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FEBRUARY 2026

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COOKING WITH RUM · ANGEL'S SHARE
CIGAR AND RUM PAIRING · THE RUM MIXOLOGIST
THE RUM HISTORIAN · THE RUM LABORATORY
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW · RUM COCKTAILS FOR LOVERS
RUM IN THE NEWS · THE SWEET BUSINESS OF SUGAR



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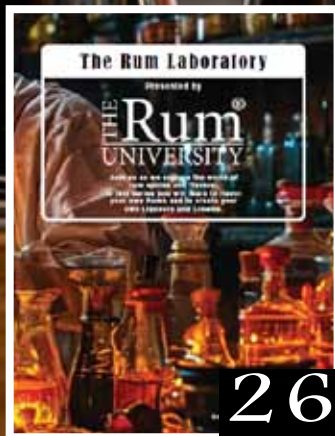
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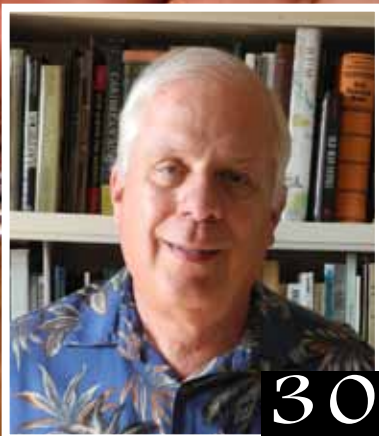


26

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2026

- 5 FROM THE EDITOR
- 6-9 THE ANGEL'S SHARE - RUM REVIEWS
- 10-13 COOKING WITH RUM
- 14-17 THE RUM MIXOLOGIST
- 18-19 THE RUM UNIVERSITY® LIBRARY
- 22-25 THE RUM HISTORIAN
- 26-29 THE RUM LABORATORY
- 30-33 RUM IN THE NEWS
- 34-44 THE SWEET BUSINESS OF SUGAR
- 50-53 RUM COCKTAILS FOR LOVERS
- 54-57 THE HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF THE BARREL
- 58-63 EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
- 64-67 CIGAR AND RUM PAIRING



30



34



64

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FRONT COVER: Hitting All The Right Notes

INSIDE SPREAD: Chemistry of Love

FROM THE EDITOR

A Banquet of Consequences

There are many sayings and proverbs about actions and consequences, all of them warning us about the effects of our decisions and behavior. American engineer, philosopher and author, Alfred A. Montapert, famously wrote:

"Nobody ever did, or ever will, escape the consequences of his choices."

There are many analogies/similarities between the real world and the distilled spirits industry. When it comes to aging spirits, Montapert's words couldn't be more accurate: when barrels are emptied, their contents will be undeniably tied to the chemical composition of what filled them in the first place, modified by the barrels themselves and by the environmental conditions that were in place during the barrels' residence in the aging cellar.

For seasoned distillers, with multi-generational experience at play, this is not a challenge. But for new, inexperienced distillers/brands, not knowing what to put inside the barrels, or how to properly age them, can be a catastrophic mistake.

While it is impossible to accurately predict future weather patterns, it is very possible to measure the actual weather and to adjust our plans if reality deviates from the predicted model.

Take, for example, finishing a spirit in a specialty cask. In this example, we are trying to recreate an exquisite prototype that was finished 90 days during a very hot summer. Let's think now about how the finishing cask will behave in our aging cellar during the next 90 days, possibly the coldest 90 days of the year:

- the average temperature of the distillate inside the cask will be much colder
- the daily temperature Delta (the



difference between each day's hottest and coldest temperatures) will also be decreased

- the amount of wood extractives will be reduced
- the rate of oxidation/acidification inside the barrel will be slower

As you can imagine, the consequence of literally following a formula, without a full understanding of how the aging process is dependent on climate, would result in an inferior quality and, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, *"sooner or later everyone sits down to a banquet of consequences."*

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!

St. Augustine Distillery Pot Distilled Rum

Several years ago, while visiting one of my favorite Florida cities, we toured the St. Augustine Distillery. Located in a refurbished early 1900s era icehouse, the distillery opened its doors to the public in March of 2014. The distillery has a unique configuration that holds two 500-gallon pot stills, one artisanal pot still, and everything else it needs to produce the bourbon, gin, rum, and vodka that are part of its portfolio. For twelve weeks during the year, the company focuses their operations on producing their rum instead of bourbon. During that time, they distill fermented molasses and sugarcane syrups made from Florida sugarcane. After the fermentation process, they age the rums in 53-gallon used white oak St. Augustine Distillery bourbon barrels. The pot still rum is aged for a minimum of one year at 45% ABV and bottled on-site at the distillery.

Appearance

The front label has gold and brown text with a sugarcane crusher featured in the center. The labels have the basic information about the rum and do provide a link to the website that delivers a great deal about their production practices and operation. The 750 ml bottle has a wood capped synthetic cork secured to the bottle with a clear plastic wrap.

The rum holds a honey amber color in the bottle and only lightens slightly in the glass. Swirling the liquid creates a medium band around the glass that

slowly beads up and releases two waves of legs before evaporating, leaving behind a small bit of residue.

Nose

The aroma leads with a robust caramelized vanilla note, followed by a light anise-laden herbaceousness, cooked fruit, fresh-cut coconut, and brown sugar.

Palate

The first sip delivers a thin and sweet mouthfeel that quickly opens, releasing flavors after a few seconds. Additional sips lead with brown sugar molasses with anise, honey, tea, and caramel nipping around the edges. As these notes settle, a light astringent wood note comes into play, grounded by char and mineral flavors that merge and form the finish.

Review

When I was visiting a local shop looking for rums, I spotted this bottle and decided to review it. I found the flavor profile interesting, a little hot and astringent for sipping, but with the flavor hooks complex enough to be useful in a large range of cocktails covering the Prohibition era to modern tropical cocktails. I understand that the distillery occasionally releases higher proof and limited rums and would be interested in exploring those if I ever have the opportunity.



www.staugustinedistillery.com

THE ANGEL'S SHARE

by Paul Senft

John Watling's Pale Rum

Located in Nassau, Bahamas, John Watling's distillery produces two different rum lines and a vodka. Using sourced molasses and two pot and column distillates from around the Caribbean, the company distills their rum in small batches using pot and column stills as part of their processes. Their Pale rum is a blend of two- and three-year-old rums that have been aged in medium-toasted, once-used bourbon barrels that are charcoal filtered, blended, and bottled at 40% ABV.

Appearance

The hefty 750 ml bottle has a medium neck that makes it easy to pour. The wooden cap holds a synthetic cork, and the company uses a clear security wrap that needs to be cut from the bottle to remove the cork. The labels provide basic information about the product.

The rum holds a clear color with a slight straw color highlighting the liquid in the bottle and glass. Swirling the rum in the tasting glass creates a thin band that quickly thickens and releases a few waves of legs before evaporating.

Aroma

Opening the bottle releases a bouquet of light caramel, tart lemon-lime citrus, and toasted wood notes.

Palate

The first sip delivers a swirl of caramel sweetness, light citrus tartness, and a gentle pepper note that quickly transitions into lightly charred oak flavor. As the flavors begin to fade, the citrus flavors return for a short, dry finish.

Review

While this rum is not overly complex, the flavor profile has a baseline versatility that leads to it being a good ingredient for a range of tropical style cocktails, from daiquiris and mojitos to planter's punch. This product is priced at the high end for minimally aged rums, but it is worth investigating when you want to try something new that is like products more well known in the market.





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COOKING WITH RUM

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

by Chef Susan Whitley





Rummy Lamb Chops

Ingredients:

- ½ C. Sweet Soy/Balsamic Sauce (* see recipe below)
- ½ C. Dark Rum
- ¼ C. Hoisin Sauce
- ¼ C. Sesame Oil
- ¼ tsp. Dried Thyme
- ¼ tsp. Dried Oregano
- 12 Garlic Cloves, minced
- 16 Lamb Chops (1 inch thick)

Directions:

To make the marinade: combine Sweet Soy/Balsamic Sauce, dark rum, hoisin sauce, sesame oil, thyme, oregano, and garlic in a small bowl and mix well. Measure out ¼ cup of the marinade and reserve it for basting the meat on the grill.

Place the lamb chops in a large, shallow dish. Spoon the remaining marinade over the chops and turn the chops to coat evenly. Cover dish with clear wrap and allow chops to marinate at room temperature for about one hour.

Heat grill to 350°F. Once the grill is hot, place the chops on the grill over the flames and cook for about 3 to 4 minutes. Brush (or lightly spoon) marinade on both sides of each lamb chop. Cook the chops for an additional 3 to 4 minutes longer, until lightly charred on each side. Transfer the lamb chops to a serving platter and allow them to rest for about 5 minutes before serving. Yield: 4 servings.

***Sweet Soy/Balsamic Sauce (makes 1 cup)**

Ingredients:

- 1 tsp. Cornstarch, or as needed
- 2 Tbsp. Water
- ¼ C. Dark Brown Sugar, firmly packed
- ½ C. Fig Balsamic Vinegar
- ½ C. Soy Sauce
- 3 Tbsp. Dark Rum

Directions:

1. In a small bowl stir together the cornstarch and water until the cornstarch dissolves and the mixture has the consistency of heavy cream, adding more cornstarch if the mixture is too thin.
2. Combine the brown sugar, vinegar and soy sauce in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.
3. Add the rum. Stir the cornstarch mixture briefly to recombine, then add it to the soy-vinegar mixture and simmer over low heat for about 3 minutes, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.
4. Remove the sauce from the heat and let it cool completely. Set aside ½ cup of the sauce and refrigerate the remainder in a sealable container.



Photo credit: www.fity.club

Pecan & Rum Banana Bread

Ingredients:

For the Bread

- 2 Tbsp. Butter, softened
- 2 Tbsp. Cream Cheese, softened
- 1 C. Sugar
- 1 Egg
- 2 C. All-Purpose Flour
- 2 tsp. Baking Powder
- ½ tsp. Baking Soda
- 1/8 tsp. Salt
- 1 C. Bananas (overripe), mashed
- ½ C. Whole Milk
- 2 Tbsp. Dark Rum
- ½ tsp. Lime Zest
- 2 tsp. Lime Juice
- 1 tsp. Vanilla Extract
- ¼ C. Toasted Pecans, chopped
- ¼ C. Coconut Flakes

For The Topping

- ¼ C. Brown Sugar
- 2 Tbsp. Butter
- 2 tsp. Lime Juice
- 2 tsp. Dark Rum
- 2 Tbsp. Toasted Pecans, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. Coconut Flakes

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease 8×4-inch loaf pan with cooking spray (or butter).
2. Beat together 2 tablespoons of butter and cream cheese at medium speed until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the sugar until well-combined. Beat in the egg.
3. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
4. In another separate bowl, stir the bananas, milk, rum, lime zest, lime juice, and vanilla extract until combined.
5. Add a third of the dry ingredients into the cream cheese mixture followed by a third of the banana mixture. Repeat the same process two more times.

6. Add the toasted pecans and coconut flakes, just gently mix.
7. Pour the batter into the greased loaf pan. Bake for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool bread in the pan for about 10 to 15 minutes then transfer it to a serving plate.
8. While the bread is cooling, begin preparing the topping. Combine the brown sugar, butter, lime juice, and rum into a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir constantly for 1 minute, or until the sugar has dissolved, and the mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and add pecans and coconut flakes.
9. Spoon the topping over the bread while it is still warm.
10. Let the bread cool completely before serving. Enjoy!



Photo credit: www.fromvalerieskitchen.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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Got Rum? February 2026 - 16



THE RUM Mixologist

This Month's Cocktail:
Por Mi Amante

The strawberry-infused rum is at the heart of this romantic cocktail created by bartender Will Thompson.

Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 ounces strawberry-infused Rhum Barbancourt
- 3/4 ounce lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 1/2 ounce strawberry demerara syrup*
- 2 dashes tabasco

Directions:

1. Add all ingredients to a shaker with ice and shake until well-chilled.
2. Strain into a cocktail glass.

***Strawberry demerara syrup**

1. Add 8 ounces demarara sugar and 8 ounces of water to a saucepan over low heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved.
2. Add 1 cup of finely chopped strawberries. Bring to a low boil, then allow to cool completely.
3. Strain out the solids. Will keep, refrigerated in an airtight container, for up to 1 month.

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 one of quiet study and appreciation for the history of rum.

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

Romantic Cocktails: Craft Cocktail Recipes for Couples, Crushes, and Star-Crossed Lovers by Clair McLafferty

(Publisher's Review)

Romantic Cocktails is a bewitching collection of over 100 classic and craft cocktail recipes, perfect for winning hearts—and mending broken ones, too!

