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AUGUST 2021

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GOOSE'S

MONTECRISTO CIGAR LOUNGE AND TOBACCONIST

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A FAMILY BUSINESS WITH A VISION:

GOOSE'S

MONTECRISTO CIGAR LOUNGE AND TOBACCONIST



By Kathy Hunt

Sometimes you just need to get out of the house, enjoy a good cigar, and play a game of pool or chess with fellow tobacco aficionados. Other times you may need to dash out for a smokable hemp product, vape juice, or cigarette rolling supplies. No matter what your needs are, Goose's Montecristo Lounge and Tobacconist on Ridge Pike in Limerick can meet them. The store carries a vast array of premium cigars, vape, hemp and CBD products, hookah supplies, roll-your-own tobacco tubes and other accessories. For those craving a change of scenery, too, Goose's attached, 2,500-square-foot lounge provides a comfortable space for smokers to relax, light up and enjoy their purchases.



POOL ROOM

PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES



JOHN GIESE SR.

In business for 11 years, Goose's Montecristo Lounge and Tobacconist is the brainchild of John Giese Sr, Joanne Giese and John Giese Jr. The name is both a play on his family surname, which is pronounced "geese," and a nod to the nickname both John Giese Sr and Jr have had during their lifetimes. Produced in Cuba since 1918 and the Dominican Republic since the 1970s, Montecristo ranks high with consumers as well as critics. It made the luxury lifestyle magazine the *Robb Report's* top cigars list in 2020 and 2021. Goose's features the full-line of Montecristo cigars, along with the many iconic brands that Altadis produces; namely, Romeo y Julieta, H Upmann, Aging Room, Vega Fina just to mention a few.

"We are proud to be a Montecristo lounge," said Giese, who serves as Goose's vice-president of sales and marketing. "It's a prestigious designation and we have a great team, the Altadis company, backing us."

The origins of a tobacconist

Giese knows good teams and tobacco companies. He has worked in the tobacco industry for 43 years. He began his sales career in 1978, covering Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia for the General Cigar Company, which sells the Macanudo and Partigas brands. In 1987 he joined the Philadelphia pipe tobacco and cigar company John Middleton Co., which is the home of the Black &

Mild cigar. During Giese's 20-year tenure as director of sales, John Middleton grew from an \$8 million to a \$380 million company. After the business was acquired by the Altria Group, Giese left to start his own business in 2008.





Located at 250 West Ridge Pike in Limerick

“At the tender age of 55 I became an entrepreneur,” he said. “It was a huge risk, but I knew the industry because I’d been in it for 30 years. If I can’t make it in this industry, I can’t make it in any industry.”

Giese formed Goose Enterprises Inc. in 2008 with his wife Joanne, and son John Jr. Joanne, along with being the president of Goose Enterprises Inc., is a dental hygienist; and, son John Jr., is vice-president of operations. A fourth member of the team, Brian Bruno, has likewise been with Goose Enterprises since its founding. Bruno serves as director of wholesale sales, and along with John Jr., is the man behind the counter most days at Goose’s.

Due to a year-long noncompete clause, instead of immediately opening the store, Giese worked for the Scandinavian Tobacco Group (STG) as the vice-president of sales. Goose’s Montecristo Lounge and Tobacconist officially opened its doors on April 29, 2010.

“We decided to go with a brick-and-mortar store because you could have people come in and enjoy the experience and lifestyle of cigar smoking,” he said. “People come in and discuss the binder, filler and wrapper of a cigar, where it’s rolled . . . it’s a more educated group of consumers.”



MONTECRISTO LOUNGE & MEMBER LOCKERS

Giese found the space for Goose’s while driving along Ridge Pike with Joanne, searching for a place for breakfast. Instead, they spotted a “For Rent” sign in front of 250 West Ridge Pike in Limerick.

Initially, when Giese looked at the rental unit, which was 5,700-square feet of a 10,000-square-foot building, he thought that it was too large. However, as he began to envision the business’s layout — an office, a cigar lounge, retail area — he realized that the additional space would give him the opportunity to specialize in not only premium cigars but also destination categories. He could cater to “the lit” as well as “the unlit.” He explained that,

within the tobacco industry, “the lit” refers to tobacco that you light or burn. “The unlit” pertains to vaping, where you heat rather than burn the substance.

The property also enabled him to set up a 60-seat lounge featuring TV screens, a pool table, dart board, card table and chess set. It also contains a wet bar where regulars can keep their beverages and a radio and TV studio, which is managed by Goose Pond Media. John Sr., John Jr., Joanne and Brian are the people behind the media group.

