

Got Rum?®

DECEMBER 2025

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COOKING WITH RUM - ANGEL'S SHARE
CIGAR AND RUM PAIRING - THE RUM MIXOLOGIST
THE RUM HISTORIAN - THE RUM LIBRARY
RUM IN THE NEWS - THE SWEET BUSINESS OF SUGAR
THE RUM LABORATORY - GOT RUM? TEAM INTERVIEW



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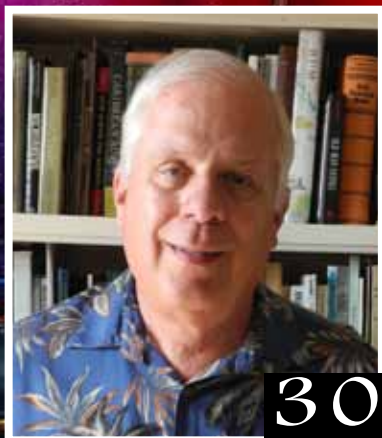
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FRONT COVER: Merry Old Fashioned
INSIDE SPREAD: Radiant Rum Reveling

FROM THE EDITOR

State of the Beverage Industry - Update

If you are a member of the distilled spirits industry in the USA, or if you have been keeping up with related headlines, then you already know that distillers and brand owners are facing numerous challenges:

- Consumer preferences are changing. Some consumer groups are moving away from hard liquor and towards THC, but changing legislature will impact the availability of these products in late 2026 and beyond.
- Exports of bottled products have sharply fallen because of tariffs and related political posturing.
- Many distilleries have been forced to close their doors and to liquidate their assets.
- Barrel brokers/investors are facing the reality that their inventories do not have the value they expected.
- The prices for glass bottles, metal cans, corks/stoppers for bottles and even cardboard have skyrocketed, due to tariffs and transportation increases.

In August 2024, there were 3,069 active craft distilleries in the USA. In August 2025, the number was 2,282, representing a casualty rate of 25%!

This is very bad news for the companies involved and for their employees, and the consequences reach far beyond the confines of their distilled spirits plants. Equipment suppliers are now facing overstock and increased production cost scenarios that will affect their cash flows and long-term survival as well.

Is there a silver lining hidden beyond these dark clouds? There is one indeed: many companies can still re-invent themselves, cater to the emerging consumer trends, follow the market into new areas. New players seeking to enter the industry are



also facing good news: there is an ample supply of used equipment available for a fraction of what it used to cost just 12 months before. There is also a large pool of skilled workers eager to continue their journey in this industry.

The past 12 months have been very challenging, but postponing the implementation of solutions to these challenges is likely to result in even larger obstacles to overcome: the time to plan and act is now! Reach out to me if you need help defining or implementing a roadmap to survival.

Cheers!

Luis Ayala, *Editor and Publisher*



<http://www.linkedin.com/in/rumconsultant>

Do you want to learn more about rum but don't want to wait until the next issue of "Got Rum?"? Then join the "Rum Lovers Unite!" group on LinkedIn for updates, previews, Q&A and exclusive material.

THE ANGEL'S SHARE

by Paul Senft



My name is Paul Senft - Rum Reviewer, Tasting host, Judge and Writer. My exploration of Rums began by learning to craft Tiki cocktails for friends. I quickly learned that not all rums are created equally and that the uniqueness of the spirit can be as varied as the locales they are from. This inspired me to travel with my wife around the Caribbean, Central America, and United States visiting distilleries and learning about how each one creates their rums. I have also had the pleasure of learning from bartenders, brand ambassadors, and other enthusiasts from around the world; each one providing their own unique point of view, adding another chapter to the modern story of rum.

The desire to share this information led me to create **www.RumJourney.com** where I share my experiences and reviews in the hopes that I would inspire others in their own explorations. It is my wish in the pages of "Got Rum?" to be your host and provide you with my impressions of rums available in the world market. Hopefully my tasting notes will inspire you to try the rums and make your own opinions. The world is full of good rums and the journey is always best experienced with others.

Cheers!

Havana Club Selección de Maestros

Havana Club rums, while not available for sale in the United States, can usually be found when traveling outside the country, and over the years a recurring question has been asked concerning if they are worth the suitcase space. The brand itself is polarizing due to political reasons, as ownership of the Havana Club brand is split between the Cuban government through the Ministry of Food under the name Cuba Ron and Pernod Ricard, each carrying a 50-50 stake in it.

All the rums used to create this product are molasses-based column still rums that have been produced at different distilleries around the island. The different Maestro Roneros for the distilleries select rums from their aging facilities to be included in this blend. The selected rums go through a triple aging process using used white oak bourbon barrels. After this aging process, the Maestro Roneros select the final rums that will be part of the blend. Which is why the rum is fittingly called Selección de Maestros. No age statement is provided, but the rums are blended and bottled at 45% ABV.

Appearance

The rum is sold with and without a brown tube that provides some details about the rum. The bottle is a tall custom 700 ml design with the words "El Ron De Cuba" embossed below the neck. The front and back labels provide a minimum amount of information about the rum and seem by design to want the consumer to focus on the golden hue'd burnt umber liquid.

The Havana Club branded plastic cap holds a synthetic cork and is secured to the bottle with a black security wrap with the words "Selección de Maestros" wrapped around the neck. The liquid lightens slightly in the glass. After I swirled the liquid, a thin band formed that slowly thickened and released a single wave of equally slow legs before evaporating with only a few beads of liquid remaining around the glass.

Nose

The astringent punch of the ethanol leads the way, quickly followed by notes of caramel, roasted nuts (a combination of toasted almonds and pecans), raisins, lemon zest, and cardamom.

Palate

Like the aroma, the rum's flavor leads with an astringent punch of charred oak and alcohol. Additional sips reveal notes of raisins, brown sugar, and vanilla, and then a swirl of spices manifesting midpalate—cinnamon, nutmeg, and cardamom. As the palate is conditioned to the rum, the nuttiness from the aroma manifests as caramelized sugar pecans and toasted almonds and coconut, with rich cacao and dried tobacco leaf. This tobacco note gently transitions the rum into a charred oak mineral-rich finish that lingers for quite some time.

Review

For many years this rum expression was considered the pinnacle of the Havana Club line. Recently, the company has released other expressions that may make that consideration outdated, but so far, those rums appear to be limited outside the island. This is a rum that must be sipped slowly and savored as the flavors unfold on the palate. While the rum does not have a vintage or age statement, there are subtle changes to the flavor profile over the years as different rums are used in the blend. There have always been reports of small-level additive usage with this brand, with recent reports stating that up to 10 grams per liter have been detected. I do not believe the additives make the rum overly sweet and found it to be an enjoyable sipper that functioned well in a range of classic cocktails and shined in a few tropical drinks. To answer the opening question, yes, if you like what you read in this review, then Havana Club Selección de Maestros is worth the room in your suitcase.



www.havana-club.com

THE ANGEL'S SHARE

by Paul Senft

Ron Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva

This rum was created as a tribute to the company's 18th-century founder, Don Juancho Nieto Meléndez, who was known as a rum collector who enjoyed discovering interesting rums and curating quite a collection. It was this search that eventually led him to founding Destilerias Unidas, S.A. Released in 2004, Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva is the creation of Master Blender Tito Cordero. To make this rum, the company fermented a combination of sugarcane juice and molasses. The rum is comprised of a blend of 20% column still and 80% pot still that is aged up to 12 years in used bourbon and malt whiskey casks at the distillery property in Venezuela. Before the blending process, the company adds cane sugar (29 grams per bottle) to the rum to amplify the flavors of the product. The final product is blended to 40% ABV and sold in the United States in 750 ml bottles. They state that they do not add any coloring agents to their rum.

Appearance

The bottom heavy frosted green bottle conceals the color of the rum and is sealed with a plastic screw cap. The label provides the basic information about the rum and features a portrait of Dan Juancho Nieto Meléndez. One thing of note is that there is no age or vintage information on the bottle.

In the glass, the rum has a ruby-hued chestnut brown color. Swirling the liquid creates a medium band that releases a couple of waves of fast-moving legs and then releases a wave of slow-moving legs that take quite a bit of time to descend on the side of the glass.

Nose

The aroma leads with caramelized vanilla and is followed by a swirl of sweet prunes, random spices, milk chocolate, charred oak, acetone, and black cherry.

Palate

The first sip is a swirl of brown sugar, prunes, toffee, and the heat of alcohol. Additional sips reveal anise, candied orange, mocha latte, curry spice, astringent oak char, dried tobacco, and acetone. These flavors merge and linger in a sweet and spicy mineral-rich finish.

Review

Over the past decade, Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva has become the flagship product of the Diplomatico line. It is a solid sipper, especially for those who enjoy sweet rums, and it is quite versatile in a large range of cocktails. It is not uncommon to spot it on a restaurant tasting menu and to see it used in a few of the cocktails. As other products in the brand portfolio have been updated and reformulated, this one has remained relatively unchanged. I would not recommend this product for rum enthusiasts that do not enjoy sweetened rums. However, over the years I have discovered quite a few bartenders and other imbibers who enjoy it, especially as an after-dinner sipping rum. For me, it was an affordable gateway into understanding the brand, and it is a fun one to share with whiskey enthusiasts or those consumers who are curious about trying different kinds of rums.



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COOKING WITH RUM

**Bringing the Spirit of the Cane
Into the Heart of the Kitchen!**

by Chef Susan Whitley





Crockpot (Slow Cooker) Turkey Chili

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. Olive Oil, divided
- 1 ½ lbs. Ground Turkey
- 2 Medium White Onions, chopped
- 1 Medium Red Bell Pepper, chopped
- 1 Medium Green Bell Pepper, chopped
- 5 Garlic Cloves, minced
- 1 Jalapeño Pepper, finely chopped
- 2 Cans (14 oz. each) Fire-roasted Diced Tomatoes
- 4 tsp. Chili Powder
- 1 tsp. Ground Cumin
- 1 tsp. Dried Oregano
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1 ½ oz. Dark Rum
- 2 Tbsp. Ketchup

Directions:

1. Heat one tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground turkey and cook for about 7-8 minutes breaking up the meat into smaller pieces. Once cooked, place inside crockpot.
2. In the same skillet, heat the remaining one tablespoon of olive oil. Add onions, bell peppers, garlic and jalapeño pepper. Cook until softened (about 4-5 minutes). Stir in the tomatoes, chili powder, cumin, oregano, salt, rum and ketchup and cook for about a minute. Place mixture into crockpot, mix with meat. Cover and cook on LOW for 6 hours.

Yield: 6 servings.

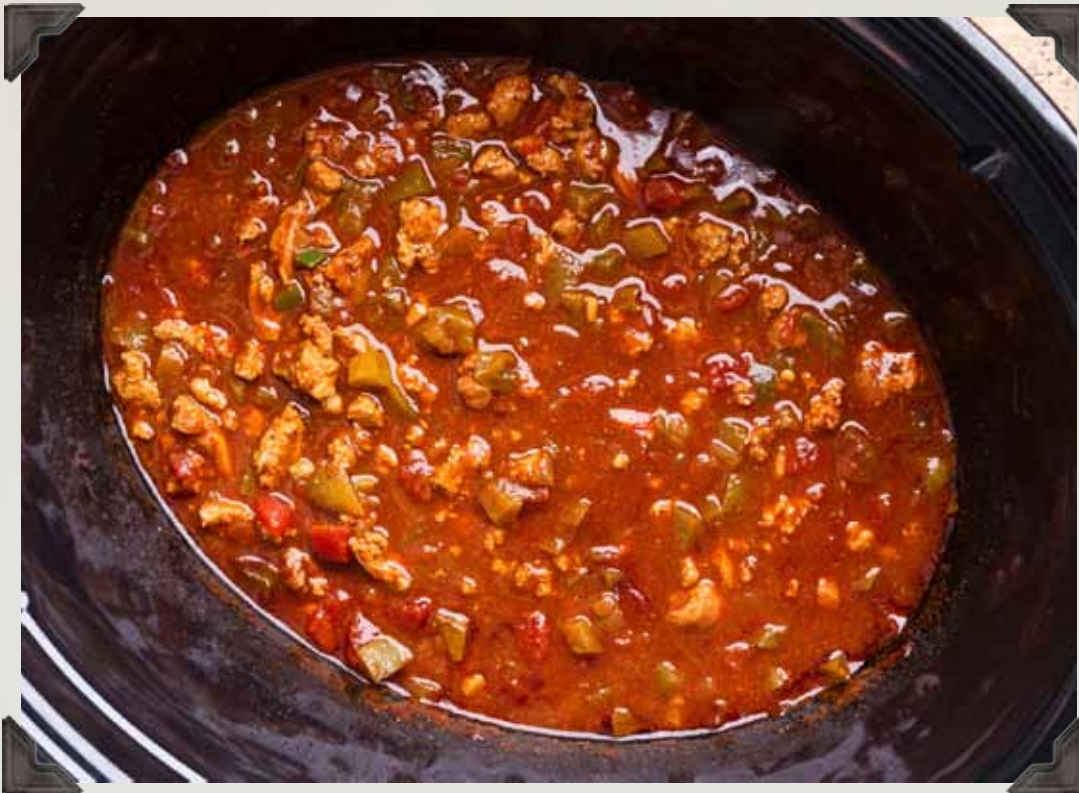


Photo credit: www.thetravelpalate.com

Crockpot (Slow Cooker) Brioche and Rum Custard

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. Unsalted Butter, melted
- 3 ½ C. Whipping Cream
- 4 Eggs
- ½ C. Brown Sugar, packed
- 1/3 C. Gold Rum
- 2 tsp. Vanilla
- 1 ½ lb. Brioche Bread, torn into pieces
- 1/3 C. Pecans, coarsely chopped
- Caramel or Butterscotch topping, optional

Directions:

1. Coat the inside of crockpot with melted butter.
2. In a large bowl, combine cream, eggs, brown sugar, rum, and vanilla, stir well.
3. Mound a fourth of brioche pieces in the bottom of crockpot. Ladle a fourth of the cream mixture over the brioche. Sprinkle a third of the pecans over cream. Repeat these steps with the remaining brioche, cream mixture and pecans until all ingredients have been used up.
4. Cover crockpot with lid and cook on LOW for 3 to 3 ½ hours (or on HIGH for 1 ½ to 2 hours). Cook custard until toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
5. Serve warm. Optional: Drizzle with caramel or butterscotch topping.

Yield: 4-6 servings.



Photo credit: www.instantpot.com

THE RUM Mixologist

A space devoted to the exploration
of classic and new rum cocktails

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What Is Mixology?

Mixology is the study and skill of inventing, preparing and serving cocktails and other mixed drinks. Mixologists are experts in this field, but mixologists' knowledge goes beyond memorizing basic cocktail recipes: it includes historical information, basic chemistry behind flavor combinations and a capacity for combining common ingredients in new ways.

Join us, as we explore the essential collection of rum cocktail recipes that every mixologist needs to master.



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THE RUM Mixologist

This Month's Cocktail:

Easy Rum Eggnog

About Rum Eggnog

Rum eggnog is a delicious and satisfying holiday cocktail, but most traditional recipes can be a bit time-consuming. Here is an easy-to-follow, simplified version, for those who prefer to spend more time drinking eggnog and less time making it!

Easy Rum Eggnog

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 ounces añejo rum
- 1 1/2 ounces ruby port
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup
- 1 large egg
- Grated nutmeg, for garnish

Directions:

1. In a cocktail shaker, combine the rum, ruby port, simple syrup, and egg.
2. Dry shake (without ice) to combine the ingredients.
3. Add ice and shake vigorously a second time.
4. Strain into a white wine glass and dust with nutmeg. Serve and enjoy.