Inside the plush red foil cover of Romantic Cocktails, you will find the secret to mixing up more than 100 cocktails for couples, crushes, and star-crossed lovers. Simple step-by-step instructions and gorgeous full-color photographs make every drink recipe easy and truly swoon-worthy.

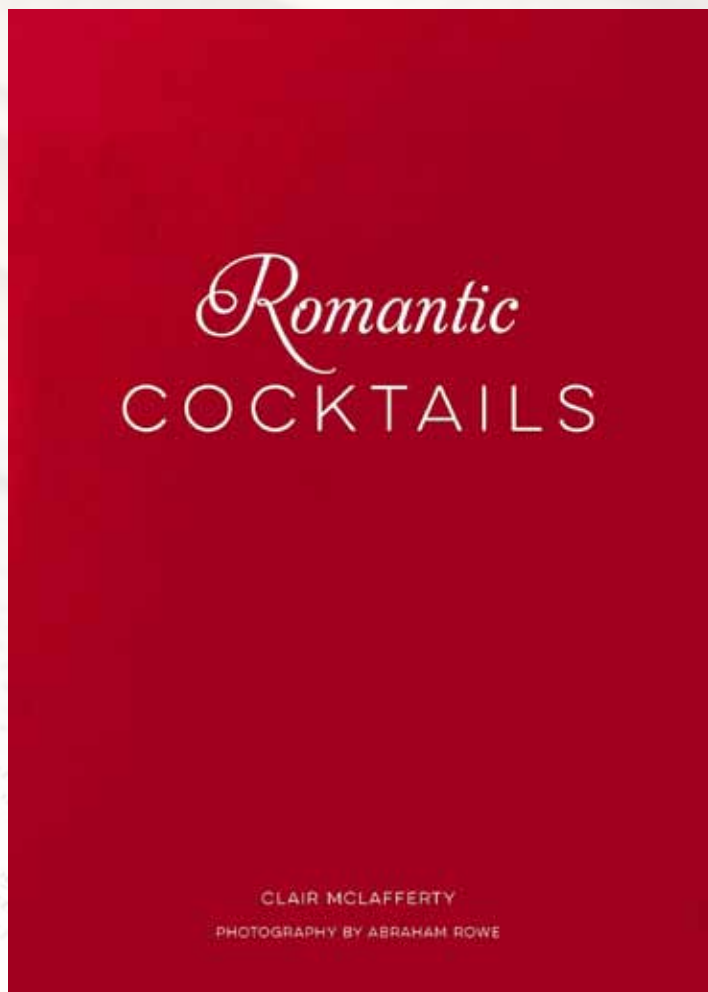
The drinks are as fun and charming as they are intoxicating, with names including:

- The Afternoon Delight - a little sweet, a little naughty
- Boozy Milkshake for Two - two straws please
- Between the Sheets - a romantic variation on the classic Sidecar cocktail
- The Vesper Martini - synonymous with sophistication
- The Goodnight Kiss - the perfect nightcap for a night you don't want to end

Author and bartender Clair

McLafferty offers insider tips and tricks for everything from sizing up recipes for a party to fixing a drink that didn't turn out quite right. Throughout the book, you will find drink-related romantic quotations and toasts from the likes of Shakespeare, Louisa May Alcott, and James Baldwin.

Whether you are looking for a romantic gift or a reliably excellent cocktail book for your home bar, Romantic Cocktails will knock your socks off!



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THE RUM HISTORIAN

by Marco Pierini

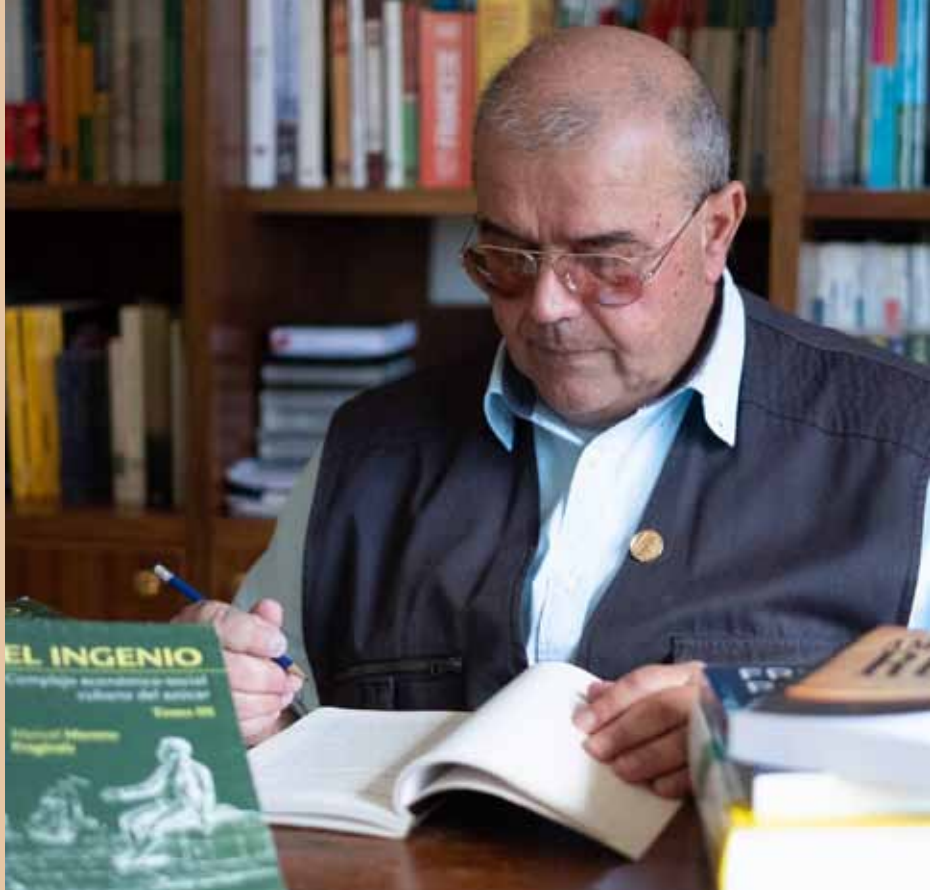
I was born in 1954 in a little town in Tuscany (Italy) where I still live. In my youth, I got a degree in Philosophy in Florence and I studied Political Science in Madrid, but my real passion has always been History. Life brought me to work in tourism, event organization and vocational training, then 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.

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 realized that this History deserved to be researched properly and I decided to devote myself to it 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 2020, with my son Claudio, I have published a new book "FRENCH RUM – A History 1639-1902".



HISTORY OF CUBAN RUM 30. THE FIRST CUBAN REVOLUTION AND HAVANA CLUB

As has happened several times in this long series of articles dedicated to the History of Cuban Rum, the time has come to devote some space to Big History. This time, we do so with the help of a classic work of Cuban historiography, Hugh Thomas "*Cuba. A History*" 1971.

"In early August 1933 Cuba presented a desolate and disconcerting picture; there were serious strikes in all service sections of Havana, with the railway workers out for the first time. Newspapers were also shutting down. The bars and the cafès were closed for the first time in history. Food was scarce. Most shops were shut, and there were few people on the streets. Everyone was asking when the American marines would land."

The marines did not land and finally, in the night of 12-13 August the dictator, Gerardo Machado, flew to Nassau, with seven bags of gold. There followed a year of demonstrations, violent clashes, occupations of factories and plantations, the formation of soviets, student

mobilization, popular revenge against Machado's hated police, the collapse of public order, looting and violence.

Shifting political alliances and short-lived governments were formed, then, in 1934, a sort of counter-revolution brought back stability and democracy (well, more or less), but under the shadow of the new strongman, former sergeant Fulgencio Batista. It was the first Cuban revolution, almost forgotten today, yet a watershed in the history of the island. Before it, there had been three decades of political life dominated by the protagonists of the War of Independence, marked by political instability, low-intensity civil wars, and repeated U.S. military interventions. After it, a new phase began, with a generational shift and new political actors, and a relative stability; however, under the surface the same old problems continued to simmer and a new generation of political activists emerged, one that will lead to the revolution of 1959. "The Revolution of 1959 followed in the wake of that of 1933 as the Second World War followed the First, or the revolution in Russia in 1917 followed that in 1905. The middle class of Cuba received a warning, to which they paid little attention. Afterwards, it was much less easy to expect their radical sons to place faith in liberal solutions".

The 1933 Revolution did little to reshape the structure of Cuba's economy that carried on "Importing nearly everything it consumes, and exporting nearly everything it produces" as a sharp observer had already pointed out back in 1919. The island remained anchored to its old pattern, its fate still tied to sugar and with it Cuba's structural fragility remained, a country perpetually swept along by shifts in global demand it had no power to influence. Yet, unlike in earlier times, governments now began trying to steady the ship. They sought international agreements to bring about a measure of order to the market and—much as was happening across the Western world in those same years—started passing laws and regulations meant to improve workers' lives: the eight hour workday, the

legalization of labor unions, tax reforms, and more.

The other major change was the end of immigration. As we know, since the beginning of the 1800s Cuba had been a magnet for immigrant workers from Spain and many other countries. In the 1930s, Cuban authorities enacted a series of laws and administrative measures that sharply curtailed foreign entry, closing the doors to new labor migration and in 1939 l'isola had 4.250.000 inhabitants. And perhaps it was only then (though I know I am venturing onto a minefield here) that a shared national identity took shape, I believe for the first time. (On this period and these themes recommend reading Leonardo Padura's excellent book "*Heretics*")

In those same violent and chaotic years, the Cuban rum industry continued to grow, and it was a steady, lasting growth. And perhaps Arechabala grew more than any other company, by diversifying its activities and investing in many different sectors: sugar refining, storage of sugar and molasses also for other companies, transportation, import and export of various goods, distillation, confectionery products, bottling, and more. Let us remember that since 1921 the company had become a corporation under the name of JASA, that is, José Arechabala Sociedad Anonima. JASA grew in an extraordinary way, going from 500 workers in 1928 to 900 in 1932 and 1.200 in 1935, becoming one of the largest companies in Cárdenas and increasingly identifying itself with the history and identity of the city.

And in those same years, the company launched a new rum label, Havana Club. "In 1934, the company released its Havana Club label, which was part of a larger growth strategy to expand into the U.S. market. Launched just after the repeal of U.S. Prohibition, the Havana Club label was designed to meet a growing demand for Cuban rum. As part of its strategy, the company's Ron Añejo Arechabala 75 would be designated Cuba's domestic brand, while Havana

Club would represent the company in the U.S. markets. To facilitate its sale in the United States, its label featured an English rather than Spanish spelling (Havana rather than La Habana). (Christopher Chávez "*Isle of Rum*" 2024)

This is how it was recounted twenty years later in the book "*José Arechabala S.A. en su 75 aniversario, 1878-1953*" published by the company for the 75th anniversary of its foundation

"On March 19, 1934, after meticulous preparations and studies of market possibilities, a new industry was inaugurated: The Liquor Factory, which was solemnly blessed. And throughout the entire Republic a new product of supreme quality appeared: HAVANA CLUB ARECHABALA RUM. This activity now also includes cordials, cognac, and 'Alcohol-Elite'—a formidable resource for the home, clinics, etc., due to its nature as pure alcohol—as well as other product lines."

Here is how the birth of the new label is reconstructed in the aforementioned book by María Victoria Arechabala Fernández and Antonio Santamaría Carcía "*Arechabala Azúca y Ron*" 2023. The translation is mine, and, as always, I ask the Authors and the readers for their indulgence.

"As will be explained later, beginning in 1933 JASA equipped itself with machinery capable of distilling 4 million liters a year and added a new molasses plant. It strengthened its marketing, began selling Havana Club rum and other spirits, increased its fuel production, and opened an office in New York. ...In 1934, it also opened a liquor factory, following through on a project dating back to the 1920s that aimed to create new rum brands. Some sources claim that as early as 1928 the company had already been aging the spirit—something essential for later commercialization, since rum requires time to mature. ...Its exports went mainly to the United States, where they were well received. Some of the earliest shipments, labeled Havana Club and Doubloon Rum, were sent in casks

on an experimental basis. By the time the plant was inaugurated, several thousand cases of both brands had already been shipped to New York and other American cities. ...On April 10, 1935, the company became the holder of trademark number 99,789, a word mark under the name Havana Club, for which it had applied to Spain's Industrial Property Registry and the General Trademark Registry in July and December of 1934, covering distilled products, spirits, and liqueurs."