The entire lounge can be reserved for meetings, birthday, bachelor or cigar parties, and other smoking or non-smoking events. Although non-smoking events at a cigar lounge may sound counterintuitive, Goose’s merchandises a range of smoke eliminating sprays and candles. It also possesses \$30,000 HVAC unit that draws clean air in and pushes smoke out, enhancing air quality and ventilation at the business.

Goose’s does sell lounge memberships: Silver, Gold (with a locker) and a coming soon Goose’s Media Group membership. With them customers gain access to the lounge, discounts on cigar purchases and use of elegant, humidity- and temperature-controlled storage lockers.

Continued on page 8)



MONTECRISTO HUMIDOR





Lighters



Pipes and Pipe Tobacco



Humidors



(Continued from page 7)

A myriad of choices under one roof

Today, approximately 75 percent of Goose's sales are in premium cigars. The store retails all of the iconic Altadis USA brands, including Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, H. Upmann, Aging Room, St. Luis Rey and Vega Fina. Additionally lining the shelves of its Spanish cedar, walk-in humidor are such brands as Macanudo, CAO, Rocky Patel, Fratello, Ashton, Padron, Fuente, Alec Bradley, Oliva, CLE and Drew Estate. Goose's offers 2,500 open boxes from which customers can select their cigars.

Once a customer has stocked up on cigars, the next item needed might be a lighter or another accessory. Goose's has Vertigo and Zippo lighters, Xicar cutters and an assortment of ashtrays as well as humidors for the home or office. It's a one-stop shopping experience for cigar aficionados.

For pipe and cigarette fans, Goose's has 50 pipe tobacco varieties from the United States' oldest tobacco company, Sutliff Pipe Tobacco. It also keeps on hand such longstanding favorites as Captain Black.

"If you look at the tobacco industry's figures on pipe tobacco, it's through the roof," Giese said. "It's not because

everyone is walking around with a pipe. It's because people use pipe tobacco to roll cigarettes. There's a lot of flavor and good taste with pipe tobacco. So, when they're buying a 16-ounce bag of pipe tobacco for roll-your-own, that's going toward the overall tonnage," he said.

For those who do smoke pipes, Goose's showcases the luxury brands Savinelli and Peterson of Dublin. Originating in Milan, Italy, Savinelli pipes are made from Italian briar and contain a signature triangular balsa wood filter. Established in 1865 and based in Ireland, the award-winning Peterson is the oldest continuously operating briar pipe factory in the world.

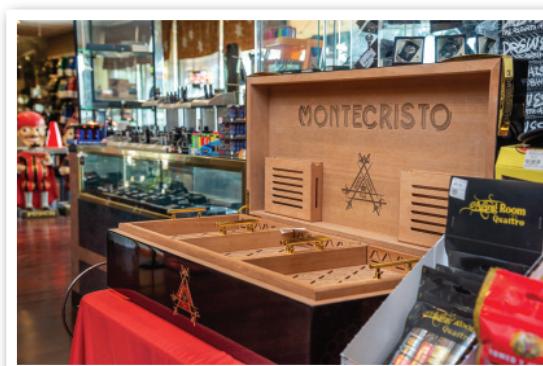
"These are the finest pipes in the world and we have a first-class display of both. You've got to come see it," Giese said.

The store likewise sells roll-your-own tobacco and tubes, stocking such brands as American Club, Good Stuff, Premier and Gambler. It carries tubes in king size and 100's. For those interested in commercially produced cigarettes, the store's best seller is Seneca from the native-owned Grand River Enterprises in Six Nations, Ontario, Canada.

Beyond tobacco products, Goose's has disposable as well as refillable vape, or electronic cigarette, devices such as vape pens and mods, tanks and juices.

"We've carried vape and vape juices for eight of the eleven years we have been in business," Giese said. "It's about ten to 15 percent of our business. Vaping is also a very popular way to quit cigarettes. I've had people come in here, practically crawling on their knees, saying, 'Help me quit cigarettes.' Vaping is a viable alternative. They have come out with products in the juice line, called salt nicotines, that really mimic the taste of a cigarette," he said.

"Salt nicotines are high nicotine. Basically, they became popular when Juul was introduced into the marketplace," Brian Bruno explains. "It introduced salt nicotines into the market. Vaping has become so big in the last couple of years with both adult men and women. While some people do it to get off cigarettes, other people just like it. If you just want to satisfy the oral fixation, you can vape and not do nicotine," he said.



