
Cuban cigars could soon be available in US

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. —A thaw in relations between the United States and Cuba could lead to a greater availability of Cuban cigars.

Matt Monte knows almost every cigar in his humidor — and he should.

Monte's family has sold cigars in Albuquerque for decades, but in all those years, they've never been able to ring up a Cuban cigar.

"People, even now, don't know about the embargo, and they're constantly calling for Cuban cigars," Monte said.

Cuban cigars are famous around the world. They're often described as perfect, and plenty of attention goes into making them.

"It's still a hand-rolled product. From the seed to the ash, that cigar is going to touch about 300 sets of hands," Monte said.

President John F. Kennedy ordered hundreds of them just before signing a trade embargo that made them illegal in 1962. The embargo remains in effect today.

But a recent announcement that the U.S. will resume diplomatic relations with Cuba has given cigar aficionados hope that smokers will one day be able to walk into their neighborhood cigar shop and purchase a Cuban.

"I think it would absolutely help the industry. We wouldn't have to compete with the Internet as much as we do," Monte said.

Tourists will soon be able to visit Cuba and bring back up to \$100 worth of cigars, but getting them on store shelves is another story.

That would take an act of Congress, but Monte believes anything is possible.

The new rule allowing tourists to bring cigars back to the U.S. from Cuba is expected to take effect soon, but it will still be against the law to resell them.