The choice of timing was no accident: "Prohibition was abolished on December 5, 1933, and the 1934 Reciprocity Treaty allowed Cuban rum to enter the United States. It's no coincidence that JASA then decided to open its liquor factory, and that in its early days its demand depended largely on that of the neighboring country."

In addition to production, JASA immediately devoted significant resources to the promotion of the new label.

"Marketing strategies were common at JASA from the 1930s onward, especially in the promotion of new products. In May 1935, the company leased the former Palace of the Counts of Casa Bayona, located in the Plaza de la Catedral in Old Havana, in order to establish offices there, along with the Havana Club Private Bar. The bar was intended to introduce the company's beverages to prominent figures in the city as well as to visitors from other parts of Cuba and abroad. From the moment it opened, numerous societies, companies, and associations used the venue for their events. Practically all foreign visitors passing through the island's capital between 1935 and 1958—especially Americans—spent time at the establishment, and the local, national, and international press took note of it. This coverage helped publicize the brands of the Cárdenas based company, particularly its flagship rum."

The Arechabala family's lavish display made clear their rising self assurance and their refusal to be intimidated by the Bacardis that years earlier had hired architects Esteban Rodríguez Castells

and Rafael Fernández Ruenes to create an Art Deco headquarters in central Havana—the impressive Edificio Bacardi, which in 1930 stood as the tallest structure in the city. So, for decades, both rum dynasties thrived side by side, expanding their operations and effectively sharing a duopoly of Cuban rum.

The promotional campaign for Havana Club did not stop there. The most important Cuban newspaper of the time, the *Diario de la Marina*, ran numerous photo features on Havana Club and other products of the company, which sponsored also many sporting events, a radio station, and the recently founded, but already renowned, *Club de Cantineros*. For its promotional campaign of 1935 and 1936 JASA rented a typical wooden house in Varadero, already a prestigious tourist destination at the time, called Cottage Havana Club.

Last but not least, demonstrating a mastery of the most advanced marketing strategies, “Starting in January 1935, *Diario de la Marina* and other newspapers and magazines published advertisements for Jasa’s flagship beverage. They also printed the recipe for a cocktail called the *Havana Club Especial*, which became very popular in Cuba. The recipe — often prepared by a well known bartender from the Arechabala bar named Antonio — contains a teaspoon of sugar, a small glass of Havana Club, lemon juice, three cherries in syrup, and finely crushed ice. The ingredients were shaken together and the mixture strained through a fine sieve. ... Jasa also awarded prizes in a National Cocktail Competition, the first of its kind held in Cuba, which took place in the capital. The event was organized by the Bartenders’ Club and was reported in the pages of the main local and national newspapers.”

Only later, by the early 1940s, did Arechabala executives change their approach in the U.S. and rather than promoting Havana Club as a rum meant for cocktails, they began marketing it as a refined spirit meant to be enjoyed on its own.

In essence, the Arechabala firm pursued a path focused on building up its tangible assets and strengthening its distribution network. For a period, this approach proved effective. Little by little, Havana Club gained recognition across the United States and Europe, while in the city of Cárdenas, the family’s influence became deeply rooted. By the time the business reached its seventy fifth year, the Arechabala family had established themselves as central figures in shaping Cuba’s powerful rum industry.

Bacardi, on the other hand, followed a very different path: it diversified very little, focused primarily on rum and began a process of internationalizing its production, first in Barcelona, then in Puerto Rico and Mexico. We will get back to this.

Anyway, Havana Club soon established itself as one of the market leaders in Cuban rums, while the growth of Bacardi and Arechabala was a real storm for the smaller Cuban Rum Companies. Both companies continue to prosper and expand, in a virtual duopoly on Cuban rum exports to the US up until the Revolution in 1959.

As a matter of fact, when in 1950 a World Bank team visited the island, “Rum production in general was a bright spot in the Cuban economy. Don Facundo and his successors had not been the only businessmen to recognize the good sense of building an Enterprise around a raw material Cuba possessed in abundance, molasses, adding value through the application of technology and skilled labor. While the World Bank team had harsh criticism for the management of most Cuban industries, the island’s rum companies were a notable exception. ‘After detailed investigation’ the team reported, ‘the Mission is happy to report that it can suggest no improvement in production of Cuban rum.’” (Tom Gjelten “*Bacardi and the long Fight for Cuba*”)

Marco Pierini



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Got Rum? February 2026 - 26

The Rum Laboratory

Presented by

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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.

Got Rum? February 2026 - 27



The Rum University® Laboratory

Presents

making your own

Coconut Palm Wine (Tuba)

Ingredients

- 1 lb dried coconut
- 1 lb rice
- 1 lb pitted dates
- 1-3/4 lbs granulated sugar
- 1-1/4 tsp acid blend
- 1 tsp yeast nutrient
- 1 gallon water
- Sauterne wine yeast

Directions

Bring 1 quart water to boil and add rice; boil for 3 minutes. Meanwhile, chop the dates and mix them with the coconut in a boiler. Strain the rice, adding the water from it to the boiler containing the coconut and chopped dates. Bring to a boil and hold for 15 minutes.

Strain the water over the sugar, yeast nutrients and acid blend and stir until dissolved completely.

Allow to cool to room temperature, transfer to primary and add activated yeast. Cover and ferment until initially

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vigorous fermentation subsides, then transfer to secondary and attach an airlock. After 3 months, rack into clean secondary with crushed and dissolved Campden tablet, top up and refit airlock.

Wait 3 additional months and rack, top up and refit airlock again. After additional month, stabilize, sweeten if desired and rack into bottles.

Did you know that...

- Coconut Wine is common in various parts of Asia and Africa, where it is known by local names, including *emu* and *oguro* in Nigeria, *nsamba* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, *nsafufuo* in Ghana, *kallu* in South India, *tuak* in North Sumatra, Indonesia, *mnazi* in Mijikenda, Kenya, *goribon* or *Rungus* in Sabah, Borneo, and *tuba* in the Philippines.
- In the Philippines, if you distill the coconut wine, the resulting spirit is called *Lambanog* and it has been described as having a taste somewhere between whisky and rum.

Source: winemaking.jackkeller.net, adapted from original recipe by C.J.J. Berry.

RUM IN THE NEWS

by Mike Kunetka



PLANTERAY

Planteray Rum introduced Planteray Hogo Monsta, a bold high-ester rum, rich in the naturally occurring aromatic compounds formed during fermentation, delivering an unmistakably intense character bursting with funky, fruity, and spicy notes. Crafted at the legendary Stade's West Indies Rum Distillery in Barbados, this is not just a rum; it is a sensory uprising. Created for bartenders, rum devotees, and bold spirits enthusiasts, Hogo Monsta stands as the most unbridled release in Planteray's history and a vivid tribute to the centuries-old rum-making traditions that gave it life. Founded in 1893, Stade's West Indies Rum Distillery has long been a cradle of authenticity and innovation in Barbadian rum-making. Every corner of the site breathes history, from open-air fermentation vats to century-old copper stills and the Distiller's Vault, home to archives spanning generations. And yet, beneath that legacy runs a quietly rebellious edge. "At Stade's Rum Distillery, rum has always been both tradition and experimentation," says Alexandre Gabriel, Owner and Master Blender of Planteray Rum. "For years, this style of high-ester rum lived in the shadows,

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.

used discreetly by blenders to add power and depth to a final mix. We always dreamed of bottling it as-is, raw and unapologetic. Hogo Monsta is that dream unleashed.” This is not merely “high-ester” by conventional standards. Hogo Monsta delivers an extraordinary 2,029 grams per hectoliter of aromatic compounds, bottled at 56.6% ABV. Meticulously distilled by the Planteray and Stade’s teams, it is the result of extended fermentation, precise distillation cuts, and a deliberately bold vision. In just a few measured drops, it erupts with overripe banana, pineapple, and mango, layered with varnish, brine, spice, and an unmistakable tropical funk. The mouthfeel is dense and oily, carrying a long, unrestrained finish. These aromas and flavors are what today’s rum connoisseurs often call “rum funk,” or hogo, an Anglicization of the French term haut goût (“high taste”), once used by rum traders to describe spirits of formidable pungency. Hogo Monsta was never designed for casual drinking. Its potency makes it unsuitable for volume consumption or unmeasured pours. Instead, it is a professional tool, a concentrated flavor catalyst created for skilled hands. Just a few drops can transform a Mai Tai, elevate a blend, or unlock new territory in a Daiquiri. Used with intention, it elevates. As Alexandre Gabriel puts it: “Don’t buy this unless you know what it is!” <https://planterayrum.com/>

LA MAISON & VELIER

La maison & Velier’s FLAG SERIES is a curated journey through the world’s most revered rum-producing nations. Each release features an emblematic single cask selected to capture the distinct terroir and excellence of its origin. LM&V believes in absolute transparency: the labels detail every step of the spirit’s life, from distillation and wood management to the final bottle count. Presented ‘au naturel,’ these rums are bottled at cask strength, uncut, unfiltered, and entirely free of additives or coloring.

- **FLAG SERIES BARBADOS 2011** - Founded in 1996 on the site of a former sugar refinery, this distillery has been heavily awarded by all rum concours and connoisseurs. They produce rums that are distilled in both double column Coffey still and pot still that are blended before being transferred to cask. This unique bottling expresses balanced notes from 14 years of long double aging processes: 8 years in ex-bourbon cask in the cellar in the South of Barbados and 6 years in ex-bourbon cask in Europe’s continental weather. At cask strength, this rum is an elegant and richly textured example of iconic Barbadian rum producer. Bottled additive-free at cask strength of 64.6% abv.
- **FLAG SERIES VIETNAM 2018** - This rum was produced in Vietnam using a local variety of cane, grown and harvested

by hand, in the province of Quang Nam. Founded in 2018 near Hoi An, the distillery honors French Caribbean rum-making traditions while embracing sustainable practices. The production process is meticulous, from the use of endemic sugarcane which is hand-harvested for optimal juice concentration, to natural fermentation, copper column still distillation and maturation in the tropical conditions of Vietnam. This bottling was distilled in a copper Armagnac column still and aged for 6 tropical years in an ex-Cognac cask. Bottled additive-free at cask strength of 55.5% abv.

- **FLAG SERIES GHANA 2020** - Located in the Ahafo region of Western Ghana, this family-owned distillery is renowned historically for the production of cashews and cashew distillate. More recently, they have begun focusing on the cultivation of a local variety of organic sugar cane and distilling using the fresh cane juice to produce rum. After a fermentation of three days, distillation happens in a 2000L pot still. This bottling has been aged for one year in Ghana and three years in Europe in ex-bourbon barrel. This cask strength rum represents one of the most interesting African rum distilleries on the market: a rising star. Bottled additive-free at cask strength of 63.6% abv.

<https://www.lmvusa.com/>

ANGOSTURA

Ahead of the Carnival season, Angostura® launched its latest innovation, Angostura® Cubata, a premium Ready to Drink (RTD) bold Spiced Rum and Cola beverage. Crafted for today’s consumers, Angostura® Cubata blends Angostura® Tamboo Spiced Rum with crisp cola to deliver a vibrant, flavor-forward experience that celebrates Caribbean character with a contemporary edge. It is the latest addition to their product line up of RTD beverages which include 420 and Angostura® Puncheon Punch. Angostura® selected their Tamboo Spiced Rum for this latest innovation, specifically for its seamless flavor synergy with cola, featuring vanilla, caramel, cinnamon, and warm spice notes. Chairman of Angostura Holdings Limited, Mr. Gary Hunt said, “Innovation has always been at the heart of the House of Angostura. It’s not just about creating new products; it’s about understanding how people live, celebrate, and connect and respond in ways that are authentic and exciting. We created Angostura® Cubata because the way people enjoy their drinks has evolved. Today’s consumers want great taste, convenience, and a brand that reflects who they are.” <https://angostura.com/>

DOS MADERAS

Dos Maderas, announced the release of Dos Maderas Origen Thailand, a limited-edition release crafted from 12-year-old Thai rum and finished in rare 80-year-old Oloroso sherry casks. With only 4,000 bottles available worldwide, this launch marks the first expression within the new Dos Maderas Origen Series, a collection designed to showcase the global diversity of rum through the distinctive lens of sherry-cask finishing. This new series begins in Thailand, where the rum is distilled from locally grown sugarcane and aged for 12 years in Bourbon casks before traveling to Jerez, Spain. Once there, it undergoes an additional six months of maturation in exceptional 80-year-old Oloroso sherry casks, sought after for their age, complexity, and influence on the final liquid. The result is a rum that showcases the Dos Maderas philosophy of uniting cultures, climates, and aging traditions into a single spirit. With this unique series, Williams & Humbert applies the same technique as with the rest of its rums in the Dos Maderas range, Reverse Finishing. "The release of Origen Thailand introduces a new chapter for Dos Maderas, offering a way to explore the global rum-making while preserving the artistry of sherry finishing that the brand is known for," says Gonzalo Medina, International Marketing Manager at Bodegas Williams & Humbert. "We chose Thailand as the starting point for the Origen Series for its vibrant culture, rich culinary heritage, and a growing spirits scene, perfect to shine a light on the world's rum-producing regions." The bottle's design reinforces a strong sense of place, with a label by Claessens International that pays tribute to Thailand's cultural and natural heritage, featuring the Thai elephant, a national symbol of strength, wisdom, and good fortune. <https://dosmaderas.com/>

