

Your Favorite Brand

In a very few minutes you consume and enjoy a product of research and applied science in many fields, combined with the utmost care and control in preparation and manufacture. Your favorite brand of cigarette, which you light so casually, has been from two or three years in the making. Let's see what took so long.

Growing tobacco is laborious and exacting work. It has been called a "thirteen month" crop, because a month before the last of a crop is graded and marketed seed beds are being prepared and planted for the next crop. One-half ounce of tobacco seed (150,000 seeds) will sow 100 square yards of plant bed and produce about 20,000 tobacco plants or enough plants for four acres. A 90 day period is required from the time of seeding until the plants are large enough to transplant. About 90 more days are required to mature the crop after transplanting.

Harvesting is by hand, picking the leaves one by one as they mature from the bottom of the stalk. These leaves are tied in bundles on sticks and cured in heated barns, after which the leaves are graded, tied into bundles and transported to the warehouse floors for the auction sale. It is here that the experience and care of the tobacco farmer is reflected in the quality of his product and the price he obtains.

After the cigarette manufacturer purchases the tobacco, he redries it to a standard and storage moisture content, packs it into wooden hogsheads, containing about 1000 pounds each, and stores it away in huge ventilated warehouses from two to two and one-half years to "age in wood". When it is properly sweated and aged, it is taken out, steamed, and the stems removed. Then these stemmed leaves are replaced in the hogsheads for final conditioning.

The next process in making your cigarette is blending the various types of tobacco in the proportions which the manufacturer has found most appealing to your taste. In general, there are four types of tobacco used in the American cigarette—Burley, which is grown mainly in Kentucky and Tennessee; Bright Flue-cured grown in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida; Turkish, imported mainly from Turkey and Greece; and Maryland which is grown exclusively in that state. These types are conditioned and mixed in large revolving cylinders, after which they pass through cutting machines which shreds the blended mass into the condition found in your cigarette. After the tobacco has been shredded and again dried and fluffed-up, it develops its maximum aroma and is ready for the cigarette making machine.

In order to make the finished cigarette, there

has to be a jacket to confine the shredded tobacco in amounts as desired by the manufacturer. The paper for the jackets must be exacting in every respect.

In the wisp of white paper in which your favorite blend is wrapped, there is a story of chemical and industrial triumph over difficulties which has added another chapter to American industrial achievement.

Ninety days are required for the growing of seed flax, the fibre of which is used in making cigarette paper. After the seed is harvested, the straw is cut and sent to decorticating mills where the fibres are separated from other parts of the stalk. These fibres are baled and sent to Pisgah Forest for storage.

From storage the bales are conveyed to the Pulp Mill for several hours of cooking and bleaching, then to the refining beaters where the individual fibres are shortened and hydrated. On the paper machines the fibres are matted together to form a wet sheet of paper, this sheet is dried, and from the dry end of the machine comes a pure white roll of cigarette paper. The paper on these large rolls is given a rigid inspection in a rewinding process and made ready for the slitters, where it is slit into narrow reels or bobbins.

Standard bobbins, only 29 millimeters wide, are packaged and shipped to the manufacturers to be placed on cigarette making machines. As the paper passes rapidly through the machine it is first printed with the name of the cigarette or the manufacturer, then run on an endless woven belt beneath the feeder hopper where it receives shredded tobacco at a uniform and controlled rate; thence through a curved tube where the cigarette is formed, sealed and pressed into shape. The long continuous cigarette runs a gauntlet of whirring knives which cuts the cigarettes into proper length, ready for the inspector's eye. From each machine 800 to 1200 cigarettes are ejected each minute.

The automatic packaging machines are equally as ingenious. These machines actually count out 20 cigarettes, wrap them in foil and outside wrapper, and affix the revenue stamp. These machines are so human that any package containing less than 20 cigarettes or having a cigarette with a loose end is automatically thrown out.

Cigarette consumption has been increasing steadily every year. In 1948 smokers in the United States consumed 348.4 billion cigarettes, while foreign smokers used 38.7 billion, making a total of 387.1 billion cigarettes used during that year. The estimated consumption for this country in 1949 was 355 billion cigarettes and a drop to 35 billion for foreign users.