

Like Starting to Smoke All Over Again

Written by

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by **Vesperae**

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It can seem so strange how we process and integrate traumatic events and change in our lives. It's been only a little more than three months since I was confronted with FSCs and the personal loss of commercially produced cigarettes, but it actually feels like years have passed for me in this short span of time. When we lose anything that is a substantial long term part of our everyday experience - a relationship, a job, a loved one - our lives change so fundamentally that we need to adjust to the newness of the absence in seemingly everything. That which was familiar becomes suddenly a little different, because we're suddenly a little different now. And in those moments of feeling slightly out of phase with our worlds, we can sometimes gain insights and a new perspective on the familiar. We can sometimes see little things that we had forgotten or didn't see before, feel things that we had forgotten or didn't feel before, and think about things that we had forgotten or didn't think about before. And since we're relearning our worlds in thousands of little ways, time dilates.

Such has been the case for me.

As I mentioned in my last column, I've been smoking only Make Your Own (MYO) cigarettes since the end of November, when Fire Safe Cigarettes (FSCs) began to saturate local retail outlets where I live, and in many respects, the transition has felt like starting to smoke all over again. While I obviously haven't undergone the physical adjustment required to make the transition from being a non-smoker to becoming a smoker, there has been quite a bit of psychological adjustment related to integrating MYO cigarettes into the experience of being someone who has long primarily related to and indulged her SF through her own smoking. But after working through the initial shock of my sense of loss, I have been extremely relieved and more than a little surprised to discover that MYO cigarettes can and do work for my Fetish appetites.

There are two types of MYO cigarette - Roll Your Own (RYO), and Stuff Your Own (SYO).

RYO is much more than the vintage icon of the cowboy and his pouch of 'baccy and papers; it

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can also be done on a rolling machine that produces very "commercial" looking cigarettes, and cigarettes can be rolled either with or without a filter. Prior to the FSC fiasco, my only experience with MYO cigarettes was with RYO cigarettes in the form of the Drums that many of my friends smoked when I was working on my art degree in the 90s. I thought that they were kind of cool and Bohemian, but the finished cigarettes always struck me as primitive looking, and waaaaay off my Fetish radar, not that many of the women in my social circle smoked them anyway. So when someone first suggested to me that I maybe consider MYO cigarettes as an alternative to FSCs, I immediately remembered my Drum smoking male friends from college, and my knee-jerk reaction was "No way in Hell!" But then I started to feel desperation set in as I faced the possibility of quitting (I shiver to remember it), and after a little Googling, I discovered and began to read more and more about the SYO cigarettes option.

SYO is the route that I've taken thus far, and the one that most in the MYO Community take due to the relative convenience. (But at some point I'd also like to try machine rolling, primarily to see what differences there are in rolling papers and their burn and flavor characteristics.) SYO cigarettes very closely resemble commercially produced cigarettes, because SYO cigarettes utilize commercially produced "tubes", which are essentially "blank" cigarettes - a paper tube containing a filter, but no tobacco. SYO tubes are not "FS" (and with any luck at all, they will stay that way). To make SYO cigarettes, you only need three things - tobacco, tubes, and an "injector", which is a little machine that you use to load the tobacco into the tubes. Here is a [short video](#) that will give you an idea of just how simple and easy it is. The finished product looks, feels, and smokes almost exactly like commercially produced cigarettes, with some notable differences.

The only negative differences for me have been relatively minor, and few.

The first has to do with the dimensions of the tubes. SYO tubes almost universally come in a diameter of 8.1mm, whereas commercially produced cigarettes are almost universally 7.8mm in diameter, with the exception of Virginia Slims, which are 7.3mm in diameter, and super slims like Capris, which are 6.7mm in diameter. That extra 0.3mm doesn't seem like it would be much, but it definitely tweaks your perception of scale a bit. It's subtle, but it's there. And the absence of slimmer styles is obviously disappointing to me personally, not only for Fetish reasons, but for my own personal aesthetic preferences. There are a few super, super slim 6.5mm tubes, but they're all only available in 80mm length, which is even shorter than "kings" at 85mm, and I'd much rather have the length of at least a 100. There are also no 120mm length tubes, at least not at present. Although, if enough women switch to SYO in the wake of the FSC fiasco, a market might well emerge, and tube manufacturers might eventually start making "regular" diameter or slim 100s and 120s, although it may never happen unless the MYO market grows dramatically.

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The second has to do with the cigarette paper used to manufacture SYO tubes, which is just slightly thicker and stronger than commercially produced cigarettes, due to the fact that the paper needs to be sturdy enough to hold the tube form while empty without getting deformed or ripped. SYO tube paper does burn evenly and well, like commercially produced cigarette paper, but it seems to be a little less porous, which means that a SYO tube tends to produce a less air-diluted and more intense puff when you drag on one. This isn't necessarily a negative, but it does take a little getting used to. Related to this, most tube filter elements, while made of the same cellulose acetate fibers as commercially produced cigarettes, tend to be slightly shorter than most commercially produced cigarettes (although a few are longer, and closely resemble commercially produced cigarettes), and shorter filter elements also produce a more intense puff of smoke. Again, not necessarily a negative, and again, it just takes a little getting used to.

But I've been absolutely wowed by the positive differences.