Raw Egg Warning: Consuming raw and lightly-cooked eggs poses a risk for food-borne illness. Make sure your egg is fresh by placing the egg in a glass of water; if it sinks, it's fresh and will be safe to drink. Eggs that float to the top are too old and should be discarded.



A glass of amber-colored rum sits on a stack of old, open books. The background is a warm, golden-brown color, suggesting a library or a study. The glass is a simple, cylindrical shape with a thick base. The rum inside is a rich, golden-brown color. The books are old, with yellowed pages and some visible text in Russian. The overall atmosphere is cozy and intellectual.

THE Rum[®] UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Reviews of books related to sugarcane, milling, fermentation, distillation, aging, blending and other topics related to the production or history of rum.

www.RumUniversity.com

The Art of Mixology - Making Spirits Bright: Toast the Season with More than 75 Christmas Cocktail Recipes by Parragon Books (Author) and Joella Morris (Illustrator)

(Publisher's Review)

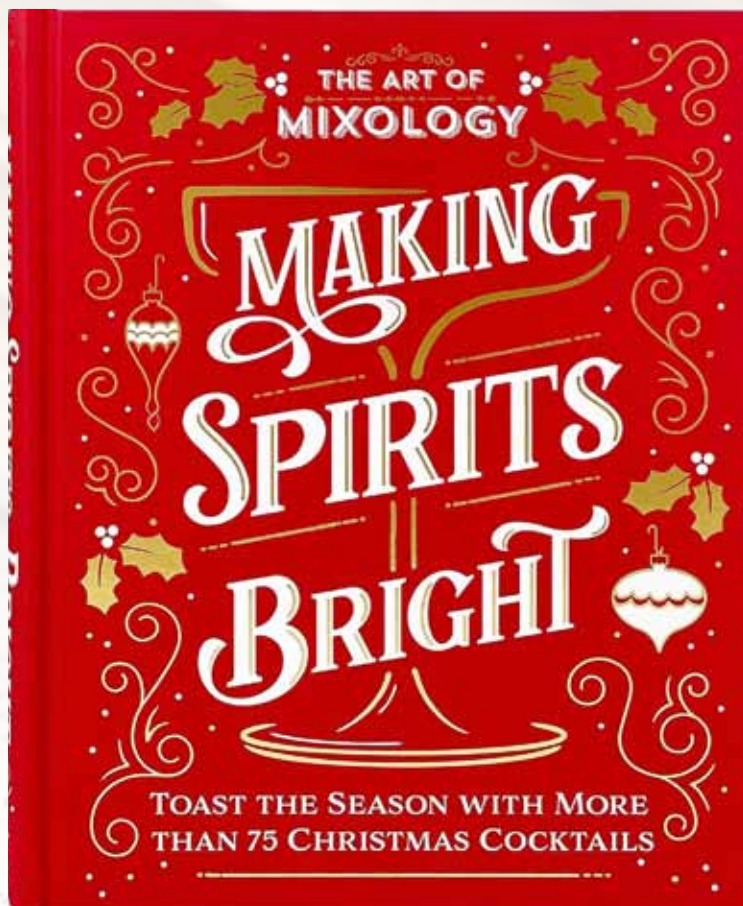
From the creators of the best-selling and classic favorite The Art of Mixology cocktail book comes our holiday title, Making Spirits Bright. Cheers to the Spirits of the Christmas Season! This collection of delicious drink recipes features cozy oldies like Eggnog and Mulled Wine, but also new classics like Jingle Juice and Cinnamon Basil Mojitos. Bartenders of every level of experience will love this holiday handbook! So whether you're a new mixologist or a thoroughly seasoned Santa, this collection will get everyone rockin' around the Christmas Tree! Beautiful photos of cocktails will inspire your imagination -- and techniques, barware, and ingredients are super easy to follow. Did someone ask for a mocktail? No problem! Recipes are easily converted to nonalcoholic choices. Great holiday host and hostess gift!

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ACCOMMODATES ALL LEVELS: This ultimate cocktail recipe book is made for beginners, experts, and everyone in between, featuring mixed drinks with a variety of alcohol favorites including whiskey, gin and vodka.



RECIPES & PHOTOS: 192 pages full of beautiful images of cocktail recipes will inspire any bartender for the holidays. Mix everything from a traditional Hot Toddy to a fresh, modern Cinnamon Basil Mojito.

TEACHES THE BASICS: Recipes are easy to follow for even the most novice mixologist.

MAKES A GREAT GIFT: Makes a great stocking stuffer or gift to the host during the holiday season.

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THE RUM HISTORIAN

by Marco Pierini

I was born in 1954 in a little town in Tuscany (Italy) where I still live. In my youth, I got a degree in Philosophy in Florence and I studied Political Science in Madrid, but my real passion has always been History and through History I have always tried to understand the world, and men. Life brought me to work in tourism, event organization and vocational training, then, already in my fifties I discovered rum and I fell in love with it.

I have visited distilleries, met rum people, attended rum Festivals and joined the Rum Family. I have studied too, because Rum is not only a great distillate, it's a world. Produced in scores of countries, by thousands of companies, with an extraordinary variety of aromas and flavors, it is a fascinating field of studies. I began to understand something about sugarcane, fermentation, distillation, ageing and so on.

Soon, I discovered that rum has also a terrible and rich History, made of voyages and conquests, blood and sweat, imperial fleets and revolutions. I soon realized that this History deserved to be researched properly and I decided to devote myself to it with all my passion and with the help of the basic scholarly tools I had learnt during my old university years.

In 2017 I published the book "AMERICAN RUM – A Short History of Rum in Early America"

In 2019 I began to run a Blog: www.therumhistorian.com

In 2020, with my son Claudio, I have published a new book "FRENCH RUM – A History 1639-1902".

I am currently doing new research on the History of Cuban Rum.

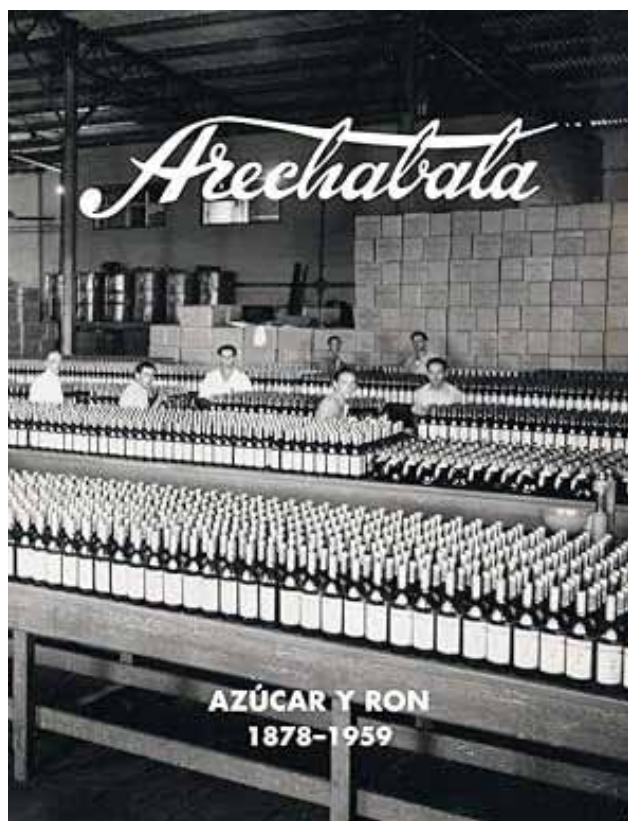


CUBAN RUM: 29. MORE LIGHT ON HAVANA CLUB

Born in 1749, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a German poet, playwright, novelist, and scientist whose influence shaped European culture. His early, huge and long-lasting success came with "*The Sorrows of Young Werther*" (1774), a novel that captured the spirit of Romanticism, emphasizing emotion and individualism and the importance of love in our lives. In 1832, on his deathbed, his last words seem to have been: "more light". Since then, people have been debating whether it was simply a request to open the window, or a reference to his illuminist passion for the truth, or the desire to know, to know more.

Si parva licet, La Vizcaya, Arechabala and Havana Club are today too little known compared to their great importance in the history and even the present of rum. We need to know more and fortunately now, at least in part, that is possible. Recently I have read two works that shed more light on the history of Cuban rum in general and on Arechabala in particular.

In 2023, María Victoria Arechabala Fernández, a descendant of the family, and Antonio Santamaría García, a renowned Spanish Historian, published



"ARECHABALA Azúcar y Ron". I only found out last spring and, after the summer break during which I also have to work for a living, I have finally read it.

It is a large volume, a beautiful object, full of family stories, period photos, rare documents, and a wealth of information, which sometimes differs from mainstream narratives. All the quotations in this article are taken from this book. The translation is mine, and I apologize in advance to the authors and our readers.

Also, the authors were kind enough to answer my questions and gave me the opportunity to finally read a book I had been searching for years, Manuel Bonera Miranda's "*ORO BLANCO Una Historia Empresarial del Ron Cubano*", 2.000. I want to publicly thank them here.

Having said this, let's start from the beginning, that is, from the very foundation of the company.

"They emerged in Cuba from the ranks of employees, entrepreneurs in areas where a large investment was not needed. This was

the case of José Arechabala, who in 1877 set up his own business after working four years for Julián de Zulueta and raising the capital necessary to establish his own business in Cárdenas. Arechabala was dedicated to the storage and trade of sugar and honey, an activity that he knew well ..."

The following year, in 1878, he bought a still "thanks to the payment facilities offered by its owners" who also originated from his native town, Gordojuela. This is another example of the importance of the networks of relations between immigrants that we talked about in the November article. Evidently the business went well, because already in 1880, he managed to pay the entire debt and remain sole owner of his company. Growth was rapid, profits increased and Don José invested heavily in modernizing and diversifying his company.

In 1891 "the Arechabala factory possessed - as part of its machinery - two of the most modern columns existing in Cuba, an analyzer and a rectifier for alcohols. Thanks to an ingenious design, which used heat exchange physics, the fermentation is separated into its constituent vapors with the first apparatus and then selectively condensed in the second. The technology used in La Vizcaya made it possible to control the strength of the rums processed, since the spirit could be removed from the rectifier at various heights - the higher, the stronger the liquor - so that it was possible to achieve, whenever desired, a distillate with 95 percent alcohol per volume of liquid processed."

It produced around 70 *pipas* (a barrel of circa 470 liters) of rum and 2.500 gallons of alcohol per day.

In this way, "La Vizcaya completed its improvement process, which began in 1885 when the owner decided to convert it into a modern factory. Batch distillation in the pot still, which was the most traditional and ancient practice of obtaining alcohol and rum, was left behind forever, to be done by continuous distillation in a column. This technique had been introduced in Cuba in the second half of the nineteenth century and was the most widely used, effective

and economical method to obtain a strong and pure liquor. With the installation, in 1891, of the efficient alcohol rectifier, José Arechabala showed himself as an entrepreneur interested in the cutting-edge technological advances of his time, especially those coming from the United States."

So, now we know that young José Arechabala had started with a traditional pot still, and that only later, in 1891, thanks to his success and more resources at his disposal, did he buy modern columns of continuous distillation.

As his company grew, so did Don José's personal prestige and social and political role. Meanwhile, Big History went on. Relations between Spain and Cuba were getting worse. In the last years of the nineteenth century, the Spanish tax burden on Cuba and in particular on its rum industry was constantly growing. The Cuban producers reacted with protests and petitions. Don José was now one of the leading figures of his town and had a leading role in trying to make the government of Madrid understand the reasons of the Cuban producers. It was a decisive moment in the history of Cuba, in which perhaps they could still have avoided the break with Spain and to which I will probably dedicate a future article. For now, it is sufficient to say that his efforts were not successful and the gap between Cuba and Spain continued to widen until the outbreak of the second great War of Independence in 1895, which ended with the intervention of the United States in 1898. (See 13. TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE: SUGAR, WARS AND THE US, in the August 2023 issue).

As we know, the war was very harsh, but Cárdenas, La Vizcaya and the Arechabala family suffered relatively little from it and were ready to start again as soon as it ended. At the end of the war, Cuba had just under 2,000,000 inhabitants and its economy was in ruins. But things improved rapidly.

"... a great many Spaniards went back to Spain during the War of Independence, taking their money with them, but only for a short period, since in 1900 they began to

return to Cuba, so that the number of the then ex-metropolitans coming back to the Island soon exceeded the number of those who had fled because of the conflict. Peace treaty agreements guaranteed that there would be no expropriations ... The post-war reconstruction, in terms of restoring basic living conditions and producing sugar, Cubas' main export, was largely due to the efforts of the population and to private capital, both insular and Spanish."

The Cuban economy recovered, and in a few years bounced back to the levels before the war and then did not cease to grow, also helped by the reconciliation between the fighters of the two sides. The producers of alcoholic beverages and rum played an important part in the recovery: in the early 1900s they accounted for about 15% of all industrial enterprises.

"The factories of Bacardí and Arechabala and others in Santiago and Cárdenas expanded and improved their technology, and the Havana rum firms formed an association to defend their interests and cooperate in manufacturing and marketing. Besides, thanks to cocktails like Mojito, Cuba Libre and Daiquiri the demand for rum expanded to the well-off and female population." (See HISTORY OF CUBAN RUM 16. THE RON LIGERO CUBANO in the February 2024 issue)

Arechabala won a silver medal in the Paris International Exposition of 1900 and later bought also some sugar plantations, as far I know a unique case in the Cuban rum world. The company continued to grow and in 1921 it was transformed into a modern corporation, JASA, that is, *José Arechabala Sociedad Anonima*.

As we know, the First World War (1914-1918) disrupted the European sugar beet cultivation while the demand for sugar to manufacture alcohol for war purposes grew enormously, so the price of sugar skyrocketed. This situation gave Cuba a sudden and gigantic bonanza: the cultivation of sugarcane grew enormously, even at the expense of the forest heritage, and money, a lot of money, flowed into Cuba in the so called "Dance of the Millions". But then the

war ended, in a few years the sugar market returned to normal, prices collapsed and the island experienced a serious economic crisis. To give you an idea of the magnitude of the catastrophe, two figures are enough: the price of sugar fell in a few weeks from 22.5 to 4 cents a pound. A terrible blow for the whole island, and ruin for the many planters who had borrowed money to increase production in the fat cow years and for the banks that had financed them.

“The crisis caused by the sharp drop in the price of sugar constituted a real cataclysm ... Panic ensued and the banks declared bankruptcy one after another, a catastrophe to which only the American banks survived, because they had strong support from their parent companies. Most of the indebted properties passed into the hands of these banks, including dozens of sugar plantations ... The crash of 1920 represented a terrible blow for the Cuban and also the Spanish capitalists, since the latter still predominated in trade and certain manufactures. And above all, it came to show the fragile foundation of national prosperity.”

In this dramatic picture, JASA held up better than other companies for its financial strength, its diversification into many different sectors and also because the domestic market of distillates endured, also thanks to the influx of many thirsty American tourists on the run from Prohibition. (See HISTORY OF CUBAN RUM 21. UNCLE SAM'S BOOZE COPS in the August 2024's issue)

In 1923, Don José died and the following year another unexpected loss struck the company: his successor José Arechabala Sainz was murdered by a former worker who had been sacked, who then fled and committed suicide. In the following years, the family remained owner, but no longer dealt with the day-to-day management of the company, many shareholders moved abroad and a new management took over.

According to the sources, it seems that in the 1920s the most important activities of the company were the refining, storage and export of both raw and refined sugar, and

the storage and export of molasses, whereas instead the production of rum was rather low.