MALIBU

Malibu has announced the release of Malibu Pink, a bold and bright new flavor innovation that proves summer energy can be served up 365 days a year. Bursting with the fruity flavor of guava, pineapple, and coconut and a playful pink color, this new release is bringing a fresh twist to the rum aisle. This new expression features guava at its heart, complemented by pineapple and Malibu's signature coconut for a tropical taste. As exotic flavors like guava transition from specialty to mainstream, Malibu Pink delivers an on-trend spirit. Whether mixed with lemonade or enjoyed as a shot, Malibu Pink offers a sun-soaked experience in every sip. Later this spring, Malibu will release a new pink-drenched campaign alongside activations and partnerships to put a playful twist on Malibu's Do Whatever Tastes Good ethos. "Malibu has always been the go-to drink for those seeking a tropical and exotic experience. With the launch of Malibu Pink, we're pairing familiar favorites like coconut

and pineapple with new guava-led notes as the next evolution in tropical flavor transporting summer-seekers on a new adventure," said Saragh Killeen, US Brand Director, Malibu. <https://www.malibudrinks.com/en-us/>

DON PAPA

The Manilla Standard reported that Don Papa Rum, the Philippine's premier small-batch rum, has launched its newest expression: Don Papa Alon. 'Alon' means 'waves' in the local language of Tagalog. Inspired by the rhythmic coastlines of the archipelago and the enduring spirit of bayanihan, the new liquid serves as a tropical homage to the Filipino sense of home. Rooted in the lush landscapes of Negros (Sugarcandia), Don Papa Alon marks a shift in perspective from the hinterlands to the shores. The expression is designed to capture the essence of island life, where time slows down and community ties are strengthened over shared moments. The rum draws direct inspiration from Ginataang Langka, a creamy, comforting island staple. It is distilled from 100% local sugarcane molasses, then infused with iconic ingredients from Filipino culinary heritage: toasted coconut, jackfruit, and chili pepper. "With Don Papa Alon, we wanted to capture not just the flavors of the islands, but the feeling you get in those communities, that deep sense of pride and warmth that defines us as Filipinos," says Angeline Manahan, Marketing Manager of Don Papa Rum. <https://www.donpaparum.com/>

POWERED BY RUM-BAR

The Jamaican Observer reported that Worthy Park Estate Limited has launched Powered by Rum-Bar, a community relief initiative aimed at helping restore livelihoods and connectivity in some of the island's most affected areas following Hurricane Melissa. The initiative donated 100 generators to 100 community bars across parishes hardest hit by the storm. Distribution began in December, with the project team donating generators to several community bars across western parishes already impacted by prolonged power outages. Powered by Rum-Bar was designed to help these establishments regain electricity, reopen safely and continue supporting the communities that depend on them. "Community bars are deeply woven into the fabric of Jamaican life, and for Worthy Park Estate Limited and its rum brands, it is of great importance that we help communities stand strong," said Tamika West, marketing manager. "Powered by Rum-Bar is about restoring power, supporting small business owners and helping communities get back on their feet." The initiative forms part of Rum-Bar and Worthy Park Estate's broader commitment to community resilience, national recovery and

responsible corporate citizenship. Distribution was prioritized in areas across St Elizabeth, Westmoreland, St James, Trelawny, and Hanover, where extended power outages have significantly affected economic activity and daily life. <https://worthyparkestate.com/>

ULTIMATE SIPPING RUM

The Ultimate Awards announced the 2026 Ultimate Sipping Rum – Miami Competition, the second edition of its blind tasting event to be held during the 2026 Miami Rum Congress. This year's competition will once again spotlight the world's finest sipping rums through a rigorous, professional evaluation process. In 2026, the judging panel will feature WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) Level III Spirits judges and seasoned rum experts, who will assess entries strictly blind to identify the "best of the best" in sipping rum. Current confirmed judges include Deniece Bourne, Lisa Belczyk, Rob McCaughey, Rhiannon Enlil, and Shawn Martin, with additional local and international judges to be announced. The Ultimate Sipping Rum – Miami Competition is designed to be clear and accessible for brands, focusing on five core categories of sipping rum while maintaining rigorous technical and sensory standards. Rums will be assessed according to age statements; for non-age-stated and solera rums, entries are classified based on the youngest rum in the blend to ensure consistent judging. The Ultimate Awards was created to celebrate quality, transparency, and excellence in spirits, offering producers an authoritative, trade-respected benchmark for their products. With a panel of judges that each bring more than ten years of experience in the spirits industry, the competition delivers meaningful, credible recognition to brands that excel in the glass. <https://theultimateawards.com/2026-best-sipping-rum-the-ultimate-awards>

DESTILERÍA SERRALLÉS

Several sources have reported that the Serrallés Distillery has announced that its President and CEO, Philippe Brechot, has decided to take retirement at the close of 2025, after almost nine years at the front of the company. During his presidency, Brechot led a period of transformation and growth, guiding Serrallés with vision and determination through significant challenges such as hurricanes, earthquakes and the pandemic, while driving the company's accelerated development, brand portfolio and international standing. The Board of Directors guaranteed an orderly transition and continuity of the company's operations, while evaluations for the appointment of the next president and CEO of Serrallés Distillery proceed. "We appreciate Brechot's great contribution to the development of the company during the past years," said Alfredo Suarez Serrallés, Chairman of the Board of Directors.

"Serrallés Distillery continues to move forward with a clear vision towards the future, maintaining the excellence that characterizes our products internationally and bringing the best of the liquor industry to every corner of the world," he added. Among the milestones of Serrallés Distillery during the past years are the large expansion of its complex in Ponce, Puerto Rico, the improvement of infrastructure for the purpose of increasing the production and export of rums, and the expansion of its Premium Rums. In turn, quality has been awarded on numerous occasions in prestigious competitions and evaluations, such as the World Spirit Awards, Beverage Testing Institute, the International Wine & Spirits, among others. <https://donq.com/>

KŌLOA RUM COMPANY

Kaua'I Now reported that a federal judge dismissed on Tuesday the Kōloa Rum Company's constitutional challenge to the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, commonly known as the Jones Act, which requires all shipping between U.S. ports be conducted on vessels that are U.S. built, owned and registered, and crewed primarily by U.S. citizens. Kōloa Rum Company v. Noem challenged the law's constitutionality, asserting the Jones Act violates the Port Preference Clause by discriminating against Hawaiian ports through higher shipping costs and limited shipping options, and it violates the Due Process Clause by infringing on the company's substantive right to earn a living. Pacific Legal Foundation helped Kōloa Rum Company file the federal lawsuit on Feb. 25, 2025, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The purpose of the suit was to end the 105-year-old law to provide "equal footing among Hawaiian businesses and their competitors, and finally cast away one of the nation's most egregious examples of economic protectionism," Pacific Legal Foundation said in a press release. While the law originally intended to bolster domestic shipbuilding, it has had the opposite effect, shrinking the American shipping fleet while severely harming citizens and businesses in Hawai'i and Alaska, the article said. Under the Jones Act, no international vessels may serve Hawai'i directly. Kōloa Rum Company must first ship products to Los Angeles, then on to destinations like Australia. And the trip from Hawai'i to Los Angeles costs nearly three times more than shipping from Los Angeles to Australia, the press release said. "The Jones Act doesn't just hurt our business it hurts all Hawai'i residents," said Bob Gunter, CEO of Kōloa Rum Company, in a statement when the suit was filed. "We pay more for everything we import, from bottles to packaging, just like all families across the state. <https://koloarum.com/>



The Sweet Business of Sugar

THE **Rum**
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Mexico

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: December 01, 2025

Report Number: MX2025-0057

Report Name: Sugar Semi-annual

Country: Mexico

Post: Mexico City

Report Category: Sugar

Prepared By: Claudia Hernandez

Approved By: Nigel Hunter

Report Highlights:

Post forecasts sugar production for marketing year (MY) 2025/26 at 5.4 million metric tons raw value (MMT-RV), a seven percent increase from MY 2024/25, based on seasonal rains in several sugarcane-producing states during the previous marketing year and an expected recovery of the planted area. Sugar consumption for MY 2025/26 is forecasted to increase 5 percent year-over-year as lower-priced domestic sugar is favored over HFCS. Mexican industry expects large domestic sugar supplies, which could contribute to the continuation of low sugar prices. Sugar imports in MY 2025/26 are forecast to decrease 19 percent from the prior marketing year based on higher forecasted production. Around 50 percent of sugar imports are expected to come from the United States.

Table 1: Sugar Supply and Distribution October/September MY (1000 MT-RV)

Sugar, Centrifugal Market Year Begins	2023/2024		2024/2025		2025/2026	
	Oct 2023		Oct 2024		Oct 2025	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Mexico						
Beginning Stocks	885	886	1,503	1,505	1,146	1,222
Beet Sugar Production	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cane Sugar Production	4,986	4,986	5,100	5,057	5,400	5,400
Total Sugar Production	4,986	4,986	5,100	5,057	5,400	5,400
Raw Imports	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refined Imp.(Raw Val)	807	765	200	180	150	150
Total Imports	807	765	200	180	150	150
Total Supply	6,678	6,637	6,803	6,742	6,696	6,772
Raw Exports	424	378	716	735	657	700
Refined Exp.(Raw Val)	49	100	50	300	50	300
Total Exports	473	478	766	1,035	707	1,000
Human Dom. Consumption	4,284	4,374	4,400	4,200	4,400	4,400
Other Disappearance	418	280	491	285	443	300
Total Use	4,702	4,654	4,891	4,485	4,843	4,700
Ending Stocks	1,503	1,505	1,146	1,222	1,146	1,072
Total Distribution	6,678	6,637	6,803	6,742	6,696	6,772

Table 2: Mexico – Sugar Cane for Centrifugal PS&D

Sugar Cane for Centrifugal Market Year Begins	2023/2024		2024/2025		2025/2026	
	Nov 2023		Nov 2024		Nov 2025	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Mexico						
Area Planted (1000 HA)	760	760	800	745	0	775
Area Harvested (1000 HA)	743	730	780	737	0	760
Production (1000 MT)	46,093	43,000	48,400	45,800	0	48,800
Total Supply (1000 MT)	46,093	43,000	48,400	45,800	0	48,800
Utilization for Sugar (1000 MT)	46,093	43,000	48,400	45,800	0	48,800
Utilization for Alcohol (1000 MT)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Utilization (1000 MT)	46,093	43,000	48,400	45,800	0	48,800

PRODUCTION

Marketing Year 2025/26

Post forecasts sugar production for MY 2025/26 (October 1 – September 30) at 5.4 MMT-RV, a 7 percent increase from the MY 2024/25 estimate due to the return of seasonal rains in several sugarcane-producing states during mid-2025. This follows several years of drought in the Northeast region (San Luis Potosi and northern Veracruz) that caused widespread crop failure. Increased rains could help boost yields in the current harvest season. Post also forecasts an increase in harvested area at

760,000 ha as sugarcane planted in MY2025/26 is now ready to harvest. The MY 2025/26, crop is currently in its rapid growth stage requiring days with plentiful sunshine, temperatures close to 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and good humidity levels. The final sugar harvest will depend on stable weather conditions with low precipitation and sunshine, as well as efficient milling capacities. CONADESUCA has not yet published an official MY 2025/26 forecast.

According to data from Mexico's National Water Commission (CONAGUA), as of August 2025, 12 out of 267 sugar-producing municipalities (4 percent) are experiencing moderate to exceptional drought (see Map 1). All 12 municipalities have moderate drought conditions. Of the remaining 255 municipalities, 36 have abnormally dry conditions, and 219 have no presence of drought. These weather conditions could help increase production yields for the next marketing year (MY 2025/26).

