

**October 19, 2011****FOR SMOKERS, DO-IT-YOURSELF A WELCOME CHANGE**

The Walton Sun (Santa Rosa Beach, Florida)

By Pat Kelly

October 18, 2011

The air is tobacco sweet, the brands are cheap and you can even roll your own. For smokers feeling that culture has tossed them aside like a used butt, there exists a place where employees remember your name with a smile.

“They are extremely kind and generous,” said Victoria Barbosa, 40, who was in Tobacco Mart recently with her husband, Fabio, to roll the couple’s own carton of cigarettes at about half the price of a regular brand.

“We found out it was easy and fun,” 42-year-old Fabio said.

The Barbosas, who own Barbosa Furniture in Panama City, scooped up some of the “house blend” from one of several plastic containers, as well as full-flavor, menthol, light or even Turkish tobacco.

You can lift the plastic lids and sniff the different, earthy aromas of the separate blends. The store is the only one of its kind in Bay County.

After loading one of the store’s four 800-lbs. rolling machines with loose tobacco and empty filter tubes, “we can have a nice conversation, smoke a cigarette and have some (free) coffee” while the sleek contraption begins spitting out cigarettes, Victoria Barbosa said.

The store, which is split into two separate spaces, also offers brand-name and off-brand cigarettes and cigars, all at discounted prices, but the roll-your-own machines are the biggest draw, store manager Jessica Curnett said.

Curnett said the Tobacco Mart, which opened Feb. 21 at the corner of 15th Street and Lisenby Avenue, has grown steadily in business, mostly by word-of-mouth. Roll-your-own carton sales

have grown from 17 a day to more than 70 cartons per day and make up about 60 percent of the total business.

Customers chat up the low cost but also talk about the excellence of the tobacco, which is chemical-free, unlike manufactured cigarettes, Curnett said. Because customers make the cigarettes themselves, they avoid the high extra taxes added to manufactured cigarettes.

“We are providing a service of cost savings and it’s a quality product,” she said, emphasizing they are not a cigarette manufacturer, nor are they a “head shop” selling incense or bath salts. Unlike convenience or grocery stores — or your local pub — beer or wine is not sold.

“You can’t come in here and drink a beer while you wait,” she said. “We have coffee.”

Kevin Bjorklund, 51, of Panama City Beach, said he has been driving over the Hathaway Bridge into the city for six month to roll his own.

“It’s great; half-price, no chemicals, you can make the blend you like and they remember your name,” he said.

His wife, Rachael Smith, agreed. “It’s wonderful,” she said. “Everybody is friendly. You’re not ostracized.”

The nearest roll-your-own competitors to the Tobacco Mart are in Fort Walton Beach and Dothan, Ala., Curnett said.

A first-time customer is shown how to use the machines, including loading the empty filter tubes and loose tobacco and setting the level for how tightly the cigarette is packed, levels that vary according to a customer’s preference.

“Packing is always my main concern” when instructing a new customer, Curnett said. “Packing is crucial.” It takes about eight to 10 minutes for a machine to produce a carton of cigarettes using from 6.5 to 7 ounces of tobacco.

Curnett acknowledged smokers develop an intense brand loyalty to the manufactured cigarettes they have purchased for many years, but she said Tobacco Mart can match any preference.

“It’s very comfortable here,” she said, adding that her regular customers come, sit, talk and are glad to see each other because they all have something in common. “We have a friendly staff and the coffee is free.”

<http://www.waltonsun.com/news/city-97687-newsherald-panama-smokers.html>

## **ROLL-YOUR-OWN UP AND RUNNING AGAIN AFTER COURT RULING**

Portage Daily Register

By Michael Thompson

October 18, 2011

The dispute between the Wisconsin Department of Revenue and roll-your-own tobacco stores has cost the Portage location and several other area stores about 50 percent of their business, two co-owners said Tuesday.

However, a court injunction has the businesses back up and running until at least next month.