No wonder too. As we know, JASA controlled the entire processing cycle of sugarcane and its derivatives. It was therefore able to produce sugar, both raw and refined, molasses of various qualities, alcohol for industrial uses and rum. In the 1920s sugar prices were erratic, constantly changing. For example, for decades Cuba exported only raw sugar to the United States, which was then refined locally, because there was a high duty on the import of refined sugar. Then, at a certain point in the 1920s, the import duty on raw sugar rose sharply, therefore JASA focused on the sale of refined sugar instead. For what little I know, this trend still exists in the (few) companies that control the complete cycle of cane processing. I remember, for example, that during a beautiful trip to Mauritius more than 10 years ago, some producers explained to me that from year to year they chose to make more sugar and less rum or the other way around, depending on the vagaries of the market.

However, in 1925 the new management of JASA decided to focus again on rum. They invested a lot of money to improve the quantity and quality of fermentation and stored large quantities of rum for aging. Evidently, they were laying the ground for something new, and big. As we will see.

POST SCRIPTUM

Mike Kunekta, who every month keeps us posted about the news in the world of rum and who I thank because he has repeatedly directed me to works I had not known before, asked me how far I would like to go on with the history of Cuban rum. Well, I would like to reach the present day. A day that, I anticipate, sees great successes, but also great risks. There will therefore be many more articles, but from time to time I will interrupt the series to tell you about other aspects of the history of rum.

Marco Pierini





THE Rum[®]
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Got Rum? December 2025 - 26

The Rum Laboratory

Presented by

THE **Rum**[®]
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Join us as we explore the world of
rum spices and flavors!
In this series you will learn to flavor
your own Rums and to create your
own Liqueurs and Creams.



The Rum University® Laboratory

Presents

making your own

Cinnamon Coffee Rum Liqueur

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 Cups Water, Divided
- 6 Tbs Heavy Roasted Coffee, Coarsely Ground
- 3 Cups Sugar
- 2 Cinnamon Sticks
- 1 tsp Pure Vanilla Extract
- 2 1/2 Cups Light Rum at 40% ABV (80-Proof)
- 1 Cup Heavy (Pot Still) Rum, preferably aged

Directions:

Combine the 1 1/2 cups of hot water and the coffee to make a strong brew, remove the coffee grounds (French Press or mesh filter) and set it aside. Combine remaining cup of water and the white sugar in a medium saucepan, stirring until all the sugar has dissolved. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat. Remove from the heat and allow it to cool.

Add the vanilla and coffee to the simple syrup, transfer to a 2-quart container and add the light and heavy rums, place the cinnamon sticks inside. Cover the container and let it rest in a dark, cool place for 4-6 weeks.

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Did you know that...

One study found just half a teaspoon of cinnamon per day can significantly reduce blood sugar levels, triglycerides, LDL cholesterol, and total cholesterol levels in people with type 2 diabetes. But for those who don't have to worry so seriously about insulin levels, cinnamon has also been shown to have many other benefits:

Cinnamon can slow the speed at which the stomach empties following a meal, which can help control sharp rises and falls in blood sugar levels. Softening these sugar spikes can theoretically reduce cravings.

Cinnamon can enhance the way antioxidants from other foods help the body defend itself, strengthening the immune system.

Source: <http://greatist.com/health/try-cinnamon-your-coffee-instead-cream-and-sugar>

RUM IN THE NEWS

by Mike Kunetka



MOUNT GAY

Mount Gay announced that its iconic Mount Gay Silver is once again available in the US. Meticulously crafted by Master Blender Trudiann Branker, this exceptional product marks Mount Gay's white rum entry into the on-trade market, honoring Barbados' passion for premium white rum. This launch re-introduces Mount Gay Silver to bartenders, providing them with the unparalleled opportunity to enhance their white rum cocktails. Celebrating Barbadian rum culture and over 320 years of rum-making expertise, Silver proudly upholds Mount Gay's traditional identity. It is a blend of pot and columns still rums, distinguishing it from most other white rums in the category, which use column still only. While the column still component of the blend is unaged, the pot still portion is aged for two years in ex-American Whiskey casks. The secret to the crystal-clear liquid is double filtration, one of which consists in a filtration through charcoal, which removes the color and adds to the elegant flavor. "Mount Gay Silver is a classic I deeply cherish, rooted in the heart of Barbados and the Caribbean. I'm thrilled to see our beloved white rum launch in the US on-trade,

These are the most recent and noteworthy headlines in the rum industry. If you want us to share your news with our readers, please send me an email to: Mike@gotrum.com.

empowering bartenders to elevate white rum cocktails and extending our authentic island craft to even broader horizons,” said Trudiann Branker, Mount Gay Master Blender. Mount Gay Silver is bottled at 40% ABV. It is available in key markets across the US in 1L size. www.mountgayrum.com.

TOP TEN STATES FOR RUM SALES

Park Street, using consumption data from Beverage Information Group, recently compiled a list of the top ten states for rum sales. The report shows a mix of traditional powerhouses and emerging markets dominating total volume, with Florida and California maintaining their commanding positions. The per capita rankings reveal intriguing regional preferences, with Northern and coastal states demonstrating particularly strong individual consumption patterns that reflect diverse drinking cultures and seasonal tourism impacts.

The top ten states ranked by total consumption are:

1. Florida: 2.6 million Cases
2. California: 2.0 million Cases
3. New York: 1.5 million Cases
4. New Jersey: 918k Cases
5. Texas: 883k Cases
6. Illinois: 865k Cases
7. Michigan: 835k Cases
8. Pennsylvania: 833k Cases
9. Wisconsin: 650k Cases
10. Minnesota: 638k Cases

The per capita data reveal a fascinating pattern, with Northern states unexpectedly dominating the rankings alongside predictable coastal leaders. The strong showing by Upper Midwest states like North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin suggests that rum consumption transcends climate stereotypes, with regional drinking cultures and traditions playing significant roles beyond simple weather patterns. The top ten states ranked by per Capita consumption are:

1. New Hampshire: 232 cases per 1,000 residents
2. North Dakota: 178 cases per 1,000 residents
3. Alaska: 165 cases per 1,000 residents
4. Minnesota: 150 cases per 1,000 residents
5. Wisconsin: 146 cases per 1,000 residents
6. Maine: 144 cases per 1,000 residents
7. Florida: 142 cases per 1,000 residents
8. New Jersey: 129 cases per 1,000 residents
9. Hawaii: 124 cases per 1,000 residents
10. Iowa: 120 cases per 1,000 residents

<https://www.parkstreet.com/>,
<https://bevinfogroup.com/>

DON Q

Don Q has launched Double-Aged Pedro Ximénez Cask Finish Rum, an elegant new addition to its acclaimed Selección Exclusiva program. Crafted with precision and passion for discerning rum enthusiasts, this limited-edition release of only 2,000 bottles harmonizes the bold character of Puerto Rican rum with the refined complexity of European cask-aging

tradition. This sipping rum begins its journey in American white oak ex-bourbon barrels, where it rests and matures for a minimum of seven years. After this initial aging, the rum is then finished for 11 additional months in Pedro Ximénez sherry casks, imported directly from Spain, infusing the spirit with a rich, velvety complexity and signature notes of dried fruit and honeyed warmth. “At Destilería Serrallés, we’re always seeking ways to honor tradition while embracing innovation,” says Silvia Santiago, Master Blender and Senior Vice President of Manufacturing at Destilería Serrallés, Inc. “With the Pedro Ximénez Double Cask Finish, we’ve crafted an expression that reflects the depth and elegance possible when Puerto Rican rum is paired with the complexity of European cask aging. This release is a testament to our team’s dedication, and I’m proud to share this rich, beautifully finished rum with enthusiasts around the world.” <https://donq.com/>

COPALLI ORGANIC RUM

Copalli Organic Rum has been awarded four distinguished accolades at the 2025 Global Drinks Intel ESG Awards, including the coveted Alexander Smith Grand Prix Award for ESG Spirits Producer of the Year. The brand also received the awards for Sustainable Spirits Product of the Year, Water Preservation Achievement of the Year, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Achievement of the Year. The awards represent the highest international recognition for sustainability in the spirits industry, judged by experts across business, science and environmental governance. “It’s an honor to be recognized by such a prestigious, global organization for our commitment to taking care of our people while creating an incredible product that celebrates and nurtures our planet,” says Wil Maheia, Chief Sustainability Officer at Copalli Organic Rum. Copalli Organic Rum’s focus on regenerative agriculture, water preservation practices, closed loop waste management, and regional conservation efforts creates a premium product while setting new industry standards for environmental responsibility. In a world full of sustainability claims, Copalli Organic Rum relies on third-party experts and verifiers to ensure the highest standards are met. Winning across multiple categories positions Copalli Organic Rum not only as a producer of exceptional rum, but as a global benchmark for environmentally responsible distilling, proving that premium craftsmanship and sustainability can go hand-in-hand. www.copallirum.com.

CHARLES S. TOBIAS, FOUNDER OF PUSSEY’S RUM

Charles Tobias, the founder of Pussey’s Rum, passed away on October 14th at the age of 91. Born in Canada, Charles earned an athletic scholarship

to the University of Southern California, where he graduated with dual degrees in aeronautical and mechanical engineering. After college, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He served two tours in Vietnam. The first was aboard an aircraft carrier, then in special operations flying T-28s ashore. During his second tour, he was shot down over the Mekong Delta and rescued by Navy SEALs. After his service, Charles returned to California and founded Veradyne, Inc. in Santa Monica, aiming to counter surface-to-air missile threats. He secured a government contract to develop silicon transistors and radar-jamming technology, building Veradyne into a \$100 million enterprise before merging with Fairchild Semiconductor.

Charles's love for sailing took root after his time at sea in the Marines. Though his family never owned a boat, he purchased a small one and quickly fell in love with the water. He began racing, upgrading vessels, and eventually set his sights on circumnavigating the globe. One day, stuck in traffic on his way to the bank, he called his assistant, canceled his meetings, and made the decision to set sail. He embarked on a five-year voyage aboard *Mar*, a 57-foot wooden ketch built for icy waters, with 2¾-inch larch planking and 12 tons of lead in the keel. While docked in Gibraltar searching for a boat part, Charles boarded a British Navy warship. The captain gifted him a flagon of dark navy rum for the next leg of his journey. Though the daily tot had been discontinued, ships still carried rum for ceremonial occasions known as "Splice the Mainbrace."

Over the next 15 days at sea, Charles and his crew finished the flagon and a new idea was born. Determined to revive the legendary naval spirit, Charles approached the British Royal Navy for permission to use their rum blend and the White Ensign. With support from General Arthur B. Hanson, he secured a meeting with Second Sea Lord Admiral Sir Gordon Tait. After navigating the necessary channels, he was granted access to the original Admiralty blend, though the name "Royal Navy Pusser's Rum" was declined and replaced with "British Navy Pusser's Rum." As a gesture of gratitude, Charles pledged ongoing support to the Royal Navy Sailor's Fund, known as the "Tot" Fund. Over the years, the brand honored that promise, contributing more than €250,000 to the fund, which was later consolidated into The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charities (RNRMC). In recognition of his charitable efforts, Charles was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the Queen's 2011 New Year Honors list. Charles partnered with Trinidad Distillers Ltd., working with master blender Robert Wong to source and blend the distillates to Admiralty specifications. He founded Pusser's Ltd. on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, where the rum was blended and bottled, making the purser's rum commercially available for the first time in history.

LA MAISON & VELIER and HAMPDEN ESTATE

La Maison & Velier issued the following update about the distillery at Hampden Estate: In October, Hurricane Melissa, the most powerful storm in recorded history, set its path directly over Western Jamaica, including Hampden's home in Trelawny Parish. In good news, the team at Hampden Estate is safe and unharmed. The full extent of the damage is still being assessed, but the impact on the staff, their families and community is immense. Homes have been destroyed and the infrastructure that connects the local community has been significantly affected. Hampden Estate has established the Trelawny Hurricane Relief Fund to raise money for the local community in order to stabilize families, repair damages to the local community spaces, schools and church. The Trelawny Hurricane Relief Fund aims to help rebuild the lives of the people who are the heart and soul of this legendary estate. 100% of donations will go directly to providing immediate and long-term aid to employees, their families, and the surrounding community in Trelawny.

Funds will be used for:

- Urgent Supplies: Providing clean water, food, and medical supplies.
- Rebuilding Homes: Securing roofs, windows, and essential home repairs for team and community members who have been affected.
- Community Support: Assisting with debris removal and the restoration of essential services like churches and schools in the local area.

Donations in any amount are immensely helpful and will go to rebuilding the lives and homes of the people, families and communities who power this iconic piece of Jamaican heritage.

<https://theafj.app.neoncrm.com/fundraiser/employeesofhampden>

WORTHY PARK ESTATE

In an industry increasingly dominated by multinational giants, Worthy Park Estate stands as a testament to what family ownership and complete control can achieve. The Jamaican distillery has won the IWSC's 2025 Rum Producer Trophy, celebrating 284 years of rum production that began in 1741 on their estate in the island's interior. International Wine & Spirit Competition Spirits Judging Committee member, Dawn Davies praised their unwavering approach: "Worthy Park is a real deserved winner this year. They have consistently come to the table with great product. They are about quality. Their sustainability program, the cane-to-glass principle - it all comes through in the rum." What sets Worthy Park apart is their complete vertical integration. As Jamaica's last remaining single estate producer, they grow sugarcane, crush it, make sugar and molasses, then ferment, distil in double retort pot stills, age, blend and bottle entirely on-site. No shortcuts, no outsourcing, just uncompromising control over every stage. Their 2025 portfolio

demonstrated remarkable range and consistency. Worthy Park 109 earned a Gold Outstanding (98 points), whilst their 12-Year-Old and Overproof expressions both secured Gold medals (95 points each). Judge Olivier Ward praised their consistent performance at this year's awards, noting how they were at the top of the rum category. Innovation hasn't compromised tradition. They're experimenting with cane juice distillates alongside traditional molasses bases - a rarity in Jamaican rum - whilst exploring diverse cask finishes from Madeira and Port to Calvados and Cognac. Their sustainability runs deeper than marketing: bagasse (crushed cane fibre) fuels their boilers, gravity feeds their water systems and vinasse (distillation waste) becomes field fertiliser. For an independent operation of 850 employees competing against global brands, this trophy validates their belief that authenticity and excellence can thrive without compromise.
<https://worthyparkestate.com/>

FLOR de CAÑA

At 135 years old, Flor de Caña stands as one of the oldest companies in Central America. However, the brand is far from standing still. To celebrate its birthday this year, the family-owned rum distillery has released what is said to be its most extraordinary creation and oldest release to date: Flor de Caña 35 Year Rum. The expression reflects the brand's dedication to sustainability, excellence and quality, and a legacy nurtured by five generations since 1890 – three of whom were directly involved in the creation of this rum. The third generation was responsible for its distillation; the fourth for its preservation; and, finally, the fifth and current for its introduction to the world. The rum was aged naturally and sustainably for 35 years in American white oak barrels in the family's private reserve, benefiting from Nicaragua's unique volcanic terroir. The distillery's base, resting between the majestic San Cristóbal volcano and the Pacific Ocean, is said to bestow a complex flavor profile and an exquisitely smooth finish on the rum. "Flor de Caña 35 Year Rum embodies the essence, values, and artistry that have defined our brand for 135 years. More than a collector's item, it is a rare treasure of time, crafted for those who value authenticity, legacy, and excellence," said Tomás Cano, who has been Flor de Caña's Maestro Ronero for almost four decades.
www.flordecana.com/35-year

GOLDBELLY & GOSLINGS

The holiday season has always carried an undeniable connection to flavor, memory, and tradition, and this year, Goldbelly introduced a collaboration that aligned those ideas with a touch of island nostalgia. Partnering with Goslings Rum, the renowned Bermudian spirits house, Goldbelly unveiled a trio of rum cakes that celebrated the essence of Bermuda while making it accessible to households across the country. The partnership

marked the first time Goslings brought its rum-infused baked goods to a nationwide audience, offering a new way to experience the brand's heritage through texture, aroma, and culinary storytelling. For those who associate winter gatherings with indulgence, warmth, and sensory comfort, the collaboration arrived at the ideal moment, blending culinary craftsmanship with a spirit-steeped lineage that spans generations. Goldbelly has earned its reputation by connecting people with iconic regional foods, and Goslings Rum carried a legacy firmly connected to Bermuda's identity, making this partnership a natural alignment. Goldbelly will be offering three cakes:

- The Signature Dark 'n Stormy Rum Cake - Among the releases, the Dark 'n Stormy Rum Cake emerged as the most emblematic, capturing the essence of Bermuda's national cocktail.
- The Rum Swizzle Cake and Its Tropical Heritage - If the Dark 'n Stormy served as Bermuda's national cocktail, the Rum Swizzle stood as its festive counterpart, a vibrant, fruit-forward drink central to celebrations, gatherings, and beachfront leisure.
- The Double Chocolate Rum Cake for Indulgent Palates - For those seeking depth and richness, the Double Chocolate Rum Cake stood apart as the most decadent offering in the collection.

