

# On the Benefits of Pipe Smoking

by Sam Hawa

## Introduction

Having enjoyed a cup of my favorite black English tea one cold but sunny morning on the outside pavement of a café in Surrey, England, I was just about to smoke my first pipe bowl for the day when a man (whom I estimated to be in his early fifties) gently approached me and calmly asked if he could join me at the same table, as all the remaining ones were fully occupied.

Welcoming him to the table, the man started eating his apple pie with easily noticeable appetite, along with slowly sipping from a small drinking water bottle, moments after which he opened a tiny leather bag which contained a beautiful hand-made briar pipe that was evidently loaded with tobacco and ready to smoke. With just a single match followed by a few gentle puffs, the pipe the man was smoking started producing a most calming and natural aroma which I instantly recognized as being generated by a Virginia tobacco based blend. I was right; he was smoking Samuel Gawith's *Full Virginia Flake*.

However, I was wrong, way too wrong, when, moments later, I was utterly stunned to discover that the man whom I initially estimated to be in his early fifties was actually 67 years old!

“What’s the secret for still looking so fresh, healthy and young at such an age?” I could not help straightforwardly asking him.

“Pipe smoking,” he calmly and very briefly but quite convincingly replied.

Indeed; more than germs, viruses, pollutions, and even chronic diseases, stress is the most damaging influence on health, if not the main and most ferocious instigator of fatal illnesses in the first place. To this same effect, products created by natural means from natural resources, such as tobacco leaves that are completely additives-free, may well be quite a constructive catalyst for not only ensuring healthy longevity, but also for eliminating stress with the least, if not almost negligible, side effects.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that smoking pipe tobacco blends containing zero additives or no chemical agents come on top of the natural means for eliminating stress, which logically leads to suggesting that non-aromatic blends that are additives-free constitute the best choice for leading a healthy smoking habit. Nonetheless, aromatic blends based on natural casing or flavoring of the tobacco through the addition of natural

material, such as natural honey, may well be a second recommended choice, though it is always advisable to prioritize smoking completely additives-free blends by all measures.

However, 'moderation' is the key word in order to get the most benefits in this respect. Accordingly, smoking and maintaining an average of 2-3 bowls of additives-free blends a day constitutes the perfect standard to adopt. More importantly, as compared to cigarettes, hookah/argileh, and even cigars, pipe smoking remains the healthiest choice from all aspects, as proven by the following link which highlights scientifically verified facts:

<http://eattheplanet.org/surprisingly-smoking-tobacco-from-a-pipe-may-have-health-benefits>

### **Facts and Recommendations**

Virginia-based blends are the healthiest among pipe tobacco blends, provided they are cured in a natural manner free from any sort of additives or chemicals. Moreover, Virginia tobacco leaves, especially those produced and flue-cured in America and Africa, contain natural sugar of the sort that the human body needs to meet its daily requirements for energy, which is why it is advisable to start the first morning bowl (after having eaten a healthy breakfast) with a purely Virginia-based blend. Furthermore, Virginia blends are also beneficial for individuals suffering from constipation, boredom, and excessive stress.

As for Oriental-based blends (also known as English or/and Balkan), they are perfect for mental contemplation and psychological relaxation. However, due to their natural constitution and the fact that they are mostly sun-cured, Oriental leaves are a bit bitter and dry to smoke on their own, which is why Oriental-based blends should be mixed with complementary portions of Virginia and the fire-cured Latakia tobacco in order to achieve the perfect harmony between effect and taste. Oriental-based blends, especially those containing Latakia, are quite effective in eliminating headaches, stress, and insomnia.

Concerning Burley leaves which are naturally very strong tobaccos, and given the fact that Burleys are generally air-cured, they constitute the perfect accompanying component with Virginia-based blends, and vice versa. Burleys also team up well with Kentucky leaves, thus achieving a very suitable congruence between tobacco air-curing and fire-curing relating to Burley and Kentucky leaves respectively, the end-result of which is a very pleasing, strong, and tasteful blend that amply satisfies the experienced smoker.

As for the seasoned pipe smoker seeking an extra punch of powerful smoke without losing the excellence in taste, adding a generous portion of Perique to Virginia and Burley would surely result in a satisfying and delicious smoke beyond compare. Some sweet-taste-favoring smokers may even choose to add a bit of Cavendish to the blend in order to further sweeten the eventually produced mixture, though with noting that

Cavendish is not a tobacco leaf in itself, but is rather extracted from mainly Burley (or Virginia) tobacco leaves and is sweetened, fired and aged in a somewhat artificial manner. As for me, I always find the natural sugar already sufficiently available in mainly Virginia tobacco leaves to be the most delicious and healthy way for naturally sweetening the blend, along with perfectly maintaining and complementing the natural effect of the other interacting components as well, in case of mixture blends.

### **Final Tips**

When ageing pipe tobacco in the cellar, it is always worth noting the following:

- The best way for ageing pipe tobacco is in tins, provided the tins remain completely sealed as initially bought. Once opened, make sure to consume the tin within a maximum of 7-10 days from opening, or store the remaining tin tobacco in a carefully sealed jar for later consumption.
- Purely Virginia-based tobacco blends can be aged for as long as 50 years and more. As a matter of fact, the more a purely Virginia-based blend is aged, the better it would taste throughout the years.
- As for Latakia-based blends, they can be stored for no longer than 20-25 years, after which the Latakia will gradually start losing a bit of its distinguishing characteristics and strength. To get the best benefit and taste from Latakia-based blends, consume them after 4-5 years from ageing in tins.
- For as long as the pipe blends pertain to completely natural, additives-free, tobaccos, it is advisable to enjoy and benefit from such blends without using pipe filters. Using pipe filters while smoking good quality natural blends would take away a lot of the benefits and characterizing attributes of the blends, without necessarily offering any additional health benefits over those already found in smoking non-filtered pipes. Besides, the use of a filter contributes to damaging the stem, while making pipe cleaning a lot more difficult. Also, even if the pipe comes with a filter, the filter may as well be simply removed without inducing any sort of guilt on the smoker's conscience in the least.

It remains to add that no matter how experienced the pipe smoker is, it is highly advisable not to inhale while pipe smoking. Also, in order to enjoy the pipe to the fullest, make sure not to exceed 2-3 bowls a day, preferably separated by no less than 4-5 hours of non-smoking intervals between each bowl. It is also always important to remember to gargle and drink water after the full consumption of each bowl. From another equally important aspect, alcohol intake is also not advisable while or amidst pipe smoking, as alcohol would certainly steal away a lot of the pipe blend charm and taste pleasure; and the interaction between alcohol and pipe tobacco would certainly eliminate a lot of the healthy benefits naturally produced by smoking additives-free blends. If necessary, only water, preferably mineral or still, can accompany smokers while enjoying their pipes.

Furthermore, in order to remain good pals with your pipes, make sure to let each pipe rest for no less than 3 days after each smoke, which means that acquiring a minimum of a dozen pipes (to start with) is a must in order to maintain such a cherished and enjoyable friendship with each of your pipes, even if that may lead to hurting your wallet a bit.

Finally, a word of truth: Not a Mozart or Beethoven symphony, not a Beatles masterpiece, not a deliciously tempting dish, or even an exceptionally priceless alcohol drink can outmatch the unique melting in the realm of pipe smoking and blending. Yes, even my puppy dog, N P, could not agree with me on this the more...