Map 1: Drought Monitor August 31, 2025

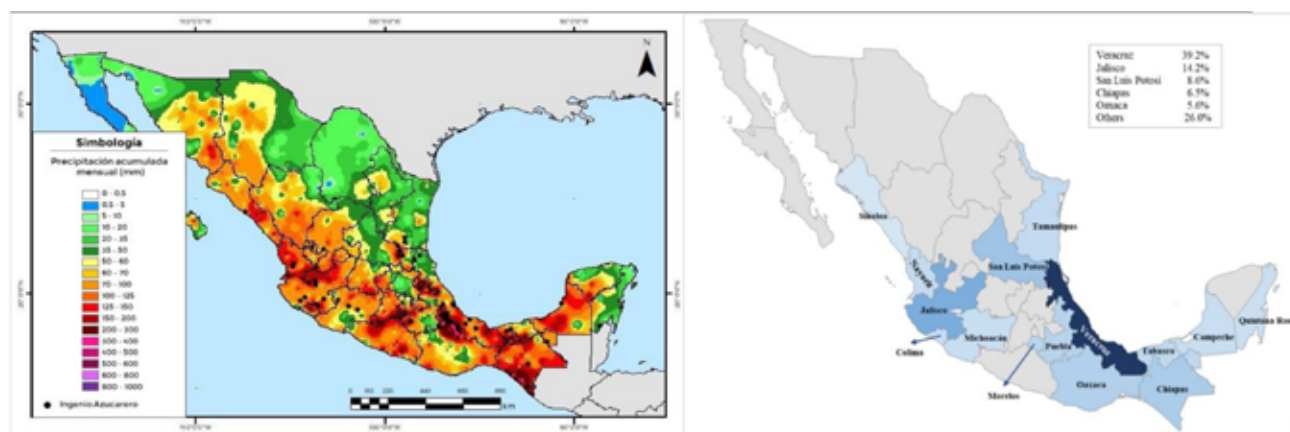


Source: CONAGUA

Legend: Map shows intensity of drought. Grey shows no drought, yellow shows moderate drought, orange severe drought, and red shows extreme drought.

Map 2 shows that several sugar states have benefited from some rains in August. The northeast, northwest, pacific, center, Papaloapan, Cordoba, and southeast regions show accumulated precipitation below last year and below the average levels. In August, the accumulated precipitation across all sugarcane areas was an average of 129 mm, 123 mm below historical average levels, and below the August 2024 level of accumulated precipitation for all sugarcane areas (see Figure 1).

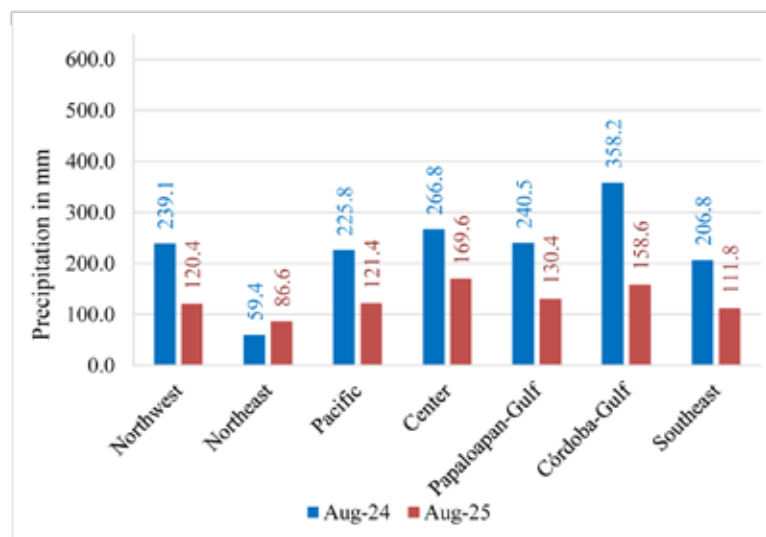
Map 2: Precipitation July Accumulation Vs. Sugar Production by State (MY 2024/25)



Source: Left: CONAGUA / Right: CONADESUCA. Last update: September 2025

Legend: Map shows precipitation in sugarcane areas. The scale from blue to purple shows lower to higher precipitation, respectively.

Figure 1: Monthly accumulated rainfall (mm) (August 2024 vs. August 2025)



Data Source: CONADESUCA

2024/25

Post estimates Mexico's sugar production at 5.06 MMT-RV for MY 2024/25, 1 percent higher than MY 2023/24. The increase in production is based on improved humidity during initial growth stages and drier conditions throughout the harvest cycle, compared to MY2023/24 where producers were faced with intensifying drought conditions during key production stages.

On September 15, CONADESUCA published the latest weekly production report for MY 2024/25. As of September 15, production reached 5,056,757 MT-RV¹, 1 percent higher than the previous MY, as seasonal rains contributed to a slight recovery in production. Production in Veracruz, the largest sugar-producing state, reached 1.98 MMT-RV, followed by Jalisco with 720,297 MT-RV, and San Luis Potosi with 433,314 MT-RV (see Table 3). Field yields in Puebla lead with 100.22 ton/ha, followed by Morelos with 94.80 ton/ha, and Chiapas with 86.63 ton/ha. As of July 19, all 47 mills have concluded milling (12 in April, 28 May, 5 in June, and 2 in July). According to the weekly report, final production is 317,134 MT-RV below CONADESUCA's first estimate.

Table 3: Production by State MY 2024/25

State	Area Harvested (ha)	Cane Harvested (mt)	Field Yield (mt/ha)	Sugar Production (mt)	Factory Yield (%)	Sugar Production (MT-RV)
Veracruz	314,398	19,089,521	60.72	1,867,860	9.78	1,979,932
Jalisco	71,790	5,922,685	82.50	679,525	11.47	720,297
San Luis Potosi	74,148	3,469,547	46.79	408,787	11.78	433,314
Chiapas	33,033	2,861,517	86.63	308,368	10.78	326,870
Oaxaca	48,642	2,560,548	52.64	267,210	10.44	283,243
Others	194,475	11,846,256	60.91	1,238,775	10.46	1,313,102
Total	736,486	45,750,074	62.12	4,770,525	10.43	5,056,757

*Source: CONADESUCA; *Final Report October 1, 2024 – September 17, 2025*

On May 6, CONADESUCA published its fourth production estimate for MY 2024/25 at 5.13 MMT-RV, 3 percent lower than the third production estimate due to a lower estimated planted area, lower field yield, and lower recovery rate. The fourth national balance estimate includes a category for low-polarization (low-pol.) (<99.2) sugar stocks at 159,000 MT-RV (see Table 4). This sugar was produced during MY 2024/25 and is intended to supply sugar to the U.S. at the beginning of next marketing year (MY 2025/26) (October – November).

Table 4: MY 2024/25 CONADESUCA Fourth Official National Balance Estimate
Metric Tons Raw Value (MT-RV)

Total Supply	6,773,540
Beginning Stocks	1,503,010
Production	5,127,430
Imports	143,100
Total Use	5,685,981
Exports	1,085,796
The U.S. and Puerto Rico	450,635
World Markets	635,162
Deliveries to Domestic Users	4,600,185

¹ One Metric Ton Raw Value (MT-RV) = 0.943396226 Metric Tons (MT)

IMMEX ²	265,000
Food	4,335,185
Ending Stocks	1,087,559
Optimal Stocks Domestic	928,559
Stocks Pol < 99.2	159,000

CONADESUCA's First National Balance Estimate as of May 6, 2025

Table 5: CONADESUCA First Estimate vs Final Production for MY 2024/25

	MY 2024/25 First Estimate*	MY 2024/25 Final*	Change
Industrialized area (ha)	742,934	736,486	-0.87%
Harvested cane (mt)	46,900,186	45,750,074	-2.45%
Field yield (t/ha)	63.13	62.12	-1.60%
Sugar production (mt)	5,069,708	4,770,525	-5.90%
Factory yield (%)	10.81	10.43	-3.52%

Source: CONADESUCA; *Final Report October 1, 2024 – September 17, 2025

According to CONADESUCA's final production report, as of September 17, production of low pol sugar is 55 percent above the same period in MY 2023/24 (see Table 6). This increase in low pol. production highlights the supply that will be held in stocks and available for the beginning of the following marketing year (MY 2025/26).

Table 6: Current Production MY 2024/25 vs MY 2023/24 (by type)

Type of Sugar (MT-RV)	MY 2023/24 Final	MY 2024/25 Final	Change
Refined	1,165,434	990,873	-14.98%
Standard	3,439,508	3,507,625	1.98%
Special White	65,078	68,373	5.06%
Mascabado	3,434	5,201	51.45%
Raw pol < 99.2	312,307	484,685	55.20%
Total	4,985,760	5,056,758	1.42%

Source: CONADESUCA; ** Final Report October 1, 2024 – September 17, 2025

* Final Report MY 2023/24

² Industria Manufacturera, Maquiladora y de Servicio de Exportación (Manufacturing, Maquiladora and Export Service Industry)

TRADE

2025/26

Post forecasts MY 2025/26 sugar imports at 150,000 MT-RV, 19 percent lower than the previous marketing year. The decrease in imports is based on higher forecasted production leading to larger domestic supplies.

Post forecasts MY 2025/26 exports at 1 MMT-RV, 3 percent lower than MY 2024/25. The forecast is due to the export availability of sugar under the U.S. quota and unfavorable prices of exports to the world market, incentivizing sugar that is not sold domestically to be held in stocks. Under the U.S. - Mexico Sugar Suspension Agreements and the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), for MY 2025/26, the September export quota for Mexico is 199,252 MT-RV, 56 percent lower than the prior MY. This imposes a challenge for exports, as an estimated 40,000 MT-RV of low-pol. sugar produced during MY 2024/25 will remain under stocks until beginning of 2026, potentially further contributing to decrease in domestic prices.

2024/25

Post estimates sugar imports for MY 2024/25 at 180,000 MT-RV, 77 percent lower than the previous marketing year. This is based on higher domestic supply (slightly higher forecasted production and higher carry-over stocks), pushing domestic prices down and disincentivizing imports. Industry indicates that most imports (around 90 percent) are directed to companies under the IMMEX³ program, which allows registered companies to import duty-free goods if the goods are used as inputs to manufacture final products for re-export. As of August 2025, Mexico imported 170,443 MT-RV, 77 percent lower than in the same period in MY 2023/24 (732,093 MT-RV). Of the total imports, as of August 17, around 52 percent come from the United States (roughly 86,500 MT-RV), mainly purchased by manufacturing and confectionery companies.

For MY 2024/25, Post estimates exports at 1.04 MMT-RV, 117 percent higher than MY 2023/24 due to high carry-over stocks that needed to be exported due to low domestic sugar prices (see prices section). Mexican industry faces high pressure to export the MY 2023/24 surplus to avoid a further drop in domestic prices. Growers, millers, and government representatives agreed to ship approximately 425,000 MT-RV to the world market before January 31, 2025. As of August 2025, CONADESUCA reported exports to the world market of 421,695 MT-RV, representing 99 percent of the agreed amount. The remaining exports will be classified under CEDES⁴ to guarantee exports to the world market. Industry indicates that the agreed amount will be fully exported by the end of the marketing year.

Over the last few years, most of Mexico's exports have gone to the United States due to relatively higher prices than the international market. For MY 2024/25, 43 percent of Mexico's exports are estimated to go to the global market due to high carry-over stocks and a lower U.S. export quota. Under the U.S. - Mexico Sugar Suspension Agreements and according to the WASDE, for MY 2024/25, the March export quota for Mexico is 450,635 MT-RV.

³ Industria Manufacturera, Maquiladora y de Servicio de Exportación (Manufacturing, Maquiladora and Export Service Industry)

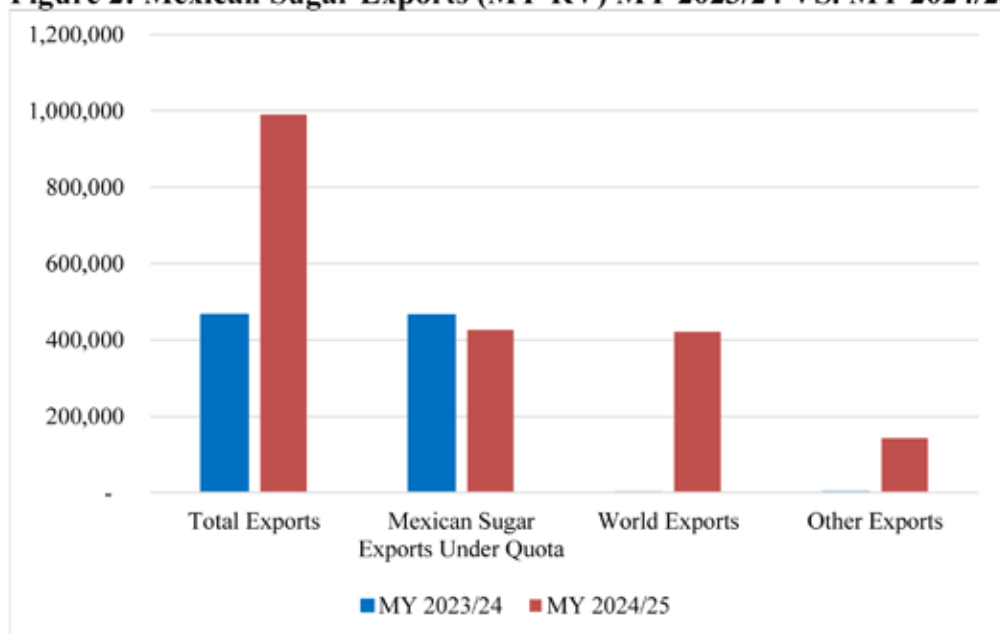
⁴ Deposit Certificates, CEDES by its acronym in Spanish.