<https://www.goldbelly.com/>, <https://goslings.com/>

SAMAROLI

Every year-end, Samaroli unveils a new exceptional collection, placing poetry at the service of rum more than ever before. This year's offering includes:

- Samaroli Diamond SXG 20 Year Old - Distilled from molasses in a simple wooden still, using a traditional method specific to the Diamond distillery. Aged for 20 years and bottled in Scotland in 2024, this unique cask reveals all the depth and poetry of the Demerara style. It is bottled at 51% ABV.
- Samaroli - Jamaica Rum 2012 - Distilled in 2012 at Hampden Estate in Jamaica, this rum comes from molasses that is naturally fermented before being distilled in a pot still. It has been aged for 5 years in a tropical climate and then for 7 years in Europe, in ex-bourbon barrels, giving rise to a profile of great complexity. It is bottled at 57% ABV.
- Samaroli - Trinidad Rum 1999 - Distilled at Trinidad Distillers Limited (Fernandes style) from molasses, this rum has rested for 25 years in ex-bourbon casks, developing a complex and harmonious structure.
- Samaroli - Colombia Rum – 2002 - Made from sugarcane honey and distilled using a process combining column and iron, this rum has matured for 22 years in a tropical climate in ex-bourbon barrels. It is bottled at 55% ABV

<https://samaroli.com/>



The Sweet Business of Sugar

THE **Rum**
UNIVERSITY



Philippines

Regardless of distillation equipment, fermentation method, aging or blending techniques, all rum producers have one thing in common: **sugarcane**.

Without sugarcane we would not have sugar mills, countless farmers would not have a profitable crop and we would not have rum!

Required Report: Required - Public Distribution

Date: April 16, 2025

Report Number: RP2025-0023

Report Name: Sugar Annual

Country: Philippines

Post: Manila

Report Category: Sugar

Prepared By: Florence Mojica-Sevilla

Approved By: Michael Ward

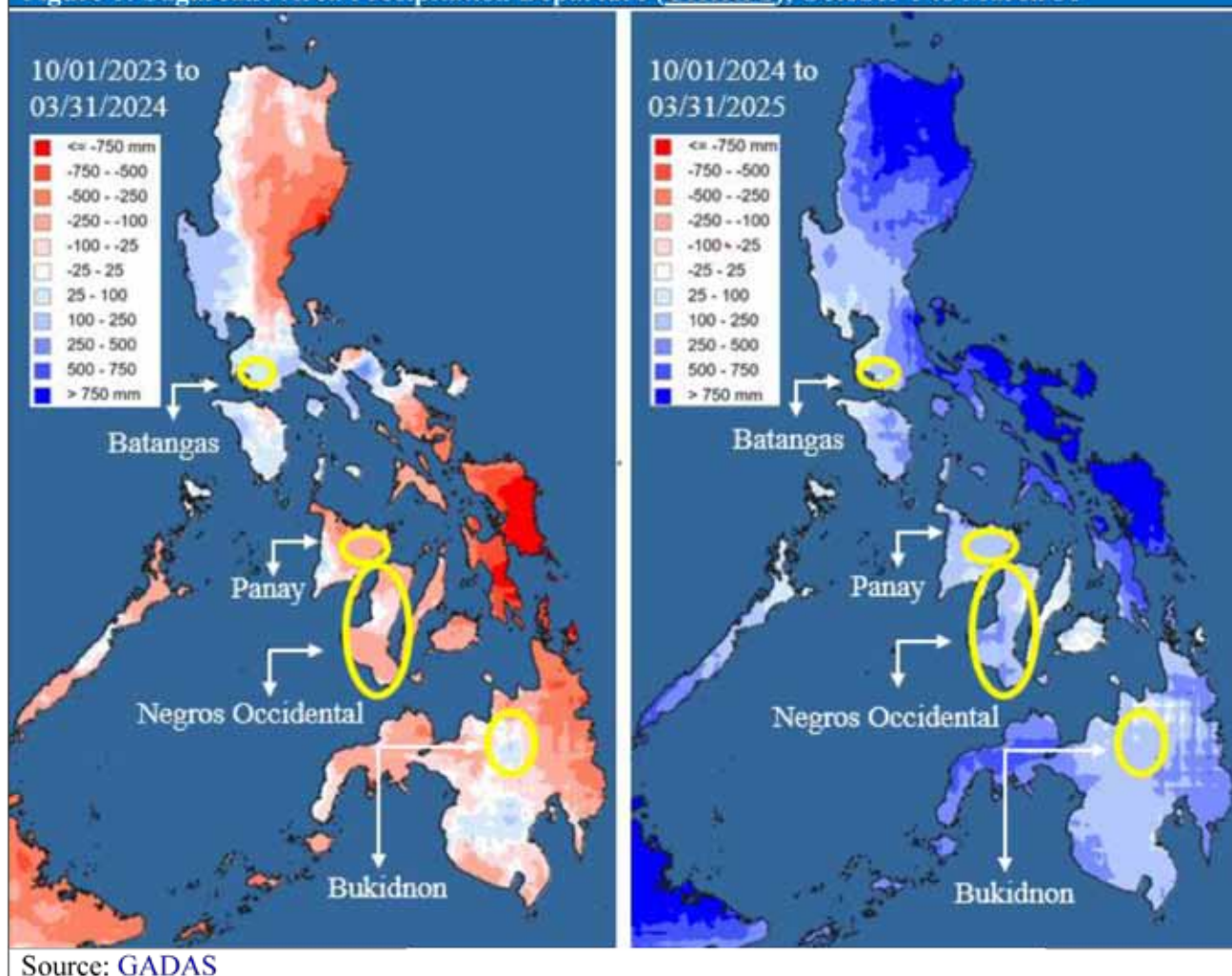
Report Highlights:

FAS Manila forecasts marketing year (MY) 2026 raw sugar production to remain flat at 1.85 million metric tons (MT). Ample rainfall during the planting season which started in October supported sugarcane planting among farms with no irrigation. Sugar imports will continue to stabilize supply and prices in the domestic market. Post forecasts refined imports of 300,000 MT (321,000 MT raw sugar equivalent) in MY 2026 per Sugar Order No. 5 released on March 12, 2025, and Sugar Order No 2, released on February 7, 2025. Post expects the Philippines to fulfill its 2025 U.S. WTO sugar tariff-rate quota allocation of 66,000 metric tons raw value (MTRV). At this time, Post forecasts zero exports in MY 2026.

Production:

Centrifugal Sugar (Raw Sugar). For marketing year (MY) 2026 (September 2025 to August 2026), Post forecasts sugar production to remain flat at 1.85 million metric ton (MT). Farmers will continue to plant sugarcane despite the downward trend of mill site prices in MY 2025 in anticipation of increases in MY 2026. Planting started in October 2024 and will end in May 2025. Ample rainfall supported sugarcane planting in the past six months (October 2024 to March 2025) in major sugarcane areas in Negros Occidental (61 percent), Bukidnon (15 percent), Panay (8 percent) and Batangas (5 percent).

Figure 1: Sugarcane Area Precipitation Departure (CHIRPS), October 1 to March 31



Post maintains MY 2025 raw sugar production at 1.85 million MT higher than 1.78 million MT forecast production of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) released in Sugar Order No. 1 ([SO1](#)). As of March 23, 2025, SRA reported raw production of 1.4 million MT. Historically, around 50,000 MT of raw sugar is produced weekly. There are, however, other factors to consider such as diverting sugarcane to ethanol production and milling schedules. Post forecasts milling will end around the last week of June

in some areas. Those facilities which [started milling](#) late will also end late when sugarcane supply becomes low.

Table 1: Sugar Production, Supply, and Distribution, in '000 MT						
Sugar, Centrifugal (MY)	2024		2025		2026	
Market Year Begins	Sep 2023		Sep 2024		Sep 2025	
Philippines	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Beginning Stocks (1000 MT)	1,465	1,465	1,258	1,273		1,068
Beet Sugar Production	0	0	0	0		0
Cane Sugar Production	1,922	1,922	1,850	1,850		1,850
Total Sugar Production	1,922	1,922	1,850	1,850		1,850
Raw Imports	0	0	0	0		0
Refined Imports (Raw Value)	71	86	0	236		321
Total Imports	71	86	0	236		321
Total Supply	3,458	3,473	3,108	3,359		3,239
Raw Exports	0	0	25	91		0
Refined Exports (Raw Value)	0	0	0	0		0
Total Exports	0	0	25	91		0
Human Domestic Consumption	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200		2,200
Other Disappearance	0	0	0	0		0
Total Use	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200		2,200
Ending Stocks	1,258	1,273	883	1,068		1,039
Total Distribution	3,458	3,473	3,108	3,359		3,239

Post forecasts sugarcane area to remain flat in MY 2026. There are limited areas for expansion that can replace the continuous conversion of agricultural land to residential and industrial uses. Sugarcane farmers will continue to plant sugarcane in anticipation of price increases. Crop shifting to corn will be minimal in MY 2026 due to declining corn prices.

Table 2: Sugarcane Production, Supply, and Distribution						
Sugarcane (MY)	2024		2025		2026	
Market Year Begins	Sep 2023		Sep 2024		Sep 2025	
Philippines	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Area Planted (1000 HA)	388	388	389	389		389
Area Harvested (1000 HA)	388	388	389	389		389
Production (1000 MT)	21,600	21,600	21,800	21,800		21,800
Total Supply (1000 MT)	21,600	21,600	21,800	21,800		21,800
Utilization for Sugar (1000 MT)	20,400	20,400	20,800	20,800		20,800
Utilization for Alcohol (1000 MT)	1,200	1,200	1,000	1,000		1,000
Total Utilization (1000 MT)	21,600	21,600	21,800	21,800		21,800

Sugarcane growing areas cover 26 mill districts located in 20 provinces within the 10 regions of the country. Visayas (Negros, Panay, Cebu and Leyte) remains the top producer. Negros Occidental

represents 61 percent of the sugarcane production area nationwide. Of the total area, 97 percent of the harvested area is for centrifugal sugar, the remaining area (3 percent) is for bioethanol production. Generally, sugarcane area harvested is on the downtrend due to land conversion and the closing of mills. The marginal increase in MY 2025 was not enough to recover the area lost over the long term.

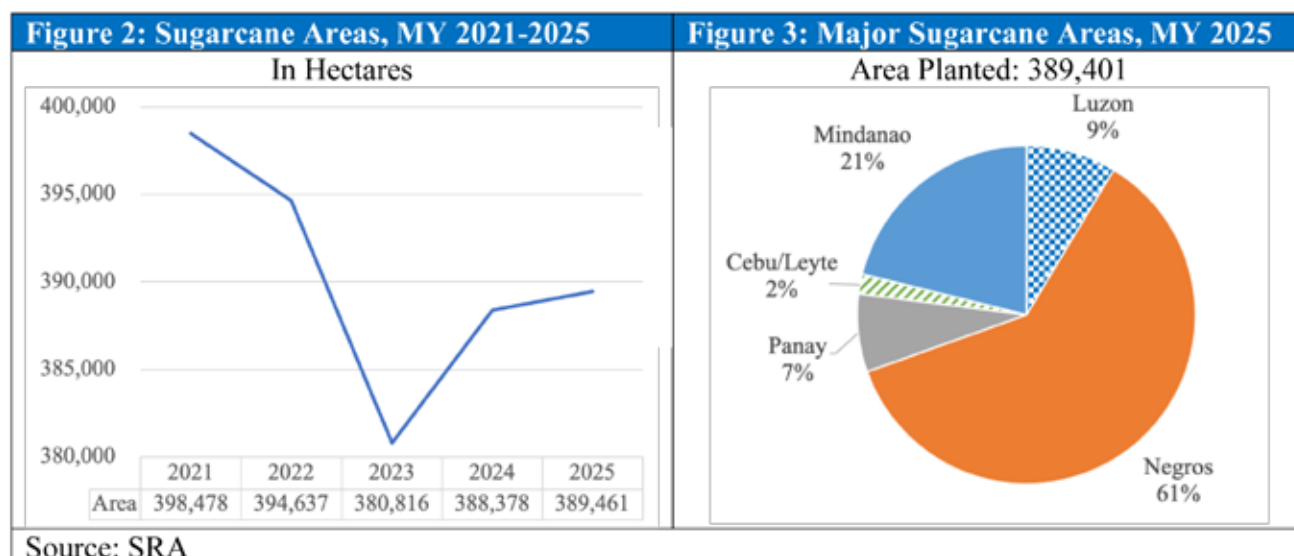
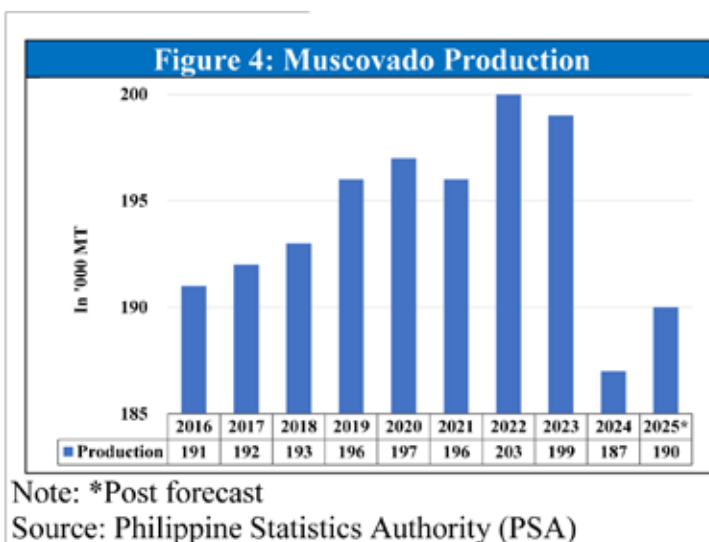


Table 3: U.S. Dollar to Philippine Peso Exchange Rate, Annual Average				
Marketing Year	2022	2023	2024	2025*
US\$ - PHP	52.14	56.02	56.83	57.83

Note: *average from September 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025
Source: [Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas](#) (Central Bank of the Philippines)

Non-centrifugal Sugar (Muscovado). Post forecasts production to slightly recover in MY 2025. The increasing interest in healthy and organic food will drive demand for muscovado sugar, which is viewed as pure and wholesome. Muscovado serves as an important ingredient in local delicacies, jams, beverages, and in making chocolates. Muscovado powder has a minimum polarization of 77-86 °Z as stated in the PNS/BAFS 144:2015. It is considered one of the healthier alternatives to refined sugar. Several commercial brands are now readily available. High prices encouraged more production in the past two years.