Discount Smokes and dozens of other RYO stores across the state had to shut down their RYO machines after the Wisconsin Department of Revenue sent notices late last month to all RYO stores stating that the stores are cigarette manufacturers and distributors and had to pay appropriate excise taxes.

Stores sell pipe tobacco and rolling papers to customers, who can rent time on the RYO machine to make their own "smokes." A "box" of "smokes" from an RYO store costs less than half the price of a comparable carton of cigarettes, because pipe tobacco is taxed differently from standard cigarettes.

Kirk Burnstad and Lon Chester, two of the business partners who opened Discount Smokes on East Wisconsin Street in the spring, said they shut off the machine as soon as a Department of Revenue agent visited a few days after the notice.

Unlike some other store owners, they said, they kept the doors open between the notice and injunction - and marketed Discount Smokes' small-scale roll-your-own machines.

"We probably sold a hundred of the machines in the week and a half we were down," Chester said.

They said they didn't make a profit, however.

Dane County Circuit Court Judge Juan B. Colas on Oct. 7 issued a temporary injunction, preventing the state from enforcing the notice at least until a hearing next month. RYO Machines LLC, which makes the machine, was one of the plaintiffs, along with distributor WISUP and Wausau store owner RW Petersen LLC.

The complaint reads: "The Wisconsin legislature limits the definition of a manufacturer to persons 'who manufacture cigarettes for the purpose of sale.' ... If anyone, it is the consumer, not the retailer, who manufactures roll-your-own cigarettes. Yet, even a consumer is not a

manufacturer under Wisconsin law because the roll-your-own cigarettes are for personal use only, and not intended for sale."

The complaint asked the judge to place an injunction on the notice so businesses wouldn't go under while waiting for a decision.

State Department of Revenue spokeswoman Stephanie Marquis said the department was disappointed with the decision but remained dedicated to enforcing laws.

Burnstad attended the hearing in Madison. As soon as Colas issued his injunction, he and the rest of the RYO store owners began calling their stores.

"We just called right in and said, 'Start them up,'" Burnstad said. "Everyone was on the phones."

Burnstad and Chester also co-own RYO stores in Wisconsin Dells, Baraboo and Columbus. The Columbus opening was delayed from Oct. 1 to Monday because of the state action. They plan to open an RYO store in Westfield on Nov. 1 and are looking for locations in Waunakee and DeForest.

Each store employs three or four people, they said.

The RYO stores have drawn criticism for cutting the price of tobacco products, which could make it easier for youths to smoke. Burnstad and Chester, neither of whom smokes, said they didn't think excise taxes were a deterrent. They also said their employees are trained to keep underage people from using the machine.

"They card everybody," Chester said.

Burnstad said most of Discount Smokes' customers are 50 to 60 years old.

"We're a blue-collar, adult store," he said.

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[http://www.wiscnews.com/portagedailyregister/news/local/article\\_84eef17c-fa14-11e0-9868-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.wiscnews.com/portagedailyregister/news/local/article_84eef17c-fa14-11e0-9868-001cc4c002e0.html)

## **FILTRONA – MENTHOL FILTER TIPS FOR RYO**

Tobacco Journal International

By Staff

October 13, 2011

Filtrona Filter Products has launched a menthol filter tip for the expanding Roll Your Own market that the company says is easy to use and contains an acetate to prevent it slipping when rolled into a cigarette.

Flavoured filters for RYO traditionally have been awkward to use because they have a smooth outer surface that can make them slip as they are being rolled into a cigarette, Filtrona said. Its new Diamond Menthol filter is unique to the market in that it contains Non-Wrapped Acetate (NWA), which prevents slippage, the company said.

Adding menthol flavouring to a filter was not possible until recently because the steaming process used to set the plasticizer would wash away the flavour, according to Filtrona. The company said it solved the problems by developing a flavour application process that is not affected by steam setting.

[http://www.tobaccojournal.com/FILTRONA\\_\\_\\_Menthol\\_filter\\_tips\\_for\\_RYO.50832.0.html](http://www.tobaccojournal.com/FILTRONA___Menthol_filter_tips_for_RYO.50832.0.html)