Table 6: Mexican Sugar Exports to the U.S. Under Quota (MT-RV)

Month	MY 2023/24	MY 2024/25	Variation % 2023/2024 vs 2024/2025
October	20	0	NA
November	19,646	0	NA
December	44,161	18,339	-58.5%
January	63,959	38,532	-39.8%
February	115,616	75,829	-34.4%
March	111,513	40,510	-63.7%
April	13,521	60,492	347.4%
May	62,420	119,265	91.1%
June	18,962	17,726	-6.5%
July	9,745	39,666	307.1%
August	6,442	15,703	143.8%
September	12,347		
Oct-Aug	466,006	426,063	-8.6%

Data Source: CONADESUCA, Last update: September 15, 2025

Figure 2: Mexican Sugar Exports (MT-RV) MY 2023/24 VS. MY 2024/25



Data Source: CONADESUCA, data from October – August for each MY

HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP (HFCS)

2025/26

Post forecasts MY 2025/26 HFCS imports flat at 1.12 MMT dry basis. Large domestic sugar supplies leading to low prices are expected to stagnate imports of HFCS and increase domestic sugar consumption. Low-priced domestic sugar is forecast to be favored by consumers, requiring less need for sugar imports and a plateau of HFCS imports.

2024/25

Post estimates HFCS imports for MY 2024/25 at 1.12 MMT dry basis, 4 percent higher than the previous MY due to continued imports derived from contracts signed in MY 2023/24 and low HFCS prices. Currently, HFCS is more attractive than sugar due to lower prices. HFCS prices are around the same level as sugar under contract No. 11 (international sugar prices), significantly lower than Mexico's sugar prices, and lower than contract No.16 (U.S. sugar prices).

Table 7: HFCS Supply and Distribution October/September 1000 MT dry basis

	2024/25		2025/26	
	September	October	September	October
Production	520	520	520	520
Imports	1,125	1,120	1,120	1,120
Total Supplies	1,645	1,640	1,640	1,640
Exports	4.3	4.1	3.0	3.0
Consumption	1,641	1,636	1,637	1,637
Total Use	1,645	1,640	1,640	1,640
Ending Stocks	0	0	0	0
Total Distribution	1,645	1,640	1,680	1,640

CONSUMPTION

2025/2026

Post forecasts sugar consumption for MY 2025/26 at 4.70 MMT-RV, with human consumption at 4.40 MMT-RV and IMMEX at 300,000 MT-RV. This represents a 5 percent increase in overall sugar consumption compared to MY 2024/25 due to higher forecasted sugar supply, lower domestic sugar prices, and forecasted flat HFCS imports. According to industry sources, large supplies of sugar are expected and could maintain the low-price environment experienced in the previous MY, leading to the favorability of domestic sugar over HFCS.

2024/2025

Post estimates sugar consumption for MY 2024/25 at 4.49 MMT-RV, with human consumption at 4.20 MMT-RV and IMMEX at 285,000 MT-RV. This represents a decrease of 4 percent compared to MY 2023/24 due to expected higher HFCS consumption. IMMEX is estimated at 285,000 MT-RV, attributed to a lower consumption pace from the previous MY's sugar imports, lower sugar mill sales to the domestic market, and higher HFCS imports. MY 2023/24's elevated domestic sugar price

environment prompted consumers, mainly manufacturing companies, to buy sugar in anticipation of further price increases. This preemptive purchasing decreased the IMMEX consumption rate for sugar for MY 2024/25.

Mexico's sugar consumption faces several challenges, including high food price inflation, healthier consumer trends, sugar substitution with other sweeteners, and the implementation of the second phase of the Front of Pack Labeling Law (see Policy Section). Despite these challenges, sugar remains an integral part of the diet in Mexico, with an average per capita consumption of 37 kg per year. While the full effects of such measures like the labeling law and the IPES tax (see Policy section) are unknown, little evidence suggests that they have significantly reduced sugar consumption

As of August 2025, human domestic consumption is at 3.83 MMT-RV, 6 percent lower than in the same period in MY 2023/24. CONADESUCA reports IMMEX for MY 2024/25 at 256,668 MT-RV, 3 percent lower than CONADESUCA'S fourth estimate due to sugar imports substituting domestic sales and high HFCS imports. For MY 2024/25, CONADESUCA's fourth official consumption estimate is 4.7 MMT-RV (see Table 2).

Table 9: Human Domestic Consumption (1000 MT - RV)

Month	MY 2023/24	MY 2024/25	Variation % 2023/24 vs 2024/25
Oct	336	391	16.46%
Nov	361	319	-11.54%
Dec	359	380	5.77%
Jan	443	318	-28.32%
Feb	408	275	-32.55%
Mar	343	347	1.26%
Apr	416	440	5.75%
May	355	286	-19.53%
Jun	344	418	21.55%
Jul	364	350	-3.67%
Aug	355	312	-12.19%
Sep	312		
Oct-Aug	4,082	3,834	-6.06%

Data Source: CONADESUCA, Monthly National Sugar Balance. Last update: September 15, 2025

STOCKS

2025/26

Post forecasts MY 2025/26 ending stocks at 1.07 MMT-RV, 12 percent lower than the previous marketing year due to lower forecasted imports and lower beginning stocks. This forecast is 10 percent higher than Mexico's optimal final stock level of two and a half months of domestic consumption. The industry is incentivized to keep the MY 2025/26 stock levels as close as possible to the optimal level, as high stocks could help depress domestic sugar prices.

2024/25

Post estimates MY 2024/25 ending stocks at 1.22 MMT-RV, 31 percent higher than Mexico's optimal final stock level. For MY 2024/25, CONADESUCA's fourth official stock estimate is 1.09 MMT-RV (see Table 2). The stock amount includes a category for low-pol. sugar (<99.2) at 159,000 MT-RV. Industry suggests that this type of sugar was produced during MY 2024/25 and will remain in stock for the next marketing year. The aim is to supply sugar to the United States at the beginning of MY 2025/26 (October – November) when Mexico's production starts, and there is no supply of this type of sugar. Industry has indicated that they want this type of sugar available at the beginning of each marketing year, and millers will adjust the amount of low-pol sugar they produce for each MY accordingly at the start of the next MY (2025/26).

As of August 2025, CONADESUCA reports ending stocks at 1.65 MMT-RV, 10 percent lower than in MY 2023/24. However, 64,648 MT-RV are classified under CEDES to guarantee exports to the world market, which will be recovered once the sugar is exported.

PRICES

Average prices in MY 2024/25 have been lower than in the previous MY due to high stock levels, almost 30 percent for standard sugar. Current domestic prices are reaching levels comparable to MY 2021/22 when the average price of standard sugar reached 795 pesos per 50 Kilograms – Bulk (around USD 43⁵). For the remainder of MY 2024/25, prices will depend on final production levels and the management of beginning stocks.

Increase in sugar imports have saturated the domestic market and caused a drastic drop in prices and income for local growers. This issue is exacerbated by increased competition from fructose and reduced export quotas to the United States, which causes the sugar to remain within Mexico, further depressing prices. In response to the emergency, industry leaders are requesting several actions from the Government of Mexico. Their proposals include adding sugarcane to a national emergency support program, implementing a "prior permit" system to regulate sugar imports, and increasing import tariffs. They are requesting an increase in tariffs on sugar imports to USD 720 per ton of sugar to make imports more expensive and less competitive with domestic sugar.

Table 10: Mexico Average Wholesale Sugar Prices in Mexico City (CIF Basis) in Pesos per 50 Kilograms – Bulk

Month	Standard		Refined	
	MY 2023/24	MY 2024/25	MY 2023/24	MY 2024/25
October	1,518.00	906.25	1,583.33	1,188.84
November	1,440.00	819.17	1,517.50	1,186.25
December	1,294.38	916.00	1,488.75	1,157.00
January	1,121.83	872.50	1,508.00	1,125.17
February	1,236.25	887.50	1,463.33	1,116.67
March	1,209.50	886.25	1,476.25	1,102.50

⁵ 1 USD = \$18.36 pesos as of September 15, 2025

April	1,132.00	867.53	1,472.92	1,082.33
May	1,093.75	787.88	1,437.92	1,109.59
June	1,055.00	767.50	1,397.50	1,050.83
July	969.60	743.47	1,306.67	1,004.17
August	893.50	764.67	1,252.83	962.29
September	862.83		1,259.58	
Avg Oct-Aug	1,152.22	838.07	1,445.91	1,098.69

Source: SNIIM (National Service of Market Information)

* As of August 31, 2025

POLICY

Sustainable Development

The Mexican government's sugarcane industry programs and policies are governed by the Sustainable Rural Development Law, the Law on Sustainable Development of Sugar Cane, and the National Development Plan 2024-2030 ([PND](#)).

- The Sustainable Rural Development Law places rural development policy under the federal government's purview.
- The Law on Sustainable Development of Sugar Cane establishes CONADESUCA as the agency responsible for coordinating and executing all activities related to the sugarcane agroindustry.
- The PND is a document that outlines the Government of Mexico's (GOM) priority objectives for achieving the country's development and the well-being of Mexicans.

All programs and policies related to the sugarcane industry must comply with these two laws and the PND, which ensures that their overall impact contributes to the industry's sustainable development.

Production for Wellbeing Program

Under the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) "Production for Wellbeing [Program](#)", the GOM provides an annual support of \$7,300 pesos (around USD \$358⁶) per sugar producer (up to 20 hectares rainfed or up to 5 hectares irrigated) to improve crop yields and contribute to food self-sufficiency. Furthermore, SADER provides training and technical support aimed at increasing yields. The level of support has not increased since MY 2019/20.

National Sugarcane Agroindustry Program ([PRONAC](#)) 2021-2024

PRONAC aims to promote the development of the sugarcane agroindustry to generate employment and increase the well-being of rural populations. PRONAC also supports the sufficient and timely supply of sugar to the national and export markets. The program has four priority objectives:

1. Ensure the economic viability of producers and mills stabilize the sector at the national level.
2. Increase the productivity and competitiveness of sugarcane production and processing.
3. Promote research, development, innovation, and technology transfer in the sugarcane industry.

⁶ 1 USD = \$20.40 pesos as of March 28, 2025

4. Strengthen sustainability indicators (economic, social, and environmental) for a balanced development of the sugarcane agroindustry.

PRONAC 2021-2024 remains in effect until a new one is approved, which does not yet have an approval date.

Reference Price of Standard Sugar

On a yearly basis, generally in late October, CONADESUCA announces the sugar reference price at which mills purchase sugar cane from growers for that harvest season. On October 31, CONADESUCA announced the standard sugar⁷ [reference price](#) for MY 2024/25 at 21,657.45 pesos (around USD 1,061) per ton, the highest on record. The aim is to provide stability and profitability to the sector. The reference price is negotiated annually – with the participation of government, millers, and growers – based on production, export volumes, and domestic and international prices.

Front of Pack Labeling Law – Second Phase

The second phase of Mexico's *Norma Oficial Mexicana* (NOM) 051, a front-of-pack labeling regulation, began on October 1, 2023, and was extended to end until December 31, 2027, when the third phase will begin. It was originally scheduled to end on September 30, 2025. However, an [agreement](#) published in the Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) on July 31, 2025, extended the deadline for the second phase.

