

Chapter 12

Rum

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting the background on rum
 - ▶ Knowing the rum production process
 - ▶ Looking at some well-known brands and flavors
 - ▶ Serving it up
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Rum is a spirit distilled from sugar cane. It comes in light and dark varieties and is an ingredient in hundreds of cocktail recipes.

Rummaqing through Rum History

Caribbean rum has been exported out of the islands for hundreds of years, linked to the tropical and subtropical climates where sugar cane thrives. It was Christopher Columbus himself who first brought sugar cane to the Caribbean from the Azores. But the origins of rum are far more ancient, dating back, most experts say, more than 2,000 years.

Sugar cane grew like a weed in parts of southern China and India, and Alexander the Great, after conquering India, brought with him to Egypt “the weed that gives honey without the help of bees.” The Islamic people from the Middle Ages, known as the *Saracens*, passed on their knowledge of distilling sugar cane to the Moors, who made *arak* (a cane-based proto-rum) and planted sugar cane in Europe sometime after AD 636.

Columbus brought sugar cane to Puerto Rico on his second voyage in 1493. Later, Ponce de León, the first Spanish governor of the island, planted the first cane fields in Puerto Rico, which were soon to become vital to the local economy and to the world's palate for fine spirits. Some historians speculate that Ponce de León's legendary search for a mythical fountain of youth was, in fact, a much more practical search for a source of pure water to use in his distillation of rum.

The first sugar mill, a precursor to the Puerto Rican rum industry, was built in 1524, when the product of cane distillation was called *brebaje*, the word *rum* being a later addition brought by crusading English seamen.

The popularity of rum continued to spread during the early 19th century. Distilleries prospered and grew in Puerto Rico. In 1893, the first modern column still was introduced to Puerto Rico. With this innovation, the foundation was laid for the island to produce a more refined, smoother-tasting rum at a dramatically increased pace. Distilleries relocated from vast, outlying sugar plantations to more accessible sites and soon became centrally organized and managed. The first Puerto Rican rum for export to the continental United States was shipped in 1897 — some 18,000 gallons.

During the Prohibition period in the United States, most Puerto Rican rum distillers stayed in business — not by being rumrunners but by producing industrial alcohol. When Prohibition ended in 1933, Puerto Rico refocused on the potential of the American liquor market and slowly began to rebuild its shipments to U.S. ports. The island soon took steps to upgrade its rum production, and through special government funding and research, the island's rum was catapulted to the forefront of the world's rum production.

With the onset of World War II, manufacturers of U.S. distilled spirits were ordered to limit their production and manufacture of industrial alcohol for the war effort. However, because the territorial mandate didn't apply to Puerto Rico, demand for Puerto Rican rum increased. Sales were phenomenal throughout the war years, with Rum and Coke being the national drink during World War II. In 1952, about 100 different brands of Puerto Rican rum were on the market. Today, there are just 12.



Rum folklore

Legend has it that Paul Revere ordered a mug of rum before his famous ride from Boston to Lexington. And a Benjamin Franklin invention, the Rum Flip, made with rum and beer, was raised in 1773 in celebration after the Boston Tea Party.

Rum may have been the first of all shaken cocktails in the world: At Increase Arnold's Tavern in Providence, Rhode Island, thirsty patrons called for "rum, milk, sugar, cracked ice, shaken in a silver coffee pot until the frost is on the pot," topped with nutmeg and ginger.

Rums from Puerto Rico are the leaders in rum sales in the continental United States. A staggering 77 percent of all rum sold on the mainland comes from Puerto Rico.

How Rum Is Made

Rum is distilled from molasses, a sticky syrup that results when sugar cane is boiled down. When first distilled, the crude rum is between 130 and 180 proof. This rum is then aged for two to ten years to mellow it out. This aging process determines whether the rum is light or dark. Rum aged in charred oak casks becomes dark (caramel and other agents are added to affect its color). Rum aged in stainless steel tanks remains colorless.

Most light rum comes from Puerto Rico. Most dark rum comes from Jamaica, Haiti, and Martinique.