Prices. Mill site prices will continue to go down until the end of MY 2025. Milling started late in MY 2025, which will extend the milling season to around the end of June 2025. Farmer's income is computed in terms of mill site prices using sugar yield or the LKG/TC (50-kilogram bag per ton cane) and the prevailing sharing scheme implemented in the mills (i.e., 70:30 or 70 percent to farmer and 30 percent of sugar output to the miller). High prices benefited both the miller and planters; however, the planters suffered from high cost of fertilizer and other costs such as labor, power, and fuel. Increasing costs of these inputs resulted in lower income among farmers or even losses when sugar prices become low.

Wholesale Prices. Prices show an increasing trend in MY 2025 despite the large sugar stocks available. The price of raw sugar is determined on a weekly basis via a bidding process initiated by planters' associations (note: sugarcane farmers are known locally as planters) with offices located inside the mill compound. The result of the bidding in Negros Occidental (the major producing province), normally done on a Thursday, becomes the reference price made available to other planters' associations nationwide. It is then the decision of the sugar traders to use the same price or increase/decrease the price to buyers, but normally it will not differ more than P10-50 (\$0.20 to \$1.03) per LKG.

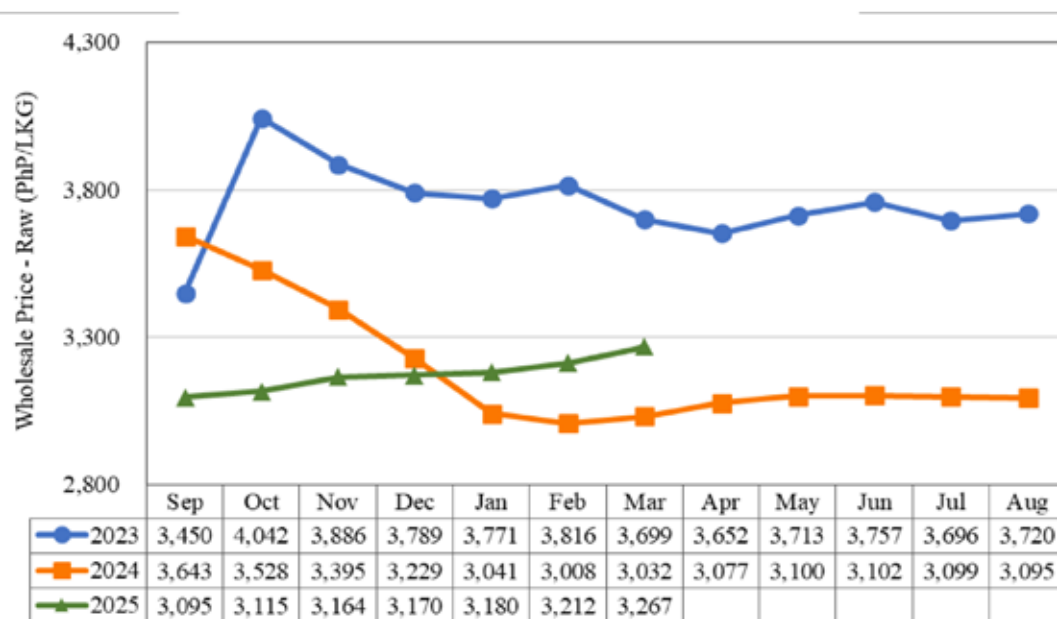
Table 4: Mill Site Prices, PhP/LKg

Month	2023	2024	2025
Sep	3,364	2,758	2,756
Oct	3,312	2,703	2,801
Nov	3,270	2,616	2,653
Dec	3,058	2,415	2,487
Jan	3,425	2,405	2,754
Feb	3,092	2,548	2,910
Mar	3,101	2,753	2,776
Apr	3,177	2,580	
May	3,120	2,444	
Jun	3,033	-	
Jul	3,000	-	
Aug	-	-	
Ave.	3,177	2,580	2,734

Note: - No milling operation

Source: [SRA Mill Site Prices](#)

Figure 5: Wholesale Prices of Raw Sugar, Metro Manila

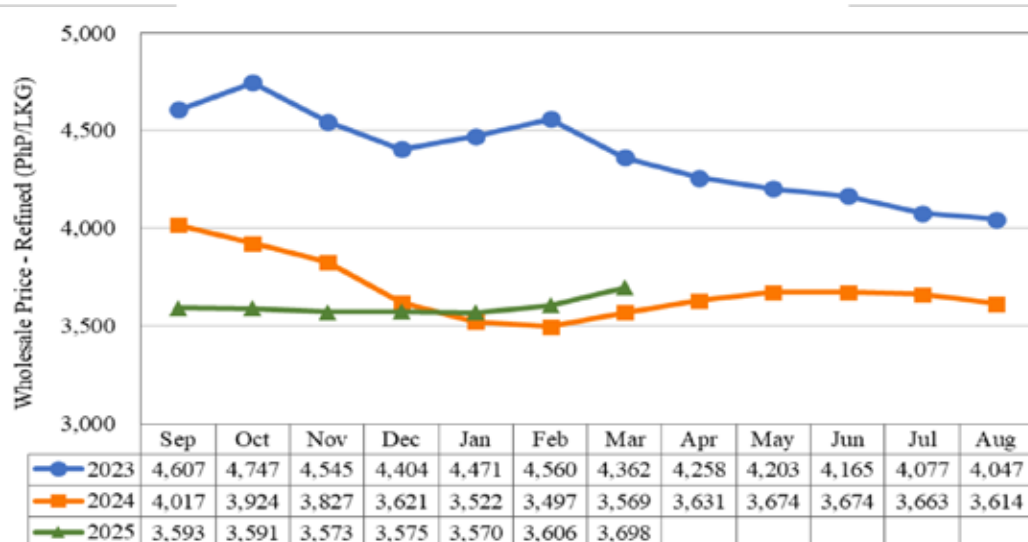


Source: [SRA Monthly Average Sugar Prices in Metro Manila](#)

MY 2025 \$/LKG

Sep	55
Oct	54
Nov	54
Dec	54
Jan	54
Feb	55
Mar	57
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	

Figure 6: Wholesale Prices of Refined Sugar, Metro Manila

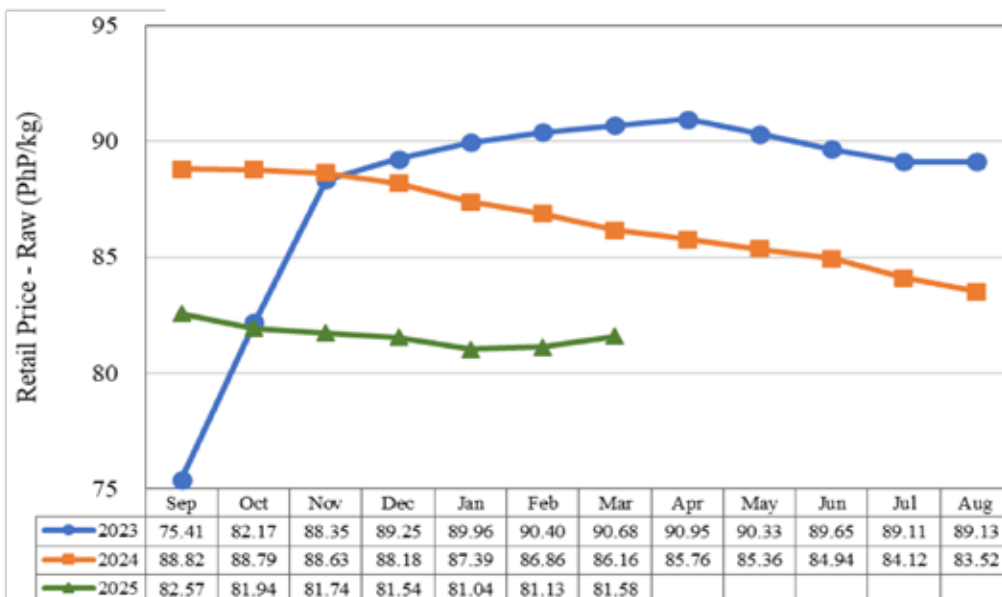
MY 2025
\$/LKG

Sep	64
Oct	63
Nov	61
Dec	61
Jan	61
Feb	62
Mar	64
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	

Source: [SRA Monthly Average Sugar Prices in Metro Manila](#)

Retail Prices. Prices remain elevated but are on a downward trend from 2023. Consumers wait to see prices decline, but prices continue to be higher than PhP80 (\$1.38) per kilo, despite supply being relatively stable. Per Post computation, imported refined sugar from ASEAN can be sold between PhP60 (\$1.07) to PhP65 (\$0.92) per kilo. See [GAIN Sugar Report](#) for price computation.

Figure 7: Raw Sugar Retail Prices, Metro Manila

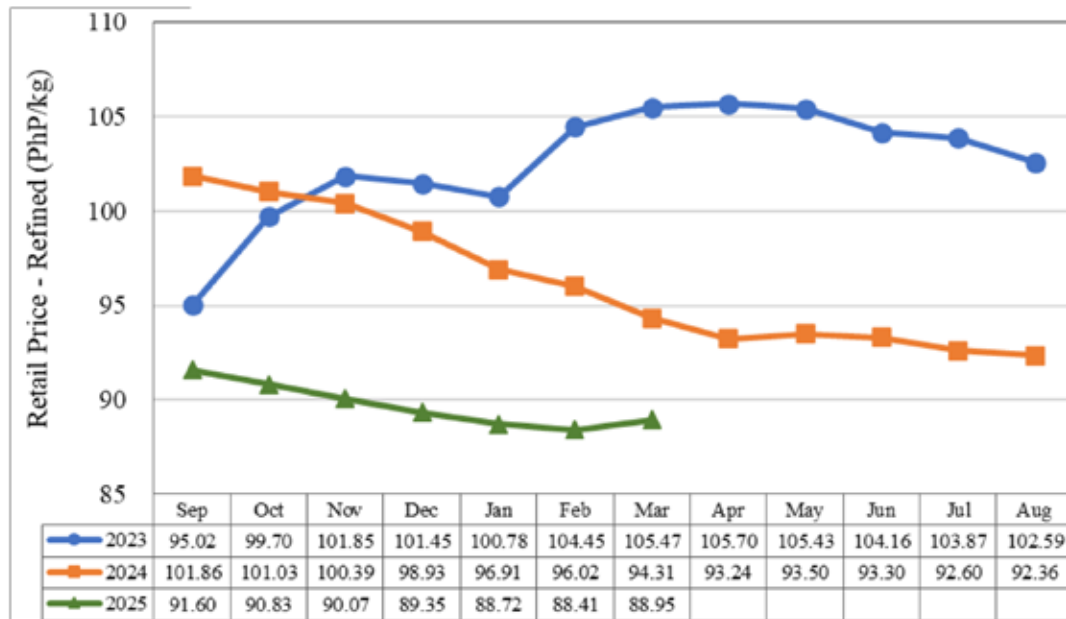
MY 2025
\$/kg

Sep	1.47
Oct	1.43
Nov	1.39
Dec	1.40
Jan	1.39
Feb	1.40
Mar	1.42
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	

Note: Average price of brown and washed sugar

Source: [SRA Monthly Average Sugar Prices in Metro Manila](#)

Figure 8: Refined Sugar Retail Prices, Metro Manila



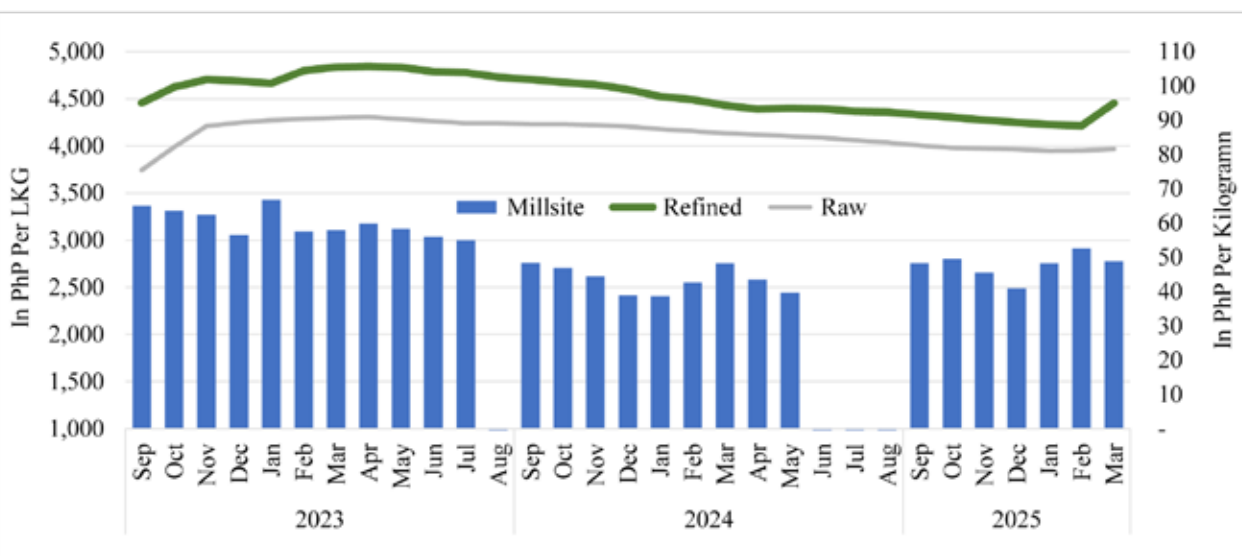
MY 2025
\$/kg

Sep	1.63
Oct	1.59
Nov	1.53
Dec	1.53
Jan	1.52
Feb	1.52
Mar	1.54
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	

Source: [SRA Monthly Average Sugar Prices in Metro Manila](#)

Millsite prices have decreased but retail prices of raw and refined sugar remain elevated in MY 2025.

Figure 9: Behavior of Mill Site, and Retail Prices of Raw and Refined Sugar



Source: [SRA Monthly Average Millsite Prices](#) and [SRA Monthly Average Sugar Prices in Metro Manila](#)

Despite the accumulation of stocks, prices remain well above the norm and consumers continue to wait for lower prices. Refined imports have resulted in only a slight decline in sugar prices.

Muscovado Prices. Foreign markets like Europe and Japan are willing to pay a higher price for muscovado. The export price remains higher for high-quality muscovado than the prevailing market price of about PhP 130/kg (\$2.25/kg) in the domestic market. The favorable retail price in the domestic and export market pulls up farmgate prices to the benefit of producers. Muscovado offers a better price than raw and refined sugar with relatively low capital to produce. Muscovado prices also increased due to high sugar prices.

Consumption:

Centrifugal Sugar (Raw Sugar). Post forecasts sugar demand to remain flat for MY 2026. The high prices of sugar and sugar-containing products will continue to discourage an increase in consumption. Domestic sugar demand is divided into three main segments: household (32 percent), institutional (18 percent) and

industrial (50 percent). Among industrial users, the beverage industry, preserved fruits, and confectionery sectors are the most important users. Based on previous studies (1993, 2001, 2008) by the University of Asia and the Pacific-Center for Food and Agri Business (UA&P-CFA), Philippine consumers preferred refined sugar (60 percent) over washed sugar (25 percent) and brown sugar (15 percent). See [2022 Sugar Annual](#) on domestic sugar consumption. The SRA allotted PhP 7 million (M) (\$121,000) to update the sugar consumption study in the country to be done by the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute. The survey will cover 2,760 households and 660 establishments starting in March 2025. The study will serve as the basis in determining the optimal volume of imported sweeteners and will assist in crafting sugar policies.

MY	Raw	Refined
2018	201,784	90,920
2019	171,994	98,259
2020	178,208	83,263
2021	178,781	83,359
2022	161,638	85,182
2023	146,036	80,458
2024	153,538	84,602
2025*	139,159	83,812

Note: * As of March 9, 2025

Source: SRA

Sugar withdrawal from warehouses remains low compared to previous years, an indication of low consumption. This will continue with the prevailing high retail prices.