Under phase one of the NOM-051, which started on October 1, 2020, warning signs and cautionary labels were required on products with certain nutrients (for example, added sugars) to indicate a health risk from excessive consumption. The [second phase](#) implements “excess” warning signs that must be affixed to processed food and beverage labels if the product exceeds critical thresholds of certain nutrients (e.g., fats, sugars, sodium, etc.). Under phase two, products with 8 kcal or more of free sugars per 100 ml of product must include an “excess calories” label (compared to 10 kcal per 100 ml under phase one). Also, under phase two, products with 10 kcal or more free sugars per 100 ml of product must include an “excess sugars” label (compared to greater than or equal to 10% of total energy from free sugars under phase one). Phase three includes front-of-pack labeling even on foods that inherently contain sugar or fat, like milk, or sodium and fat, like cheese, not allowing the consumer to distinguish among products.

Special Tax on Production and Services (IEPS)

According to the annual [announcement](#) updating the IEPS tax rates for 2025, the rates for soft drinks, flavored beverages, and junk food were increased to account for inflation. The IEPS tax on sugar-sweetened drinks began in 2014 and is currently at 1.6451 pesos per liter for flavored beverages and concentrates, flavor essences or extracts, syrups, powder, and concentrates for preparing flavored beverages. Furthermore, the IEPS also considers 25 percent for energy drinks and concentrates, powders, and syrups for preparing energy drinks. However, the Mexican government has proposed a tax increase on sweetened beverages as part of its 2026 Economic Package, calling for an 87 percent increase to the IEPS. This would raise the rate from 1.6451 pesos to 3.0818 pesos per liter for 2026 and would affect a wide range of drinks, including sodas, flavored mineral waters, and any beverage containing added sugar or non-caloric artificial sweeteners. The government is framing the measure as a public health initiative, labeling it a “health tax” designed to discourage the consumption of sugary drinks linked to obesity and diabetes. The resulting revenue is intended to fund the public health system. The proposal was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies on September 8 for approval. The Chamber has until October 20 to approve the Revenue Law, after which it will move to the Senate, which has until October 31. Once the 2026 Economic Package has been fully approved, it will come into effect by January 1, 2026.

⁷ 99.4 percent polarization



Offering Bottling/Co-Packing Services

Rum Central is located within the **Texas Triangle**, a region in Texas formed by the state's four main metropolitan areas.

The **Texas Triangle** is one of eleven mega regions in the United States and is home to approximately 75% of the State's population. This area also benefits substantially from trade with Mexico, the United States' third largest trade partner.

Rum Central is 30 Miles from Austin, with convenient access to interstate highways, rail lines, airports and seaports (within 250 miles of 4 of the top 10 U.S. seaports), guaranteeing fast and efficient shipping of your dry and finished goods.

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Rum Cocktails for Lovers

Aphrodisiacs are foods thought to increase sexual drive or to enhance reproductive ability. Many centuries ago, philosophers attributed aphrodisiac properties to any food that represented “seed” or “semen,” such as eggs, bulbs and grains. Later foods were considered to have aphrodisiac properties if they had any resemblance to genitalia. Modern science looks at the composition of foods and believes that those with a high concentration of Zinc are beneficial to the libido, as Zinc controls progesterone levels. Here is a list of foods commonly thought to have aphrodisiac properties:

Almond, Aniseed, Arugula, Asafetida, Asparagus, Avocado, Bananas, Basil, Broccoli Rabe, Chocolate, Carrots, Coffee, Coriander, Fennel, Figs, Garlic, Ginger, Honey, Liquorice, Mustard, Nutmeg, Oysters, Pine Nuts, Pineapple, Raspberries, Strawberries, Truffles, Vanilla and Wine.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

- 1 3/4 oz Rhum J.M. Blanc
- 3/4 oz Cynar
- 3/4oz Cherry Heering
- 1/4 oz Averna
- 2 Dash Rhubarb Bitters
- 1 Dash Whiskey Barrel Bitters

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients except bitters into an ice filled cocktail shaker.
2. Shake and strain into a crushed ice filled cocktail glass.
3. Drop bitters into the glass and stir.
4. Recipe Courtesy: Rhum J.M. Blanc

THE SUPERIOR LOVE POTION

- 50 ml White Rum
- 12.5 ml Crème de Cacao
- 1 Scoop Strawberry Ice Cream (or sorbet)
- 5 ml Parfait Amour Liqueur
- 25 ml Lime Juice
- 25 ml Champagne

Directions:

1. Shake all of the ingredients together until the ice cream/sorbet dissolves.
2. Pour the champagne into a flute and then single strain the gelato mix on top.
3. Garnish with a single Maraschino cherry and grated dark chocolate.





CUPID'S KISS

- 1 oz. Cruzan Raspberry Rum
- 1 oz. Canadian Club Whisky
- Cranberry Juice

Directions:

Fill highball glass with ice. Add rum and whisky, fill with juice and stir.



SAINT VALENTINE

- 1 1/2 oz white rum
- 1/2 oz Fonseca Bin 27 Ruby Port
- 1/2 oz orange curacao or Grand Marnier
- 1/2 oz fresh-squeezed lime juice

Directions:

1. Pour the ingredients into a cocktail shaker with ice and shake well.
2. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

BETWEEN THE SHEETS

- 1 oz. White Rum
- 1 oz. Cointreau
- 1/2 oz. Lemon Juice
- 1 oz. Spanish-style Rum or Cognac

Directions:

1. Add all of the ingredients to a cocktail shaker filled with ice, shake until well chilled.
2. Strain into a cocktail glass or a coupe and garnish with a lemon twist.



THE Rum[®] UNIVERSITY & RUM CENTRAL

Present

THE HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF THE BARREL

In the world of distilled spirits, nothing evokes elegance, sophistication and transformation more than barrel aging. The right barrels, in the right hands, can transform the mundane into the spectacular. Whether it is American, French, Colombian, Bulgarian or other oak variety, a well-made barrel is the magic chamber within which time slowly transforms the contents.

Join us as we explore the world of barrels. We'll take a deep dive into the physical and chemical transformations that take place inside the world's preferred aging vessels.





The History and Science of the Barrel

Lesson 2: Why Oak?

Welcome to Lesson 2 of 12 of the Rum University's latest course! You can find previous lessons of this course by visiting the Archives page on **www.GotRum.com**, you can also find additional courses and material on the university's official website at **www.RumUniversity.com**.

Contributions of properly weathered and toasted oak

To properly age rum, having wooden barrels is not enough. Great and consistent aging can only be achieved through the careful selection and care of oak barrels. But, what makes a great barrel?

- Great barrels are the correct size for the desired goal.
- Great barrels are made from mature oak trees that have achieved the ideal physiological properties. Lesson 3 will cover this topic in more detail.
- The wood from the trees must be properly weathered in order to allow for the correct and complete metamorphosis to take place within the wood prior to milling. Lesson 6 will be devoted to this topic.
- Perfectly cured wood from the tree is then milled (Lesson 7) and accurately toasted (Lesson 8), only then is the barrel ready for aging spirits.
- Old barrels must be emptied, the charred surface scraped and the inner surface re-toasted in order to extend their useful life.



When aged in properly built and maintained oak barrels, the rum is able to extract chemical components from within the wood staves and react with them.



Some of these aromas are:

- Raw nuts, specifically almonds (from Furfural)
- Toasted nuts, specifically almonds (from Methyl-furfural)
- Caramel (from Maltol)
- Toasted bread or grains (from Isomaltol)
- Unsweetened chocolate or cocoa (from Pyridine)
- Fresh bread or grains (from Pyrazine)
- Smoke or pipe tobacco (from Guaiacol)
- Spices, like nutmeg and cinnamon (from Eugenol)
- Vanilla (from Vanillin)
- Oak and coconut (from Methyl Octolactone)

Important note: the presence of these aromas in a rum does not guarantee that the rum was aged in an oak barrel.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

by Mike Kunetka



Max Well (L) and Alex Lamb (R)

THE DONN OF TIKI

Late last year I got to see *The Donn of Tiki*, a new documentary about Don the Beachcomber. At a pre-screening reception at one of Phoenix's best Tiki Bars, Undertow, I met Alex Lamb and Max Well, partners in Surf Monkey Films and the directors of the film. We talked briefly over expertly crafted cocktails (Zombies, of course). A couple of weeks later they were kind enough to answer some questions.

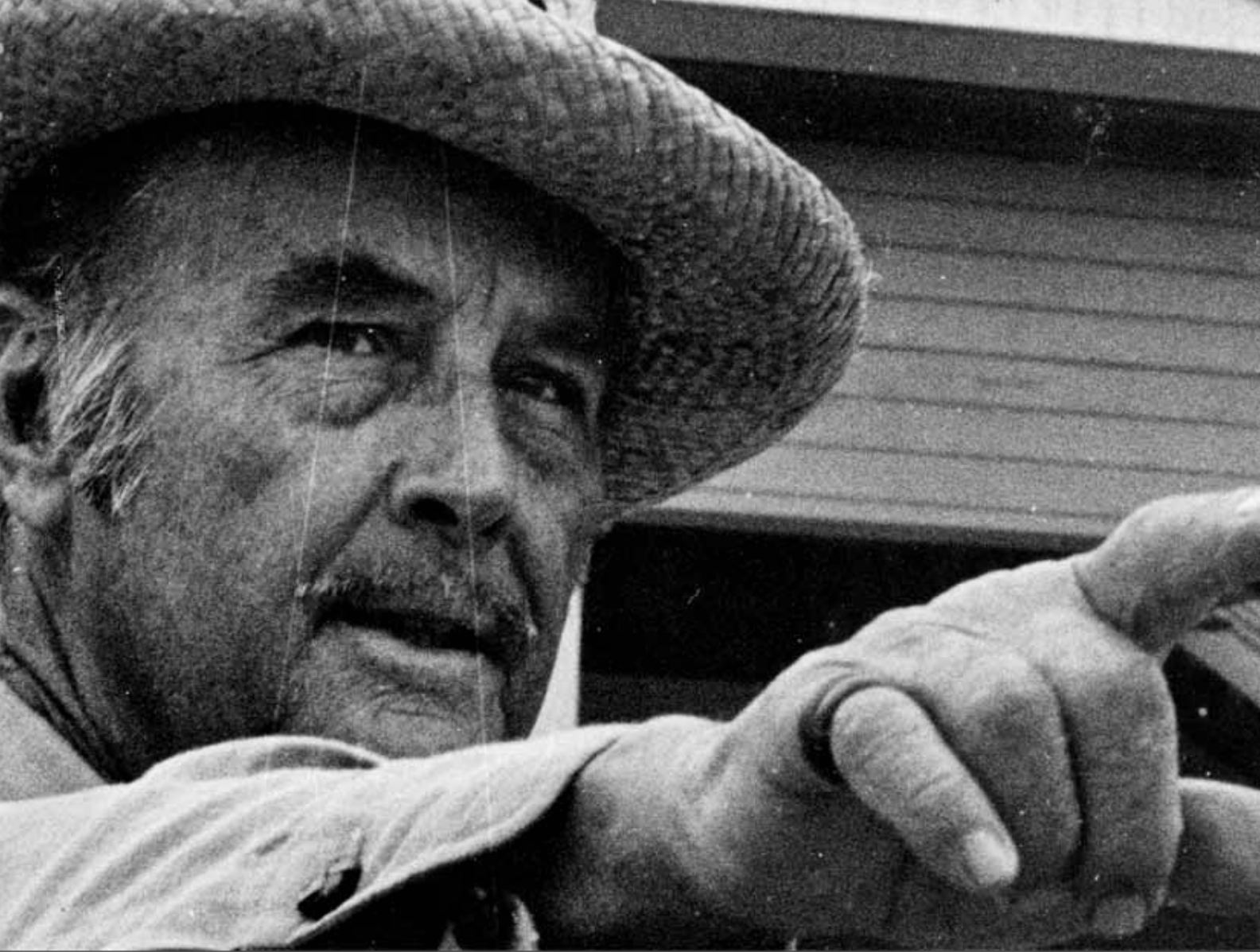
Mike Kunetka



Mike: How did you guys meet?

Alex Lamb: Max and I met at Chapman University and he shot my senior thesis project *Somewhere Over the Flagpole: A Nintendo Movie*, which was the very first time we worked together. We've worked together ever since, forming Surf Monkey Films in 2009, shooting music videos, commercials, and some children's programming.

Max Well: Alex and I met in film school, at the Dodge College at Chapman University. It has a great reputation now, thanks to the Duffer Brothers who made the hit series *Stranger Things*, and others who were there when we attended. I think we realized early on that we complimented each other. Alex is very creative; he has



wonderful ideas and is very detail-oriented when it comes to story. These skills have served him well as an editor, which he is by trade. I've always been interested in the technical side of filmmaking, and focused on cinematography. Over the years of working together we developed a mutual trust, and a respect that allows us to freely discuss ideas, and most importantly to honestly talk about whether or not something is working.