The difference between smoking commercially produced cigarettes and smoking MYO cigarettes is like the difference between eating a Big Mac and eating a hamburger that you grilled and dressed yourself, or drinking instant coffee and drinking coffee made with freshly ground whole Arabica coffee beans. And the quality of ingredients gets at the heart and charm of the MYO experience, which is that you can blend and experiment and fine tune just the right amount of this flavor and that flavor by combining different tobaccos and pre-blended tobaccos to create your own unique premium smoke. I've tried about twenty different tobaccos and tobacco blends, and experimented with custom blending over the last three months, and it's really fun to taste and broaden your understanding of why Burley and Maryland tobaccos taste bitter, why Virginia tobaccos taste sweet, and why Oriental tobaccos are mild but aromatic (to say nothing of more exotic tobaccos like Periques and others), and what each of these things, alone and in combination, can contribute to the experience of smoking. It's like the ultimate exercise in deconstruction ("...something in this blend reminds me of a Marlboro..." etc.), except that invariably, even a moderately pleasing tobacco blend in a decent SYO tube tastes and feels much better to smoke than any currently available commercially produced cigarette, including comparisons with even contemporary non-FSCs! The absence of intensive chemical engineering and processing in MYO tobaccos simply makes for not only a much less irritating smoke, but a much more flavorful smoke as well.

And I've also discovered that better quality tobaccos make for a less "demanding" smoke, in terms of the intensity of my nicotine cravings when I can't smoke for an extended period of time. I definitely still have the urge to smoke, and I'm pretty sure that my current preferred MYO tobacco is quite high in nicotine content. But I also tend to believe that the slightly greater tube diameter, reduced porosity of the paper and slightly shorter filter element of SYO tubes,

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combined with the fact that less processed MYO tobacco tends to burn more slowly than what's found in commercially produced cigarettes, all add up to something like the equivalent yield of a smoking a Virginia Slims "200", even though I'm only smoking a 100mm cigarette. Again, the analogy of fast food vs. home cooking applies, in the sense that eating fast food is almost always a short term satisfaction, and eating home cooking is almost always more satisfying, and almost always for a much longer period of time.

I've also discovered that there is something rather novel and Fetishy about the whole experience of MYO cigarettes. There is an investment of time and care and decision making in selecting and handling the tobaccos and tubes that are the right fit for your personality and tastes, and blending and making a batch of cigarettes connects you to the experience of smoking in a more ritualistic way than merely opening a pack, pulling out a cigarette, and lighting up. And for the first time in my life, I'm indulging in the luxurious little fashion detail of using metal cigarette cases, which I've found to be unexpectedly delightful.

For any Fetish, memories are obviously everything. And while the Fetish implications of commercially produced cigarette brands - personal history, familiarity, continuity, connectedness, advertising mythology - are now gone for me in many ways thanks to FSCs, there remain my memories, and how I process them through my Fetish. And much to my surprise, I've found that I can still relate to and enjoy my Fetish memories while smoking MYO cigarettes, due to the simple fact that I realize that commercially produced cigarettes have diminished so dramatically in quality that current versions of any brand bear precious little similarity to their predecessors of just a few short years ago, so continuity is really little more than an illusion anyway, and has been for a long time.

When I first began experimenting with MYO cigarettes, I was initially very afraid that seeing a woman smoke a Virginia Slims would make me feel "left out". But now, since I've discovered the combination of Bali Golden Shag tobacco in a Zen ES White 100mm tube, which to me tastes a lot like a full flavor Virginia Slims or Benson & Hedges from the 80s - only much smoother and stronger - I not only don't feel "left out" at all, but I actually feel sorry for any woman smoking a contemporary Virginia Slims. There is still a deeper personal historical connection for me, and relating to the smoking of another woman in the present happens via that personal historical connection, even though I'm not sharing directly in the experience of exactly what she is smoking. A better smoke is a better smoke, and when there are no distractions of reduced quality and FSC toxicity, I've found that my thoughts and feelings go more to the more fundamental and universal shared experiences of smoking, and of what is required to become a smoker in the first place, both of which are even more fundamental to my Fetish than specific brand identification is, even though I do miss it, and probably always will.

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But I know for an absolute fact that I would be in a pretty desolate place psychologically if MYO cigarettes weren't available, and for anyone for whom the experience of smoking is integral to her or his Fetish, I can't recommend highly enough at least trying MYO cigarettes.

If you are interested in exploring MYO cigarettes further, the following links will get you off to a great start:

[RYO Revolution](#) - An exceptional resource that includes overviews of virtually all tobacco types and brands suitable for MYO cigarettes, recommended MYO vendors, a comprehensive list of SYO tubes and specs, information on various types and brands of rolling and stuffing machines, as well as tobacco related political issues. (Note that "RYO" is used here interchangeably with "MYO".)

[RYO Revolution Forum](#) - Active, friendly, and very helpful forum for the RYO Revolution site. (Note that this is not a SF forum.)

["High Hopes & Lost Loves"](#) - my "newbie thread" at the RYO Revolution Forum, which details my experiences with MYO cigarettes over the last three months.

Additionally, I have also started a new group called [MYO / SYO / RYO Cigarettes](#) , at the new [Smoke Signals Community](#) , with which I hope to provide a place for discussion about the Fetish implications of MYO cigarettes, and I look forward to your participation there, and at the new Community Site as a whole.

[Email Vesperae](#)

Vesperae's discussion and DS multimedia forum: [The Sublime Desire of Cigarette Smoking](#)