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NO LONGER CONTENT TO SIMPLY SELL CIGARS, PHILADELPHIA'S OLDEST CIGAR SHOP NOW LETS CUSTOMERS SAVOR THEM IN STYLE. BY ALEXANDRA LESHNER

Robert Levin is no stranger to the rich, intoxicating aroma of a good cigar. Born and raised in Philadelphia, he grew up in the business: His parents purchased the Center City smoke shop Holt's Cigar Company in 1957. Now, nearly 40 years after joining the firm, Levin has introduced a new concept to Philly's cigar scene with Ashton Cigar Bar. "Ever since the smoking ban went into effect," he says of the 2007 law that prohibits smoking in Philadelphia restaurants, the city has had "very few places to enjoy a cigar. Since we own the building, it was a perfect opportunity to build a first-class bar."

But it's not just any bar. Located atop the Holt's store on Walnut Street, Ashton Cigar Bar is a unique retreat—the only venue in Philadelphia that is open to the public and allows guests to smoke cigars indoors. It

features a spacious walk-in humidor holding more than 200 premium cigar brands (including Ashton's own), a stylish modern lounge, and a fully stocked bar offering 250 whiskeys and 400 spirits in all, plus a variety of noshes. It also boasts a top-of-the-line air handling system that Levin says "will make nonsmokers feel at ease and comfortable." Although cigars and cocktails are the main focus, the aesthetics were also key. "Our goal was to create a contemporary design with a warm, comfortable atmosphere," says Levin of the luxurious space, which includes a mix of black and red leather seating, brick walls, and a sleek marble bar top. "We wanted the bar to feel upscale, cool, and hip without being snooty. It's the perfect setting to enjoy a drink and a fine cigar."

1522 Walnut St., 267-350-0000; ashtoncigarbar.com PS