Non-centrifugal Sugar (Muscovado). Currently, domestic demand for muscovado is low due to high prices. Like the demand for centrifugal sugar, consumers are lessening consumption of muscovado. Consumers of muscovado come from the health and wellness sectors as well as institutional buyers.

Table 5: Muscovado Prices, PhP/Kilo

Year	PhP/Kg
2016	86.21
2017	79.61
2018	82.70
2019	85.07
2020	82.99
2021	87.75
2022	90.00
2023	120.00
2024	130.00
2025*	130.00

*Post forecast

Source: SRA and FAS
Manila research

ALTERNATIVE SWEETENERS

Among other forms of sugar and sugar substitutes or alternative sweeteners are high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), coconut sap sugar, muscovado, honey, among others. These alternative sweeteners serve niche markets, as sugar holds the largest share of consumption. See [2024 Sugar Annual](#) for additional information.

The Philippines produces and imports sugar alternatives approved by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Many dieters use

Table 8: Consumption of Sugar and Alternative Sweeteners In '000 MT Raw Sugar Equivalent

DEMAND/ CONSUMPTION	MARKETING YEAR		
	2023	2024	2025*
Sugar	2,200	2,200	2,200
Fructose/HFCS	16	20	19
Sugar Alternatives	828	774	1,135
Aspartame	327	276	428
Acesulfame	205	192	203
Sucralose	237	242	417
Saccharin	48	46	63
Stevia	11	18	24

Note: *Post Forecast

Aspartame – HS Code 292429, Cyclic Amides (Including Cyclic Carbamates) And Their Derivatives, And Salts Thereof, Nesoi;

Saccharin – HS Code 292511

Sucralose – HS Code 293214

Acesulfame – HS Code 293499, Nucleic Acids and Their Salts, Whether Or Not Chemically Defined; Other Heterocyclic Compounds, Nesoi

Stevia – HS Code 293890, Glycosides, Natural or Reproduced by Synthesis, And Their Salts, Ethers, Esters and Other Derivatives, Nesoi
Philippines has minimal production.

Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM) and SRA

Table 7: Alternative Sweeteners

Sucralose (Splenda) 600 times sweeter than sugar Supplier: Singapore and China
Aspartame (Equal, NutraSweet, NutraTaste) 160-220 times sweeter than sugar Supplier: China, Japan, Taiwan
Stevia (Sweet & Fit) 300 times sweeter than sugar Supplier: Local, China, Malaysia, Thailand
Saccharin (Sweet N Low) 200-700 times sweeter than sugar Supplier: China and South Korea
Acesulfame (Sweet One, Sunnett) 200 times sweeter than sugar Supplier: Indonesia, China, Singapore

alternative sweeteners and artificially sweetened foods to cut sugar consumption without eliminating sweetness in beverages, baked foods, and ice cream, among others. For more information on sugar alternatives, please see the [2021 Sugar Annual Report](#). Post forecasts consumption of alternative sweeteners (aspartame, acesulfame, sucralose, saccharin, stevia) converted into raw sugar equivalent to increase by 47 percent in MY 2025, reaching almost half of the 2.2 million MT raw sugar consumption. Some bakeries and beverages manufacturers have shifted to alternative sweeteners due to high sugar prices. Demand will continue to increase among health-conscious consumers moving towards sugar alternatives.

The consumption of sugar alternatives, including glucose, and fructose/HFCS is significantly lower than sugar consumption, but consumption of sugar alternatives has been increasing over the past years. Double digit growth was recorded in MY 2024 causing an alarm among sugar producers.

On January 2, 2025, SRA issued Sugar Order No. 6 ([SO6](#)) imposing clearance fees of PhP3/LKG on (\$0.05/LKG) on imported sugar and alternatives. SO6 covers the importation in whatever form and

sugar content of all “sugars” covered under Heading 17.01 and 17.02 and “sugar confectionery” under Heading 17.04 of the ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN).

Table 9: Imports of Sugar Alternatives covered in SO6, in MT

Marketing Year	2022	2023	2024	2025*	Percentage Growth 2023-2024
Glucose	202,435	198,414	240,047	71,702	21
Lactose	25,715	22,714	18,954	3,555	(17)
Maple syrup	71	37	65	18	76
Other Sugar (a)	77,027	71,622	97,444	28,205	36
Natural Honey	676	810	864	371	7
Confectionery	62,395	71,036	82,514	36,414	16
TOTAL	368,319	364,633	439,888	140,265	

Note: *September to December 2025 only

(a) Including invert sugar and invert syrup

Source: TDM

Trade:

Exports. Post maintains MY 2026 exports at zero while waiting for SRA’s policy on sugar export next MY. In recent years, the United States has been the sole export market for Philippine raw sugar. Post expects the Philippines to fulfill its 2025 U.S. WTO tariff rate quota (TRQ) allocation of 66,000 metric tons raw value (MTRV) by August 15, 2025 per [SO5](#) series of 2024/2025. Post revises the total export to 91,000 MT for MY 2025.

Imports. Post forecasts importation of 300,000 MT refined (321,000 MT raw equivalent) for MY 2026. On March 12, 2025, SRA released [SO5](#) detailing the guidelines on the fulfillment of the U.S. sugar quota allocation for MY 2025 and provided a 1:2.5 ratio (locally produced farmers’ share sugar exported to the United States : imported sugar). Additional import is expected per [SO2](#) released on February 7, 2025, on the voluntary purchase of farmers’ sugar to avail of future import program. See GAIN Report [here](#). SO2 covered a maximum of 500,000 MT. A total of 120,000 MT was already issued and purchased by traders and will qualify to the future import program. Post revises refined imports to 221,000 MT (236,000 raw sugar equivalent) as reported by SRA. The large importation of refined in MY 2025 has translated into high carryover stocks of 356,000 MT.

Stocks:

Posts forecasts ending stocks to remain high in MY 2026 but will decline modestly year-on-year. Sugar withdrawals continue to be low compared to previous years. Raw inventory is expected to be high at the start of the milling season. With the on-going harvest, there will be a build-up of raw sugar if it is not sold in the market. SRA monitors warehouses owned by millers, traders, and importers, who are required to register all warehouses.

Table 10: Raw and Refined Sugar Stocks, in MT

	Raw Sugar			Refined Sugar		
MY	2023	2024	2025*	2023	2024	2025*
Beginning Stocks	133,541	190,790	272,005	147,593	551,552	308,544
Domestic	133,541	184,815	272,005	27,388	142,052	230,852
Imports		5,975		120,205	409,500	77,692
Imports	10,000			730,430	80,817	221,466
Production	1,799,466	1,922,586	1,418,456	640,908	691,380	398,853
Total Supply	1,943,007	2,113,376	1,690,461	1,518,931	1,323,749	928,863
Withdrawal						
From Imports	4,025	5,975		439,255	412,625	201,588
From Local Production	1,748,403	1,812,297	983,811	526,245	602,605	371,235
U.S. Exports Withdrawal		24,179				
Total Withdrawal	1,752,428	1,842,451	983,811	965,500	1,015,230	572,823
Ending Stocks	190,579	270,925	706,650	553,431	308,519	356,040
Transfer to refinery	8,772	92,713	137,779			
From Local Production				142,051	230,827	258,469
From Imports	5,975	-		411,400	77,692	97,570
Net Ending Stocks	181,807	178,212	568,871	553,431	308,519	356,040

Note: * As of March 23, 2025

Source: SRA

SRA reports on raw and refined stocks based on actual physical stocks at the end of the milling season. The sugar stock balance represents the available supply of sugar in the market at any given time. Sugar is normally stored in mill warehouses. Most sugar is produced and marketed under the long established

TYPES OF *QUEDAN*

“A” Sugar allocated for the U.S. market in compliance with the U.S. quota requirements

“B” sugar for the domestic market

“C” sugar classified as reserved, which may subsequently be converted to either A or B as the need arises

“D” Sugar allocated for the world market

Source: SRA

“*quedan*” system. A *quedan* is the equivalent of a warehouse receipt which shows the ownership of a specified amount of sugar in a warehouse. *Quedan* is a negotiable instrument, the primary trading document in the Philippine sugar industry. The Sugar Act of 1954 mandates the sharing of raw sugar and molasses with the farmer allocating a percentage of the output (30 to 35 percent) of their sugar to the mill as payment for processing of the cane. As soon as the sugar is processed, the mill issues a warehouse receipt called a *quedan*, to the farmer representing their share of the sugar (65 to 70 percent). SRA requires that all raw sugar produced or marketed within the country be covered by a *quedan*. The issued *quedan* attests to the physical presence of the sugar in the storage facility. SRA classifies raw sugar at the start of the marketing year (September) into different types of *quedan*.

Trade Policy:

Executive Order 892 (EO 892): Imports of sugar from ASEAN countries are levied at 5 percent duty. The Philippines, a signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO), has lifted quantitative restrictions on imports of all food products but maintains tariff rate quotas on sugar. The tariff rates for sugar were established in **Executive Order 313**, which set varying in-quota and out-quota rates. In-quota rates apply for sugar imported within MAV, while any imports in excess of the MAV are assessed the out-of-quota rate.

For non-ASEAN countries, under the Uruguay Round of the WTO, the Philippines committed to a final ten-year minimum access volume (MAV) of 65,050 MT of raw sugar, with a tariff rate of 50 percent. All importation in excess of the MAV is subject to a tariff rate of 65 percent. The Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff has not changed since 2016.

Policy:

SRA has the mandate under **EO 18 Series of 1986** and **Republic Act No. 10659** or the Sugar Industry Development Act (SIDA) of 2015 to establish a balance between domestic production and the country's sugar requirement.

Sugar Order. Philippine sugar policy and trade are generally regulated by the SRA, working closely with various influential industry stakeholders. During the start of each crop year, the SRA issues a central policy (known as Sugar Order No.1) on production and marketing of sugar for the country, which allocates how much production goes to the domestic and export markets, as well as reserves. These orders are adjusted as the season progresses. A running history of SRA sugar orders may be accessed [here](#).

Sugar Order No. 1. SRA released SO No.1 on September 09, 2024, which forecasted production at 1.78 million MT for MY 2025. The SRA allocated all production for the domestic market or “B” sugar, with none classified as “A” sugar for the U.S. market. SRA periodically assesses sugar allocation throughout the year based on the sugar supply situation.

Sugar Order No. 2. SRA released SO No. 2 on February 7, 2025, authorizing the voluntary purchase of 500,000 MT of raw sugar to avail of an allocation in the government's sugar importation program. This is the second round of SRA's voluntary purchase program for MY 2025. Sugar purchased under this voluntary program will be classified as “reserved” and is eligible for export to the United States under the 2025 WTO Tariff-Rate Quota allocation for raw cane sugar.

Sugar Order No. 3. SRA issued SO No. 3 on February 11, 2025, allowing new applications for construction and expansion of bioethanol using molasses as feedstock provided certain conditions are met.

Sugar Order No. 4. SRA issued SO No. 4 on March 12, 2025 amending certain provisions of **SO 6 series of 2023-2024** on the guidelines in the importation of certain “sugars” and “sugar confectionery under

Chapter 17 of the Asean Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN). All importations covered by SO6 shall be classified as “B” or for the domestic market.

Sugar Order No. 5. SRA released SO5 on March 12, 2025 on the fulfillment of the U.S. sugar quota allocation for MY 2025 to avail of the privilege to participate in the government’s future import programs. SO5 covered 66,000 MT of farmer’s share raw sugar.

Ethanol. Sugarcane and sugar molasses are the primary feedstocks used for bioethanol production,

Table 11: Sugar, Molasses, and Bioethanol Prices			
MY	Sugar Composite Price (PhP/LKG)	Molasses Price (PhP/MT)	Bioethanol Reference Price (PhP/Li)
2023	3,177	13,953	82.07
2024	2,580	15,700	80.56
2025*	2,734	15,483	81.86

Note: *Average from September to March 2025

Source: SRA

while the bagasse is mainly used for power cogeneration of sugar mills, refineries, and bioethanol distilleries. There are currently 13 operating bioethanol distilleries and six bagasse-fueled power-generating plants in the country. For more information, see the [Biofuels Annual Report 2024](#).

The reference price of bioethanol is based on the mill site prices of sugar and molasses. The National Biofuels Board (NBB) through the

SRA sets up a price index or reference price of bioethanol, which serves as the basis for negotiations between fuel oil companies and bioethanol producers.

Molasses. Molasses (HS 170310) is a major by-product from sugar production, used in the manufacture of fuel ethanol, potable alcohol, and disinfectant, among other products. Molasses imports have steadily increased in the past three marketing years. The largest suppliers in MY 2025 are Indonesia and Malaysia.

Table 12: Molasses Supply and Demand, in MT			
Item	Marketing Year		
	2023	2024	2025(a)
Beginning Stocks	149,677	116,132	131,273
Production	847,182	975,934	746,258
Local Supply	996,859	1,092,066	877,530
Consumption	889,578	962,880	467,816
Ending Stocks (Local)	107,285	129,186	409,715
Imports (b)	792,211	706,475	361,541 *

Note: *As of December 2024

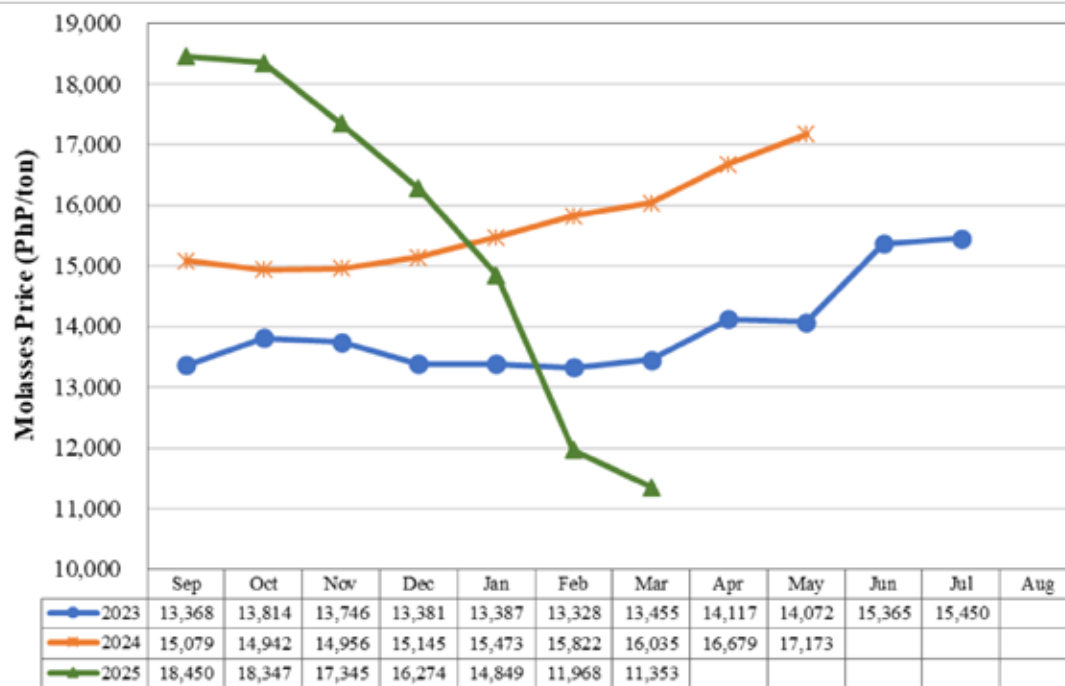
(a) As of March 23, 2025

(b) including molasses for ethanol production (potable and disinfectant). Under the law, imported molasses is not allowed to be used as feedstock for fuel ethanol production.

Source: SRA, and TDM for imports

Molasses prices in MY 2025 have been declining. The price was highest at the beginning of the MY (September) and reached the lowest in March 2025. This was due to 13 percent increase in stocks at the mill, which reached to 409,715 MT as of March 23, 2025, compared to 361,846 MT during the same period last year.