Mike: How did you become interested in Don the Beachcomber?

Alex: During Covid we were both unemployed. I'm an editor by trade and Max is a cinematographer. I was already very interested in Tiki and had been trying to master my mixology skills while in quarantine. Living in LA, I knew all the Tiki

Bars that I loved going to were shut down and I thought it would be a cool project to do a short docu-series on the history of these bars, interviewing the people who run them and learning their stories. Max and I set out to film a couple bars and everyone's interview started out the same, "Well none of this would have happened if it wasn't for Don the Beachcomber." From there we decided, even if only half of these stories are true, Donn's story would be an amazing documentary in its own right.

Max: During the Covid lockdown, we set out to create a couple of shorts about the old Tiki bars in L.A. They are visually interesting, and we were genuinely interested in the history. As we started doing research and talking with folks in the Tiki community, we kept hearing about Donn Beach. He's revered as this kind of



legendary figure by a lot of people. His life hasn't been very well documented, and there are a lot of stories that are hard to believe. The more we learned, the more we were intrigued. We thought, OK, this is something we can kick off on our own. You know, we have a little bit of equipment and we have the experience to go out with a small crew and shoot what we need. So, it was sort of one of those things where, before we realized that this was going to be a feature movie, we were already doing it and it just kind of grew and evolved from there.

Mike: Was it difficult to find investors?

Alex: Investors are kind of off the table because people don't really want to invest in anything that's not a proven concept. So, we went out and started interviewing. Somebody early on had given us the advice to just start shooting, because with a documentary, you're constantly shooting and constantly chasing money. We just started shooting it so we could show that we were capable of doing. We put together a sizzle reel out of this stuff and we started posting stuff online. We started a Kickstarter campaign with the goal to raise \$50,000. We figured if we got

\$50,000, we could travel to some of these bars that are further away, like Jeff Berry's bar in New Orleans or some bars in New York. We could visit some of these places and have the travel expenses paid for. And then our Kickstarter campaign was much more successful than we anticipated and we ended up raising about \$200,000.

Well and Lamb crafted the film around interviews with people who knew Donn or know of him and an audio recording of Donn Beach, talking about his life. The interviews are with friends, relatives, former employees, ex-wives and a Who's Who of bar owners, drink historians and Tiki elite. One of the first interviews in the film is with Tim "Swanky" Glazner who has been researching Don the Beachcomber for years. We see Tim digging through piles of photographs and stacks of boxes.

Mike: In the interview with Tim Glazner, are all of those boxes filled with Don the beachcomber memorabilia?

Max: Yes, that's Donn's archive of documents, photographs, diaries, DVD's. Phoebe, his widow, had been carrying this archive with her to all the different houses

she has lived in, in different countries, not wanting to get rid of it, hoping that someday it would be useful for a book or whatever. We got hooked up with Tim through Phoebe. We had read a book about Don the Beachcomber that was written by a man named Arnold Bitner who was also married to Phoebe. We researched the publishing company and they got us in touch with Phoebe. Arnold had, unfortunately, passed away by the time we started working on this project. But once we got in touch with Phoebe and talked to her on the phone, we just kind of hit it off. She trusted us and we were really excited to meet her and felt good about working with her. She still had this archive and she told us about Tim and his project to write a book. She got us in communication with him. You know, there were a lot of photos and blueprints and what not that were personal items of Donn's that nobody had ever seen before.

Throughout the film, we hear the actual voice of Donn Beach telling his life story. The audio recording was an interview with Donn conducted by Alice Siweky for the Watmul Oral History Foundation. Where actual film footage of certain events did not exist, they creatively used 2D (cartoon) and Stop-Motion animation to fill the gaps.

Mike: How did you decide on using animation and what it should look like?

Max: We knew that we lacked visuals for some important parts of the story. We didn't have enough archival footage or images or news clippings to cover every part of the film, and you can only stay on interviews for so long. We thought that animation could work to help fill in these sections, but we were on a tight budget, and didn't really want to use animation if it didn't look good.

Alex: I remember early on talking about what the animation should look like and we kept getting stumped. We thought something mid-century would fit because Tiki is so connected with the mid-century modern architecture and culture. But it didn't make sense to have a mid-century

style Donn bootlegging in the 1920s. At one point, I remember saying to Max, "If we had the money, but we don't, it would be really cool if we used different styles animation for the different decades of Donn's life". We talked to about five different animation studios in Los Angeles, and got laughed out of the office (Zoom meeting) by each one when they heard our budget. We had kind of given up on the idea of different styles of animation when we realized how expensive it would be. Then Max met Christopher Ninness, who was working on the documentary *Not Just A Goof*, who told him about this amazing animation studio that they worked with in Columbia called Venutria Animation Studios. We set up a meeting with their Creative Director Juan Urbina, who started the meeting with, "I've been doing some research on Donn, and I read your outline, I have this idea: what if we used a different style of animation for each decade of Donn's life?"

Max: The stop-motion came about as a way to utilize more of the Donn Beach audio recordings. We loved hearing him tell his own story, but we needed strong visuals to accompany his voice. Evan Berger, a friend of ours, had created a miniature version of the original Don the Beachcomber location which we shot for a sequence in the film, so we had a pre-built set. When Alex had the idea to utilize stop motion, it seemed like a perfect fit. We were already shooting many of our interview subjects in Tiki bars. Why not record Donn Beach in his own Don the Beachcomber bar? We worked with a wonderful artist, Kevin Kidney, of Kevin and Jody, to design the stop-motion puppet, and a team of very talented animators at Mystery Meat Media up in Oakland, to figure out exactly how this all would work. To make a long story short, it didn't. Not at first anyway. The scale we had used for the bar was impractical for the puppet. He needed to be large enough so that the animators could easily move his eyebrows, mouth, and other features. We had to shoot background plates of the set, and determine what lens and distance we needed to shoot the puppet to be properly composited into the background. It was a technical mess, but we're happy with the result!



As a young man, Donn's father offered to pay for a college degree or a trip around the world. Donn chose the trip. It was these travels that shaped his future. He would combine rums and simple cocktails from the Caribbean, artifacts and decorations from throughout Polynesia and Cantonese food to create the phenomenon we call Tiki. He took the basic Caribbean Planter's Punch recipe of One of Sour, Two of Sweet, Three of Strong and Four of Weak and drilled down on each component. Sour could be Lemon, Grapefruit, Lime or a combination. Sweet could be light sugar, dark sugar, honey, Agave, maple syrup. Strong could be rums or a combination of rums from islands throughout the Caribbean. The Weak would be ice, but he played with the type, the shape and the amount. Then, he added a fifth element, spices. Over time he would create over fifty 'Rum Rhapsodies.'

Mike: Why do you think Donn chose rum for the majority of his drinks?

Alex: I think, in the public sphere, that rum was not nearly as popular at that point as

the other spirits, like whiskey and gin. It just so happened that it was available in greater quantity and easier to get. Donn was involved in some rum running and he had a bunch of rum when prohibition ended. I think that was basically why he was using rum as his spirit, because it was plentiful and he already had a lot of it.

Max: He had a unique knowledge about rum from his days traveling in his 20's. He knew how to make a Planters Punch and a Daiquiri and these rum drinks weren't quite as popular in the US as they were in other parts of the world. He was able to package rum in a way that the public was willing to try and say, "oh, this is, this is interesting."

Mike: Donn was a man of many stories. Was it difficult to make a documentary about a man when his stories were often conflicting?

Alex: Personally, I kept having a conceptual crisis, thinking that if nothing Donn says is true, then nothing in the documentary is true. So, what's the point? Max always did a good job of pulling me out of that hole. Eventually we decided that if we could portray Donn as an unreliable narrator in the beginning of the film, it sort of gave us a "get out of jail free card" for the rest of the documentary.

Max: There's a very important introduction to the film that tells the audience in one minute who Donn Beach is, and at the end the narrator says "What follows is this man's story. Or, at the very least, the story he'd like us to believe." This line serves two purposes. First of all, it sets the tone of the film. It lets the audience know that it's okay to laugh. And most importantly, it suggests that some of what we are about to hear is Donn's version of events. That element of "what he'd like us to believe" is something that we leaned into in the film. As much as we could, we tried to verify through documentation what actually happened, but some information has just been lost to time, or we found multiple versions of the same story. Ultimately, we separated everything in the



film into three categories: the things we know to be true, the things that we believe happened based on the best available information, and lastly, stories that Donn tells us, which may be true. Or maybe not. The audience can decide.

Mike: You have been travelling across the country in 2025 screening the film. Will that continue in 2026? What's next for The Donn of Tiki?

Max: We've been touring around the country this year (2025) and will have screened in about 30 cities by the middle of December. I think we're going to continue this probably into the first quarter of next year. We already have screenings scheduled for Vancouver on February 3rd, Seattle on February 4th and Birmingham on the 7th. We're also working on a Blu-ray DVD release and probably streaming shortly after that.

Mike: Will the DVD have bonus material?

Max: It will definitely have some bonus material. We are collecting a lot of material now and we are in the process of organizing special features and some sequences that we really liked, but were

dropped from the film due to time. The DVD-Blu Ray will certainly have a lot of this material. There will be director commentaries, deleted scenes, some cocktail recipe videos, some behind the scenes featurettes.

Mike: We will, look forward to that. I have one last question. After making the film and working with Tiki bars across the country to promote it, Alex, are you making better drinks now?

Alex: I think I am. You know, when you're done doing interviews and screenings, afterwards, it's like "great, we're done, let's make cocktails", and you have these great drinks personally made by these amazing bartenders and you, you learn a lot for sure.

To see a trailer for The Donn of Tiki and to get information of upcoming screenings and the release of the DVD, check out their website: <https://www.thedonnoftiki.com/>



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



Rum Coffee

Historically, as I write my pairings, most of my readers are located, quite literally, on the opposite side of the world. This contrast is even more marked now that I am in Punta Arenas. And despite the fact that I should be experiencing higher temperatures and better climate now, which are perfect for smoking, the weather in Punta Arenas is very different from the one in the rest of Chile. Here, the sky can be clear and sunny one moment and, in less than 30 minutes, the day turns cloudy and windy and it is impossible to go outside for a smoke.

These past days the weather had been like that, and I couldn't find an opportunity to do the pairing, especially since my son is here with me and I also have to plan around him. Well, today the sun finally came out, and it is not windy, so it was the perfect time to do the pairing, especially since Joaquín was very sleepy.

We went out to a nearby coffee shop called History Coffee, located a couple of blocks away from the house. It is the only place with outdoor sitting where it is possible to smoke.

Once there, before ordering food from the menu for the pairing, I lit a cigar that I took with me, a Robusto from Casa Magna Colorado (52 x 5 ½), Nicaraguan, which I've smoked before and have enjoyed its flavor and draw. We left the house so quickly that I forgot to take a cigar cutter, even though I have approximately 8 of them spread throughout the house. So I had to improvise the cut, like in the movies, biting off the tip with my teeth, giving it a bullet-like cut, which came out quite well.



Photos credit: @Cigarili



Photo credit: @Cigarili

When the waitress arrived at our table, I asked for an Irish Coffee, but I asked for it to be made with rum. I didn't have many options, so I chose Havana Añejo. For a drink like this one, I would not recommend spending money on a rum that is much older or more expensive. Most rums won't make a worthwhile impact on coffee, unless you can get an Agricole or an Overproof, which would definitely be bolder and more noticeable.

As I mentioned earlier, I was doing the pairing during a short window of opportunity, despite the sporadic gust of cold wind. By my calculations, we only had 20-30 minutes before the sun would reach the table where we were sitting, and that is why I started smoking as soon as I sat down.

Pairings are always subjective and their enjoyment is tied to different factors. In this case, it came accompanied by a sense of relief, since I was finally able to smoke outside, without bothersome winds and with a rum! Even when compared to the ideal conditions, this pairing was not

bad at all. I do feel, however, that when they prepared my beverage, they added a bit too much rum, which increased the aromatic intensity. The cigar and the coffee combined well, without overpowering each other. The cigar's medium-to-high body stood its ground and the pairing would not have been possible if it had been any milder. At the beginning, the cigar had its own coffee-like notes, unrelated to the drink, but at the end it was loaded with dry fruits and spices.

As I finished the drink and the cigar, the sun started to reach my hands, slowly warming up my body. I wanted to continue smoking, but the window of opportunity started to close as Joaquín started to awake, so it was time to return home.

I hope that those of you experiencing cold weather can also find time to enjoy a cigar with a warm rum drink. All it takes to be happy is around 30 minutes!

Philip Ili Barake
#GRCigarPairing



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