Montecristo Super Humidor



In addition to vape supplies, the store markets hookahs, water pipes that date back to ancient Persia and India, and the specially made tobacco, or shisha, used in them. It also stocks CBD (cannabidiol) and smokable hemp products. One of roughly 113 cannabinoids present in cannabis plants, CBD relaxes but does not produce the high associated with cannabis use. As long as it contains less than .3 percent THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis, CBD is legal to possess and consume in Pennsylvania. The same holds true for hemp.

At Goose's customers can acquire such CBD-infused items as gummy bears, vape juice and "cannadips," which are reminiscent of snuff, as well as hemp oil, creams, tinctures, cigarettes, energy shots, and even bacon-flavored hemp extract for dogs. Its most popular CBD/hemp product, though, is Tree-Rolls. This packaged hemp pre-roll contains organically grown hemp flowers and rolling papers.

"We want to create a store-within-a-store with a Goose's CBD/hemp health wellness center," Giese said. "Even now, Goose's is the "GO-TO" store in the region for CBD products and smokable hemp."



CBD/Hemp Display



RADIO/TV IN-LOUNGE STUDIO

For the creative, D-I-Y or crafting customer, Goose's has a selection of affordable empty cigar boxes. "Some use them for decorative purposes. Some turn them into cigar guitars, which we have on sale. They're a lot of fun," Giese said.

The list of merchandise doesn't end there. Goose's has gift items, such as hats and glassware, as well as Boveda's two-way humidity control packs, which keeps humidors at a steady 69 to 72 percent.

"You could create a separate store for each of these destination categories, but we have them all under one roof," Giese said. "We have the space, and we benefit from that. You could say that we're visionaries. We're a family business with a vision."

Visions for the future

With the wealth of items on offer at Goose's one might assume that there would be nothing left to add. For the forward-thinking Giese Family, there is always something else to provide their customers. This includes Goose Pond Media Group's new, on-site TV and radio studio. From the studio the group will produce two podcasts. HONK! Goose's Full Monte Cigar Talk will explore everything about cigars.

"Full Monte is a reference to you showing it all, the 'full monty' for cigars," Giese said. "Montecristo also makes a line extension called the Monte by Montecristo, so the name has a double meaning."

The second podcast is Goose's G.O.A.T.'s Retro Sports Talk. "G.O.A.T. stands for 'greatest of all time,'" Giese said. "We'll talk to people about who's the greatest 76'er of all time, who's the greatest of all time Phillies team and why."

G.O.A.T.'s will also have notable sports figures on the podcast. "We're a Philly sponsor for a broadcast out of Tampa, Florida called 'Broad Street South with Angel Martinez.' I was introduced to Angel by a customer who's on the Broad Street podcast all the time," Giese said.

"He got in touch with Angel and I became his sponsor. Angel's great. Now he's going to come up here

and do the pre-game of the first Eagles home game for G.O.A.T.'s. We hope to get some big-time celebrities in the sports world on our podcast," he said.

Along with podcasting, Giese and the other members of Goose Pond Media intend to create tobacco- and cigar lifestyle-related videos.

In December 2018 Goose's purchased the 10,000-square foot building and surrounding four acres from the Oehlert family and named the building and the land the Goose Pond Center. The site contains Goose's Montecristo, Sonny's Italian Deli, The Dog House pet groomer, Mailboxes Complete and its most recent addition WXP 98.5 TV and Radio Studios. The last business is, in part, what prompted Giese to consider setting up a studio at Goose's. "Going forward, events will be a big part of the Goose Pond Center. Music events, cigar events. The options are many," Giese said.

One of the more unique events at Goose's was charity boxing with professional boxer Harry Joe Yorgey. The Goose's team set up a ring on the property's front lawn and drew a crowd of roughly 400 people to watch Yorgey box.

It has hosted music festivals featuring local artists.

Goose's hopes to book country singer Stephanie Grace and rock cover band Dog Bite Money soon. It has also held cigar festivals where companies such as Altadis, General Cigar, Fuente and others set up booths and talked about their products.

"Having WXP 98.5FM here will greatly enhance our marketing abilities and our ability to get the word out about these events," Giese said. "And they play retro music, which ties right into Goose's retro sports talk show. It's a great fit."

Located at 250 West Ridge Pike in Limerick, Goose's Montecristo Lounge and Tobacconist is open seven days a week. On Monday its hours are noon to 8 PM. Tuesday through Saturday it welcomes customers from 10 AM to 8 PM and on Sunday from 11:30 AM to 7 PM. For additional information, stop by the store, consult the website <https://www.cigargoose.com/>, or call 484.902.8770.

