, without any sort of contouring or smoothing. Straight pokers with round shanks look like judge's gavels. Pokers with bent stems may be called cherrywoods.

Pot

A pipe with a pot bowl, provided it cannot be described any other way. May be bent or straight, and may be found with various shanks, but round or oval seem most common.

Prince

Bowl resembles squat apple or apple with flattened bottom; shank is round and short, stem is long and almost always tapered; there may be a slight bend, but never more than 1/8. Sometimes called "Prince of Wales," or "Prince Regent," this shape was designed for Prince Albert (Edward VII) of England. A prince with an oval shank (usually bent) is a diplomat.

R

Rack

A storage place for your pipes. To most enjoy pipe smoking one needs several pipes to accommodate one's moods and activities. (See Rotation, below.)

Reamer

A tool for smoothing out the "cake" and trimming it down to a desired size. Reamers come in a variety of shapes and functionalities.

Ribbon

Tobacco cut into long, thin ribbons, though not as long or as fine as shag.

Rotation

A rotation is a system by which a pipe smoker keeps his/her pipes in good working order by varying when each pipe is smoked. Most smokers own more than one pipe, and their selection of pipes can be said to be their 'rotation'. It can also be said that the particular order in which the pipes are smoked is the 'rotation'. However it is used, 'rotation' speaks to the need for you to allow each pipe to rest for a period between smokes. How long your pipes need to be rested is a hotly debated topic, but it seems that the minimum time acceptable is around 48 hours, so to build a decent rotation of pipes, you will need to purchase (number of pipes you smoke in a day) x 2, to allow a two day rest between pipes.

Rubbed Out

A flake tobacco that has been partially or completely broken up.

Rusticated

A finishing technique in which the outside surface is decoratively roughed up.

S

Sandblast

A finishing technique in which the softer wood in the grain is blasted away, leaving the harder rings standing out.

Shag

Tobacco which has been shredded very finely. Renowned as the type of preference for Sherlock Holmes. At that time, shag was considered an inferior grade.

Shank

The part of the pipe that joins the bowl and the stem

Stain

A pigment, either vegetal or mineral, applied to the outside of a pipe to achieve a particular coloring.

Stem

The part that connects the shank with the bit.

Straight

A pipe without a bend in the shank.

Straight Grain

Grain so densely packed together that it runs in perfect straight lines, as opposed to the wavier 'flame-grain'

Sun Cured

Sun curing is the drying of uncovered sticks or strings of leaf in the Sun. Of all Sun-cured tobaccos, the best known are the so-called oriental tobaccos of Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and nearby countries. These are used in cigarettes and have characteristic aromas. They are low in both sugar and nicotine.

T

Tamp

To gently pack down the burning tobacco in a lit pipe. Doing so keeps the smoldering tobacco in contact with the unlit tobacco, keeping your pipe from going out.

Tamper

What you use to Tamp. Usually a 3- or 4-inch thin instrument with a flat head, resembling a nail. Sometimes sold as an independent piece, or as part of a tool with various other appendages.

Tenon

The projection on the end of the mouthpiece/stem that fits into the mortise on the bowl of the pipe.

Tongue Bite

Tongue bite is a burning sensation on the smoker's tongue, previously thought to be due to the heat of the smoke (i.e. a "hot smoking pipe")

Twist

The name Twist originates from sailors who made the tobacco into balls, soaking it in molasses for a sweeter taste. The Twist tobacco was then chewed not smoked, as the sailors worked on wooden boats and smoking would have been a fire hazard. Chewing the tobacco was also suited to miners due to the obvious fire risks in the mines. Twist is made from dark-fired leaf and spun to give a rope effect. Thinner types are used for chewing, whilst the thicker brands of Twist are used for smoking.

V

Virginia

Virginia is by far the most popular tobacco type used in pipe tobacco today. About 60% of the U.S.'s tobacco crop is Virginias. Virginia is mildest of all blending tobaccos and has the highest level of natural dextrose (sugar), which basically gives it a light sweet taste. Virginia is used in virtually all blends, is a good burner and aids in lighting. Pure Virginia tobacco is best known from flake types. Dunhill's Light Flake is a very good example, medium in strength and rather sweet in taste. Several blends by Rattray come to mind also, Marlin Flake being a rather heavy member of the family, but still very sweet. The Danish manufacturer A&C Petersen has the Blue Caledonian, mild to medium in strength, and a nice pure taste of Virginia tobacco.

Vulcanite

A dark-colored variety of India rubber that has been subjected to vulcanization: also called "hard rubber." A common material used for the stem on both mass-produced and hand-made pipes. Some pipe makers consider it preferable to Lucite because it is softer and therefore more comfortable in the mouth. The disadvantage over Lucite is that it is less durable. It is favored by some English and Danish makers. Traditionally, the best vulcanite comes from Germany; however, many disagree on this point.