Figure 10: Molasses Prices



Source: SRA

**MY 2025
\$/MT**

Sep	329
Oct	320
Nov	296
Dec	278
Jan	254
Feb	206
Mar	198
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large, cylindrical stone mill. A large, dark, circular metal gear is visible on the left side of the mill. The mill is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

THE Rum
UNIVERSITY

Presents

The Sugar Mill: Origins and Evolution



Introduction

Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) is a perennial grass of the family *Poaceae*. It is primarily cultivated for its juice, from which alcohol (through fermentation and distillation) and sugar (through dehydration and refining) can be obtained. Most of the world's sugarcane is grown in subtropical and tropical areas.

It is commonly accepted today that sugarcane originated in Papua, New Guinea, where it was initially domesticated. The plant was then taken to other lands by traders, where its sweet virtues quickly made it a sought-after commodity.

It is also commonly accepted that around 10,000 years ago, the original inhabitants of Papua did not have tools to process the cane, meaning that they likely chewed it raw to extract the juice, which was consumed as-is (Noël Deerr, *The History of Sugar: Volume One*).

Not much written history exists that documents the early extraction of the juice for the purpose of dehydration and formation of sugar crystals until the publication of *De Materia Medica*, a pharmacopoeia of medicinal plants and the medicines that can be obtained from them, which was written between the years 50 and 70 of the current era by Pedanius Dioscorides, a Greek physician in the Roman army. This is the oldest record documenting the existence of crystalized sugar, which was used at the time to “treat indigestion and stomach ailments.”

How did people manage to extract the dissolved sugar from the juice? The answers to this question are at the core of this series. So join us, as we explore this fascinating topic!



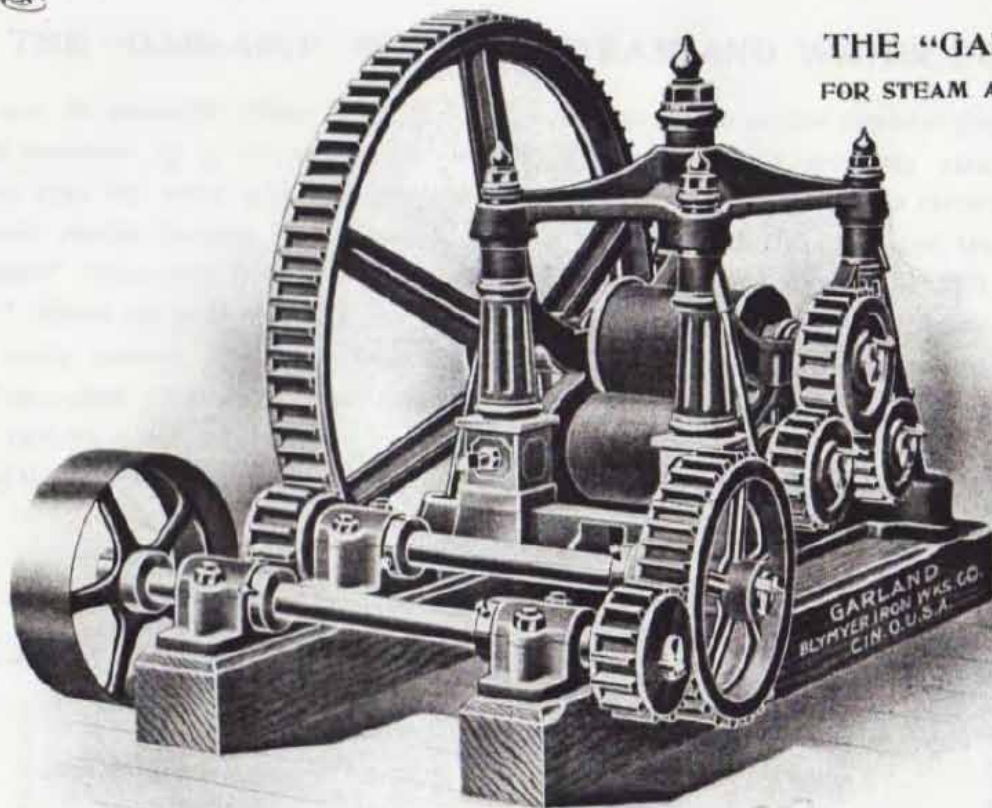
Part 12: Heavyweight Dominance

Many of the cane mill designs we've seen throughout this series exist because their designers mastered the skills/technology required to produce them profitably. Affordable products are, after all, easier to sell than their more expensive counterparts. Machines that are easy to produce and easy to sell, however, are not always easy to maintain or capable of producing the highest yields possible.

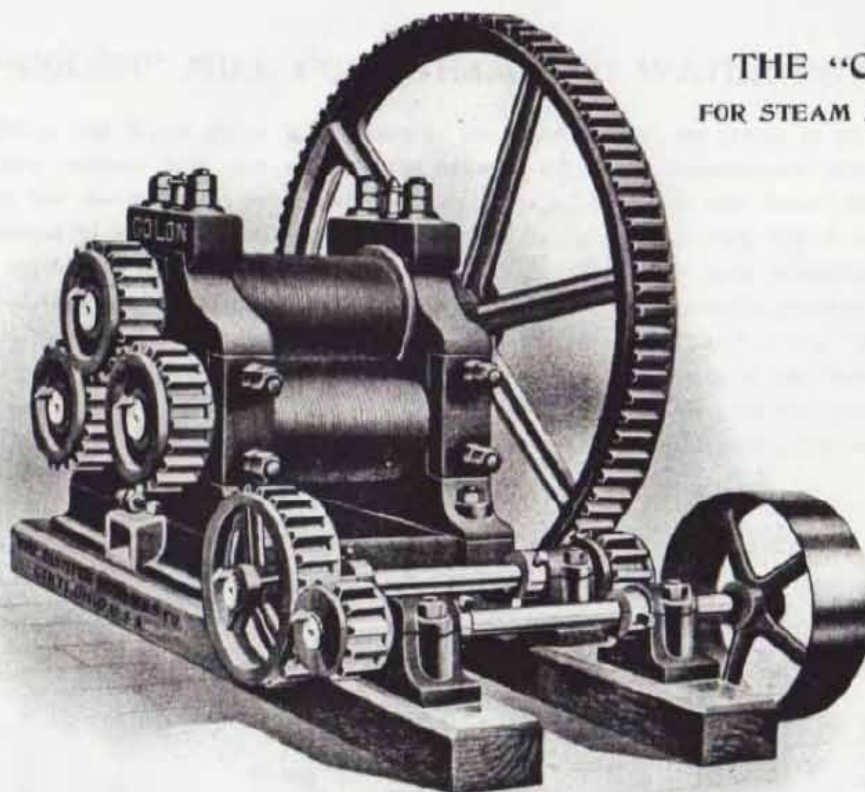
The Blymyer Iron Works Company, from Cincinnati Ohio put it best in its 1892 company catalog:

"The office (purpose) of a cane mill being to press out the juice, it is all important that it press out the largest possible percentage thereof. Only a heavy mill of the best construction will do this. Mills with cast shafts, or unturned rolls, or with rolls in wooden frames, and two-roll mills, are all mere makeshifts, and will leave a large percentage of juice in the bagasse. Flexible mills, or those with rolls arranged to yield under pressure . . . are also wasteful of juice. The loss of juice by the best flexible mill over a good rigid mill is not less than 10% and in general, the loss is 20%-30%."

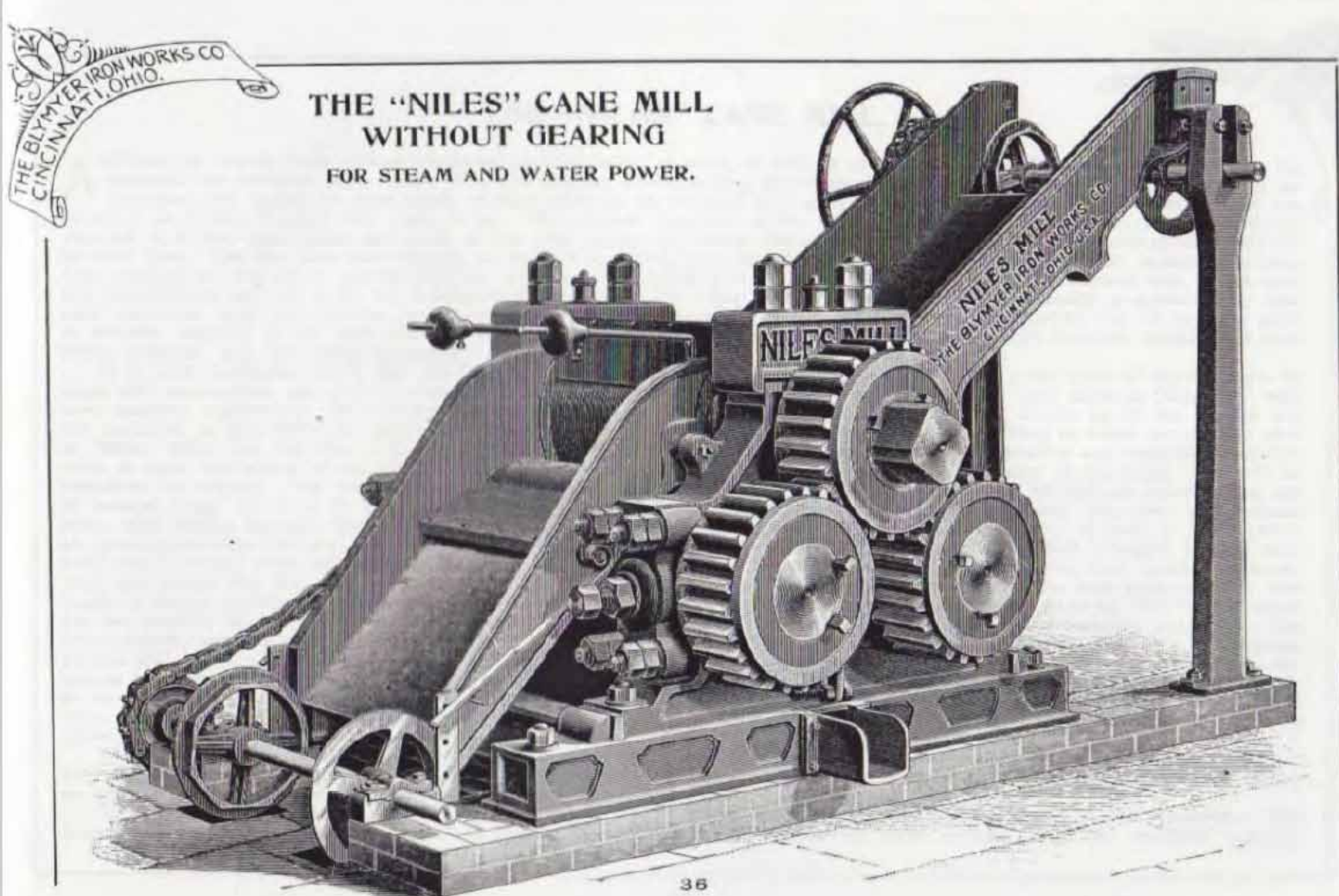
As you can imagine from the above, the Blymyer mills were heavy and well-constructed. The horizontal placement of the three rollers meant that the top roller would naturally exert great pressure on the bottom rollers, to achieve the maximum yields.



THE "GARLAND" MILL
FOR STEAM AND WATER POWER.



THE "COLON" MILL
FOR STEAM AND WATER POWER.



Shown on the opposite page and above are several of the horizontal three-roller mills produced by the Blymyer Iron Works Co.

Testament to the efficiency of their approach can be seen around the world, in large-scale commercial/ industrial sugar mills that still employ this horizontal roller arrangement.

In this series we've taken a journey through the evolution of the different sugarcane juice extraction implements. The sugar mill industry has been in decline for the past several decades, with fewer and fewer mills in operation remaining every year. Will continuing closures affect the sugar market, driving up the price and, if so, will the potentially increased profit margins drive future investment in innovation?

Or have we seen the "end of the road" in terms of sugarcane mill technology? Will we see a return to smaller mills that can be operated to supply small communities or even households? Will we see a new generation of inventors design mills powered by renewable sources of energy?

Only time will tell. But one thing remains clear: as long as we have a desire for sugar and as long as we are able to grow the sweet grass, people will continue to explore ways to extract its nectar!

We hope that you enjoyed this series about the origins and evolution of the sugar mill!. Please stay tuned for more material from The Rum University®!





Sugar Mill Spotlight

Yulee Sugar Mill Ruins Historic State Park. This site was once part of a thriving sugar plantation owned by David Levy Yulee. Yulee was a member of the Territorial Legislative Council, and he served in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate after Florida statehood.

The park contains remnants of the once thriving, 5,100-acre sugar plantation, including a 40-foot limestone masonry chimney, iron gears and a cane press. The steam-driven mill operated from 1851 to 1864 and served as a supplier of sugar products for Southern troops during the Civil War.

The park is located approximately 3 miles west of the city of Homosassa Springs, Florida, USA.

“GOT RUM?” TEAM INTERVIEW

by Margaret Ayala

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK



This issue is lovingly dedicated to our team of “Got Rum?” collaborators, to Rum Central’s Operations and Bottling teams, to all of our suppliers and, of course, our bulk rum and consulting clients!

The rum industry is **AWESOME** because of all of you! Luis and I could not have made it this far without everyone’s help. We are looking forward to another year of personal and professional growth, while we continue to serve the rum industry.

Margaret Ayala, Publisher



Putting together a monthly magazine is not an easy task. Thankfully for us at “Got Rum?”, we have the world’s best contributing writers, who tirelessly produce content for us, month after month!

It is easy, however, for readers to lose track of the people behind the stories, so each December we reserve space for our contributors to share a bit of information about themselves, their achievements, goals and observations.

Here is a quick update from Luis and me:

- “Got Rum?” has been around for 24 years and we are grateful to have such a loyal readership. We are always keen to hear which topics are most and



least interesting, so please continue to tell us about your interests/needs!

- As stated in Luis' column on page 5, the alcohol beverage industry continues to have a rough time. We are pleased to report, however, that we've actively helped several distilleries survive, through strategic planning and that we're working with many more.
- In response to our clients' needs, Rum Central has increased its role as a supplier of bulk spirits, offerings now include Tequila, Brandy, Rum and Vodka. Gin and Whiskey will be added to our portfolio in 2026.
- In 2025 we also completed a large investment to expand our finishing barrels options. We now have Amburana, Brandy, Cognac, Naranja and Tokaji, in addition to our standard

finishing casks (Armagnac, Port, Sherry, Tempranillo, etc.)

- Rum Central's co-packing services performed exceedingly well. We gained numerous new brands, and we continue to offer strategic packing options to our clients.
- The Rum University's new campus, at Rum Central in Texas, has allowed us to expand our course offerings to distillery owners and operators, in addition to the classes we teach at Moonshine University in Kentucky. Stay tuned for the 2026 Course Schedule!

I wish all a very happy holiday season and hope that 2026 brings us all better news about our beloved rum industry!

Margaret Ayala

TEAM INTERVIEW: PAUL SENFT

by Margaret Ayala



1. Of all the rums you reviewed this year, is there a particular one that stood out, and why?

The Holmes Cay Heritage blend made such a positive impression that I am using it as one of my go-to house rums. It is an easy sipper and is versatile in a wide range of cocktails, so I decided to keep the expression in stock.

2. Have you added any rums to your “favorite” list this year (even if you didn’t review them for the magazine)?

Diplomático Rum Selección De Familia, which I reviewed last December, has become a favorite of that brand’s portfolio. Hamilton Breezeway Rum became a go-to product for Daiquiris and Tiki/tropical cocktails.

