



DRUNK CHICKEN CIGARS:



THE ESSENCE OF BOUTIQUE

Cigar businesswoman is living the dream, starting ultra-small and winning hearts, minds and palates.

We have already spilt some ink in this publication puzzling through the definition of “boutique” as it applies to the cigar industry. No matter how you slice it, Drunk Chicken Cigars is about as “boutique” as a cigar company can get.

It’s safe to say that Desiree Sylver is not your average cigar entrepreneur. A black female businesswoman with degrees in Marketing and Financial Management, and a PhD in Organizational Leadership, two years ago Sylver began ordering her own custom-tailored cigar blends, rolled just for her own purposes. It was a private affair. Really, she just wanted to reduce the cost of her cigar habit, and that of her fiancé and her friends. But with the encouragement of fans who raved at the blends she was developing, Sylver ventured to offer some retailers sample cigars adorned with plain white bands marked, simply, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, just to delineate the recipes. Sylver says the first five blends were not even created to sell. She just wanted some professional feedback. But the retailers with whom Sylver shared her cigars told her that she was onto something: The cigars were excellent and could easily sell, they said...but they also advised her, “Change the bands.” So she did, and history is now writing itself.

Sylver launched Drunk Chicken in October 2019 and began actively selling in January 2020. Since that time, Drunk Chicken Cigars has won space on the shelves of more than 110 shops, lounges, restaurants and casinos across the U.S., and Sylver continues to gain new accounts every week. Her smokes are garnering favorable attention from customers, reviewers and merchants. Succinct in his praise of Drunk Chicken Cigars is Don Wiggins, owner of Underground Cigar Lounge in Ft. Worth, Texas, an outlet specializing in “unique and hard-to-find cigars.” (Wiggins is known as the “King of Boutique.”) He reports, “Drunk Chicken has been wonderful to work with. They have great customer service.

BY WILLIAM C. NELSON



Their cigars are excellent, our customers like them and we sell quite a few. And there has been no issue with supply.” Drunk Chicken now has four sales reps—Sylver calls them her “Ambassadors”—working the field and helping stage events.

One of those Ambassadors, Tanya Pritchett, working out of Atlanta and covering the Southeastern region, tells the story of how Drunk Chicken Cigars came by its whimsical name. “Desiree raises chickens, almost as pets,” Pritchett says. “She has a number of chicken coops in her back yard. So we were having a barbecue one day, and someone noticed one of the chickens was walking kind of funny and said, ‘She looks like

she’s drunk.’ This was before Desiree had even started selling cigars. She was just having them made for her own circle. Anyway, after that we all started calling her collection Drunk Chicken.” It is often from seemingly insignificant moments like these that a legacy gets set in motion.

Sylver is the first to admit, “We are a super-small operation. We roll on demand, and only keep enough cigars on hand to allow for reasonable shipping times. We don’t want to get ahead of ourselves. The goal is to ship within a week or two after we receive an order. At launch, we offered five blends, and we ordered just 10 20-count boxes of each at the start. We do aim to target a wide range of tastes

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Drunk Chicken cigars include Mother Clucker, Homicidal Hen, Sweet Dreams and Fat Hen.

across our lines, and to offer a cigar for any time of the day for any smoker on any occasion. So we say we’re an ‘Anytime of the Day’ cigar brand.”

Sylver works with one manufacturing company in Florida that currently produces all Drunk Chicken cigars—“an experienced guy from Cuba,” Sylver says, “whose family tradition of rolling goes back to his grandfather. He has a crew of other Cuban expats rolling for his company, and we have worked out a great relationship that



couple of our core values include customer service and quality. As we continue to grow, we do not want to compromise

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those core values. So we are constantly examining our inventory levels and sales to ensure we coordinate effectively with our manufacturing partners.”

Yes, there were a few naysayers at the start. “A few didn’t like the name of the company and thought it was a joke,” Sylver recalls. But Drunk Chicken Cigars is hardly a joke, nor is the singlemindedness with which Desiree Sylver is steering her enterprise. She travels the U.S. every month promoting the brand, and likewise her Ambassadors are actively exploring new territory. Unbowed by the pandemic, Sylver says, “Drunk Chicken Cigars was established at the beginning of COVID. I don’t even know what sales is like without COVID.”

If you would like to explore a possible relationship with this memorable newcomer to the world of premium cigars, visit the company website drunkchickencigars.com or give Dr. Sylver a ring at 202.888.1480. Get in on the ground floor and offer your customers something they can’t find just everywhere. That is, after all, what prospecting the world of boutique cigars is all about. 🍷

allows for weekly adjustments in what blends we order.”

Nowadays, Drunk Chicken Cigars is keeping its Cuban rollers occupied filling orders for 100 to 125 boxes per week. (All six Drunk Chicken lines come in boxes of 20.) Blends range from the powerhouse maduro Drunk Chicken Original (DCO) to the blond Connecticut Sweet Dreams, with a sweetened tip in the old Cuban style. And there are plenty of medium-bodied habano selections in-between, in a range of vitolas. Box prices range from \$200 to \$240 MSRP, and retailers receive keystone pricing on their orders.

The Drunk Chicken Original and Sweet Dreams are the currently reigning best sellers

among the company’s products, but even this keeps changing. “At the launch of the company the Mother Clucker was the biggest seller,” says Sylver. “Then it was the FAT HEN, and now the DCO and Sweet Dreams. As we enter new markets, demand for different cigars and sizes changes with circumstance.”

Sylver says she had a positive experience at the PCA trade show this summer. “I’ve interacted with a few of the movers and shakers in the industry, such as Matt Booth, Erick Espinosa and Fouad Kashouty,” she says, “and they have all been very welcoming and helpful.” Kashouty, the owner of Hiram & Soloman Cigars, relates, “Desiree is an interesting entrepreneur,

full of positive energy and fun, an energy that you can’t help but notice and admire—which, by the way, is reflected in her brand, the choice of name and surely the good quality of her cigar blends. You can see her determination to make her mark in this fierce cigar world. I applaud her for that and look forward to seeing her on top.”

Sylver maintains a clear vision and purpose. “I am a wholesaler and do not have my own brick-and-mortar retail presence. My headquarters is an office space in Washington, DC, used only for conducting daily operations. But I am very happy as a wholesaler, happy with the growth we have seen and the direction the business has taken so far. A