Popular Brands

Rum is produced throughout the Caribbean. Here are several popular brands:

- ✓ **10 Cane** (Trinidad)
- ✓ **Admiral Nelson Spiced Rum** (Puerto Rico)

- ✔ **Angostura** (Trinidad)
- ✔ **Appleton Estate** (Jamaica)
- ✔ **Bacardi** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **Brinley** (Saint Kitts)
- ✔ **Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **Castillo** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **Cavalier** (Antigua)
- ✔ **Cockspur** (Barbados)
- ✔ **Cruzan Rum** (U.S. Virgin Islands)
- ✔ **DonQ Rums** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **English Harbour** (Antigua)
- ✔ **Fernandes Vat 19 Rum** (Trinidad)
- ✔ **Gosling's Black Seal Rum** (Bermuda): Gosling also makes a Gold Rum and an Old Rum.
- ✔ **Gran Blason Añejo Especial** (Costa Rica)
- ✔ **Havana Club** (Cuba)
- ✔ **Matusalem** (Dominican Republic)
- ✔ **Mount Gay Rum** (Barbados)
- ✔ **Myers's Original Dark Rum** (Jamaica)
- ✔ **Ocumare** (Venezuela)
- ✔ **Oronoco** (Brazil)
- ✔ **Pampero** (Venezuela)
- ✔ **Pusser's** (Tortola, British Virgin Islands)
- ✔ **Pyrat** (Anguilla)
- ✔ **Rhum Barbancourt** (Haiti)
- ✔ **Ron Del Barrilito** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **Ron Rico** (Puerto Rico)
- ✔ **Royal Oak** (Trinidad)
- ✔ **Sailor Jerry** (U.S. Virgin Islands)
- ✔ **Sea Wynde** (Jamaica and Guyana)
- ✔ **Stroh** (Austria)

- ✔ **Stubbs** (Australia)
- ✔ **Tommy Bahama Rum** (Barbados)
- ✔ **Whaler's** (Hawaii)
- ✔ **Wray & Nephew** (Jamaica)
- ✔ **Zaya Rum** (Trinidad)

Flavored Rums

Rums are now available in several different flavors; new flavors of rums come out every day. I suggest you check with your local liquor retailer or liquor wholesaler to see what's new. Here are some popular options:

- ✔ **Bacardi** offers Bacardi Ciclon (90 percent Bacardi Gold rum and 10 percent blue agave tequila and a hint of lime), Bacardi Limón (a lemon-citrus-flavored rum), Bacardi Tropicó (Bacardi Gold rum mixed with exotic fruit juices), Bacardi O (Bacardi rum infused with the essence of ripe oranges), Bacardi Razz (raspberry), Bacardi Vanila, Bacardi Coco (coconut), Bacardi Dragonberry, and Grand Melon (watermelon).
- ✔ **Captain Morgan's Parrot Bay** offers coconut-, mango-, pineapple-, and passion fruit-flavored rums.
- ✔ **Cocoribe** is a coconut-flavored rum.
- ✔ **Cruzan Rums** have the following flavors: coconut, orange, pineapple, banana, vanilla, raspberry, mango, and citrus.
- ✔ **Malibu** is a coconut-flavored rum.
- ✔ **Tattoo** is a dark flavored rum from Captain Morgan.
- ✔ **Whaler's** offers coconut, vanilla, and spiced rums.

Cachaça (aka Brazilian Rum)

Cachaça (pronounced kah-shah-sah) is a Brazilian sugar cane-based liquor. Even though I'm including cachaça in this chapter on rum, you shouldn't confuse it with rum, which is made from the molasses left over after sugar refinement.

Cachaça imported to the United States is taxed as rum and thus is often called Brazilian Rum.

Brazil consumes close to 360 million gallons of cachaça per year. It's the third most-consumed spirit in the world.

Cachaça must be aged for at least one year in barrels no larger than 700 liters. The barrels are made of cedar, jequitiba, and American and European oak. This barrel-aging gives the liquor a smoother taste.

Here are some popular cachaça brands:

- ✔ **Boca Loca**
- ✔ **Cabana Cachaça**
- ✔ **Leblon**
- ✔ **Sagatiba Cachaça**
- ✔ **Samba**

The most common cocktail made with cachaça is the Caipirinha. Check out the recipe in Chapter 17.

Storing and Serving Suggestions

You can serve rum straight, on ice, or mixed as a cocktail. The good old Rum and Coke is a popular choice. It's called a Cuba Libre when you add a lime. Store an unopened bottle in a cool, dry place. After opening, a typical bottle should have a shelf life of at least two years.