



Before Leaf Lounge, I was always in cigar lounges.

I enjoyed the atmosphere, the comradery, and the chance to meet new people. They were the places I could go after work to just unwind.

I had been smoking cigars since 2007, but the idea of owning my own cigar lounge started about five years ago. I had worked in the restaurant industry and in sales, and while I enjoyed those jobs, my passion was with cigars.

I knew people who owned cigar lounges and started asking them questions and learning about the business from them. Then when this location opened up, I took a chance and opened Florence's first cigar lounge here in 2019.

There's been ups and downs to having to manage my own business, but every day is exciting. I get to pick out cigars that our customers haven't had or that even I have never tried before.

Then I get to watch people's reactions when they try them for their first time. Most of the time they'll say 'Oh, I like this!', and then sometimes they'll say something like 'Oh, I like this, but I wish you had a stronger version'. When that happens, I tell them to let me work on it and I'll get them what they're looking for.

Right now, I would say we have a little over 50 different types of cigars. And I literally try each new brand or line that comes in because each cigar brand and line tastes different. They can be different sizes, different shapes, different body types and all of that effects the taste.

We actually get a lot of people in here that don't smoke cigars or have never been in a cigar lounge before. When those people come in, I make sure to find them a cigar that won't overwhelm them to start off with and then we'll work up from there to see what they really like.

I feel like I have to know what I'm selling, and if I don't know that cigar then I'm doing my job wrong.

Then besides cigars we also serve food and have a full spirit bar along with beer and wine. So if you want to grab a couple cigars you can, if you want to relax over a drink and food you can, or you can come in and you might end up making new friends by the end of the night.

Leaf Lounge is like a small community and hopefully we'll still be here for a while because even though I liked my other jobs, I can't ever see going back.

It's cigar lounge or nothing."

- Jesse Wiles III, owner of Leaf Lounge