3. Have you noticed any consumer trends this year that are different from previous years?

There is a split happening among spirit consumers. With the challenges of the U.S. economy, I have seen the fatigue with high priced rums continue to grow. With everything costing more, consumers are being more savvy about their purchases and getting the most for their money. I have seen resentment grow toward brands releasing high-end products that cost more than a house or car payment.

4. Do you have rum-related travel plans or activities for next year?

I hope to visit some distilleries and attend a couple of festivals and conferences if my schedule permits them.

5. Is there anything else that you’d like to share with our readers?

I would like to extend my gratitude to the readers and hope they continue to enjoy the reviews and content of the magazine.

Wishing everyone happy holidays and a wonderful new year.





TEAM INTERVIEW: PHILIP ILI BARAKE

by Margaret Ayala



1. This has been an exciting and wonderful year for you, moving to Punta Arenas and becoming a Dad for the first time. Congratulations! How have you been doing settling into your new role?

Yes, it has been a year full of highs and lows! At the beginning of the year I accepted a challenge to open a new restaurant in Punta Arenas. I spent a whole year overseeing the construction and opening of the building. At the end, however, I made the controversial decision to leave the project, so that I could spend more time with my son, Joaquin, who will soon celebrate his 1 birthday. I am amazed by how much he changes on a daily basis and I just don't want to miss any of it.

At the same time, I can devote more time to the main reason behind my decision to accept the restaurant challenge in the first place: to find the perfect location for a distillery in Patagonia, both for aging and for distilling. The focus will be on premium rums, aged for a very long time. The low temperature and dominant winds will play a key role in this special project.

If everything turns out according to my plans, soon I will identify the third and final partner and we'll be able to bring this majestic project to life, culminating in the southernmost distillery in the entire continent.

Lastly, to smoke now I have to find the right time and place, days with little wind and when my paternal duties allow. At the end, I hope to be able to leave something behind for Joaquin, something that I managed to achieve in my short life.


2. Any highlights you can share about the spirits and hospitality industry in Chile?

I can describe to you in more detail the area where I live now. It is an excellent tourist destination, for at least 5 months each year. The main two destinations are: the first one is Torres del Paine Park and the second one, which is consistently becoming more popular, is as a launching point for Antarctic tourism.

Punta Arenas has positive and negative sides, as it relates to tourism: it is a beautiful city, the residents are primarily from this zone to the extent that they feel isolated from the rest of the country. On the other hand, the city needs to be more receptive to the needs of the tourists, such as, having more restaurants along the Straight of Magellan coastline and having more businesses open on Sundays. Addressing these points, plus having a few more tourist attractions, would make Punta Arenas a stronger, better prepared city. If everything works out according to the plan, touring the distillery would be an obvious activity for all visitors.

3. Two years ago there were many new cigar brands that were introduced into Chile, have they managed to stay in business? Do any of them stand out to you?

Except for the domestic brand that has its cigars made in the Dominican Republic, with tobacco from different regions, there is another group of cigar lovers: *Grupo*

A large wooden barrel with metal bands is the central focus of the background image. In the foreground, a glass of rum with ice cubes sits on a wooden surface next to a matchbox. The scene is dimly lit, creating a warm, rustic atmosphere.

Zeron, that attracts consumers with some non-Cuban brands, such as Padrón, Rocky Patel, Arturo Fuente and Alec Bradley, among many. It is a great opportunity to smoke cigars that would otherwise require travel to acquire them. The Casa del Habano in Santiago continues to be a solid, trustworthy source of Habanos. Another cigar-smoking friend of mine, Anabel, wants to import EP Carrillo and AJ Fernandez. I regularly ask her when they will be available, since I'm anxious to try them.

All these things help the market, at least the market I'm most comfortable with, which is the one comprised by cigar smokers.

4. Of all the Cigar & Rum Pairings that you have done for "Got Rum?" this year, is there one that stands out for you, one that you've repeated multiple times?

I'd say that I have combined ideas drawn from the pairings, I regularly reach out for rums when making Old Fashioned cocktails. This year I used this cocktail quite a bit, the truth is that I really enjoy the rum version more than the original American Whiskey one. As far as cigars, while it is true that I've used several classic and Cuban brands, one that I keep going back to are the small Fuller "Nápoles," which have the ideal size when time and space are limited. They are perfect with a coffee (something that is in abundant supply in Punta Arenas) or with rum, either neat or mixed in rum-versions of classic cocktails. I'd say that this is one of the most popular pairings I've done this year, without a doubt.

5. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with your fans?

I hope that next year I can surprise everyone with good news about this crazy idea that started around 2015 and which I hope to put into action in 2026. I wish good health to all my readers and to their families and hope that the new year is filled with success and happiness.

TEAM INTERVIEW: MARCO PIERINI

by Margaret Ayala



1. You took a few months off from publishing articles in the magazine to do rum research. Can you share any of your findings and future plans?

I would like to continue my series on the History of Cuban Rum up to the present day. The problem is the sources. Cuba is going through a very, very, difficult situation and accessing reliable primary sources is difficult, almost impossible, at least for me. Fortunately, I found two books - María Victoria Arechabala Fernández and Antonio Santamaría García "*ARECHABALA Azúcar y Ron*", and "*ORO BLANCO Una Historia Empresarial del Ron Cubano*" by Manuel Bonera Miranda – that allowed me to write the articles I published in the last few issues and others that are yet to come. As for the future, we'll see. In any case, the history of Cuban rum is still ongoing, and I would like to devote many more articles to it. In the meantime, however, I will intersperse the series with articles on other topics related to the history of rum.

2. Craft distilleries in the USA are struggling, many closed down this year and many more are likely to follow suit next year. How is the craft spirits industry in Italy, in general and the rum industry more specifically?

As far as I know, craft distillation in Italy is still a small-scale phenomenon, with limited production. However, there are many small distilleries producing typical Italian *amari* and other spirits, and I don't think they are in crisis, quite the contrary. The novelty in recent years is that craft distilleries producing rum have sprung up and continue to do so. In many cases, producers have replanted sugarcane, which was once widespread in Sicily, and use the juice from their own cane. Others buy the raw material in the market. See my article THE TRAVELLING RUM HISTORIAN SICILY in May 2025 issue. There are also rumors of interest from major players in the sector. Wait and see.

3. RTD consumption has been on the rise in the USA, are you seeing the same trend in Europe this year?

I haven't traveled much in years, I rarely go out in the evening, and I'm no longer in touch with the market, if only because of my age. But no, I don't think RTD consumption is growing significantly in Italy, and, from what little I know, not even in Europe.

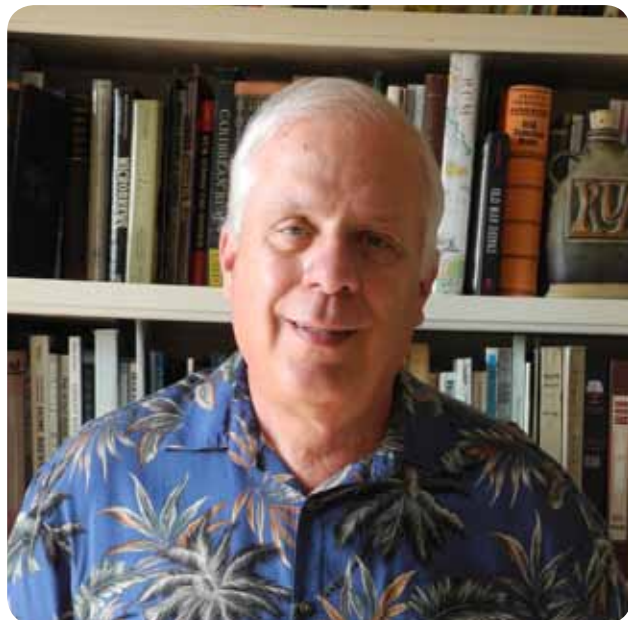
4. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with our readers?

The history of rum in particular, and of spirits in general, has become my intellectual passion. I hope our readers enjoy reading my articles as much as I enjoy writing them.



TEAM INTERVIEW: MIKE KUNETKA

by Margaret Ayala



1. We have seen a lot of ups and downs in the spirits industry this year, too many operations have already failed and more will meet the same fate next year. Is there anything in particular that stands out for you?

I think 2025 was the perfect storm of elements battering the spirit industry. First, I think people are drinking less for a variety of reasons: health, personal finances, public pressure, etc. When people do consume, no-alcohol beverages, low alcohol drinks and hard seltzers are often the popular choice. The growing legalization of cannabis products has also had an effect. The confusion surrounding tariffs certainly affected attitudes in some countries and distribution and sales in others. In our rum world, sales of spiced rums, flavored rums and mass-marketed white rums are down, again as people drink less. Our saving grace maybe the slow progress we are making in our attempts to 'premiumize' rum. We now have producers, big and small, that are making great rums that are well crafted, artfully blended and longer aged. Independent bottlers offer us rums, rhums, rons, cachaças, aquardientes and clarins from countries we never suspected made great spirits. My hope is that we do not price ourselves out of interest with the everyday consumer, like our cousins in the whiskey world.

2. The holiday season is upon us and we are curious to know what holiday cocktail you have chosen for this year's celebrations?

We were lucky enough to have my brother and daughter join us in Arizona for Thanksgiving this year and the Holiday spirits were definitely flowing.

During the day, my daughter was making a drink she called a **Rum & Spice Ember**:

2 oz Appleton 8 Rum
1 oz cinnamon syrup
½ oz fresh lemon juice
½ oz ginger liqueur
2 dashes nutmeg bitters

Shake all ingredients and pour into a rocks glass with a big ice cube

My brother always enjoys a good **Rum Old Fashioned**. Here is our version:

1 oz Denizen Vatted Dark Rum
1 oz Smith & Cross Rum
½ oz 2x Demerara syrup
Dashes of orange and Angostura Bitters
Stirred and poured into a rocks glass

Even though our nights here in Phoenix are pretty mild this time of year (50°F), we wanted something warm to drink around the fire pit and came up with this concoction:

2 oz Hamilton 86 Rum
½ oz maple syrup
½ oz orange liqueur
A dash of bitters

All mixed in a mug and the filled with hot water, a cinnamon stick and an orange slice

3. You are an avid reader, are there any new books that you have enjoyed and would recommend as "must haves"?

I really enjoyed **The Rum Never Sets; 300 years of Royal Navy and London Dock Rum** by Matt Pietrek and Alexandre Gabriel. The first part of the book is Pietrek's well researched history of Royal Navy rum and the blending process at the London Docks. The second part of the book describes how Gabriel was able to define seven key elements in the manufacture of Royal Navy Rum, the roles they played and how he was able to incorporate those in his



facilities in the Caribbean and in Europe to create his version of a Naval rum.

Right now, I am reading **RUM: Empire in a Glass** by drink historian Bill Johns. This is a big book, 446 pages. The publisher describes the book: *This is not a tasting guide. It is a cultural reckoning in a glass. Equal parts history, anthropology, and sensory exploration, **Rum: Empire in the Glass** challenges readers to drink with memory—and to ask, every time they lift a glass: what was the cost of this sweetness?*

Next on the list is **The Invention of Rum: Creating the Quintessential Atlantic Commodity** by Jordan B. Smith. This 228 page book just came out in October. Again, from the publisher: *Based on extensive archival research in the Caribbean, North America, and Britain, **The Invention of Rum** narrates the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history*

of one of the Atlantic world's most ubiquitous products. Smith casts this everyday item as both a crucial example of negotiation between Europeans, Africans, and Americans and a harbinger of modernity, connecting rum's early history to the current global market.

In March of next year, **Canada in the Age of Rum** by Allan Greer will be published by McGill-Queen's University Press as part of their Studies in Early Canada series.

This will be followed in June by **The World of Rum** by Laurence Marot from Gelding Street Press.

4. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with our readers?

I hope your holidays are filled with family, good friends, good food and good spirits!



CIGAR & RUM PAIRING

by Philip Ili Barake





My name is Philip Ili Barake, Sommelier by trade. As a result of working with selected restaurants and wine producers in Chile, I started developing a passion for distilled spirits and cigars. As part of my most recent job, I had the opportunity to visit many Central American countries, as well as, rum distilleries and tobacco growers.

But my passion for spirits and cigars did not end there; in 2010 I had the honor of representing Chile at the International Cigar Sommelier Competition, where I won first place, becoming the first South American to ever achieve that feat.

Now I face the challenge of impressing the readers of "Got Rum?" with what is perhaps the toughest task for a Sommelier: discussing pairings while being well aware that there are as many individual preferences as there are rums and cigars in the world.

I believe a pairing is an experience that should not be limited to only two products; it is something that can be incorporated into our lives. I hope to help our readers discover and appreciate the pleasure of trying new things (or experiencing known things in new ways).

Philip
#GRCigarPairing



Monkey Tail Version 2.1

Some time ago, I used a Monkey Tail for a pairing. This is a traditional drink for this time of the year in Chile and in some parts of Peru. According to one theory, the drink got its name because it was once sold in reused "Anis del Mono" glass bottles (a popular brand of anis, depicting a monkey on its front label), which is a bit hard to believe, since the bottle is quite large to fit inside the average refrigerator. Another theory is that the name comes from a former president, Pedro Montt, who was known as "el mono Montt" (the Montt monkey), who is said to have drank something very similar.

There are several recipes, but they usually use grape aguardiente, plus other household ingredients like milk, coffee, cinnamon, clove, vanilla and nutmeg.

As you can imagine, these flavors are typically associated with those found in the Spiced Rum category, which is our inspiration for today's Monkey Tail version.

Here is the recipe I used, I tried to adhere to the spirit of the original recipe, but I adjusted it based on the rums I had available:

- 300 mL of Milk (approximately 10 ounces)
- 60 mL Ron Ritual de Cuba, a low-congener Spiced Rum (approximately 2 ounces)
- 60 mL Bacardi Coconut-flavored Rum
- 3 Tbsp. Brown Sugar
- 1 Dash Vanilla Extract
- 2 Tbsp. Coffee
- Cinnamon/Cloves are optional

Place all ingredients in a kettle and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil for 3-5 minutes and strain it if needed (if you used cloves and cinnamon, for example) and allow it to cool. To finish the preparation, add 60 mL (2 ounces)



Photos credit: @Cigarili



Photo credit: @Cigarili

of White Rum, I selected JM Rhum Agricole Blanc instead of the original *aguardiente*, this will give the drink a strong rum character.

At serving time, add plenty of ice, but keep in mind that if you use crushed ice, the drink will become too diluted, which will alter its flavor. If that is the only type of ice you have available, then you'll need to consume the drink quickly, like I did.

I did this pairing in the morning, it was a Breakfast Pairing, which reminded me of the movie *Apocalypse Now* and the scene where Colonel Kilgore (played by Robert Duvall) utters the iconic phrase, known by all movie-lovers, but which I've adapted for rum lovers: *"Do you smell that? Do you smell it, son? That's the smell of a good cigar. I love the smell of tobacco, especially in the mornings."*

For the cigar, I could have reached out for a classic, even a Robusto would have been perfect for the pairing; as long as the cigar is not very intense, it will be fine. In my case,

I selected a Napoli, one of my "go to" cigars this year, especially for the brief smoking times I have, typically around 20 minutes, or enough time for a couple of Monkey Tails for the perfect breakfast. The cocktail's flavors are very reminiscent of those found in barrel-aged rums, but in a more subtle and sweet form, very easy to drink.

I hope that you can recreate this recipe at home, it is very versatile so that you can adapt it to fit your personal preferences. This particular recipe is one of many I tried and I liked it even more than many of the commercial products available in the local stores. I challenge you to make your own version and to share your feedback, describing the changes you made. In the end, the goal is for all of us to be able enjoy what we like!

Cheers!
Philip Ili Barake
#GRCigarPairing



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