

# Got Rum?®

JANUARY 2019

FROM THE GRASS TO YOUR GLASS, SINCE 2001!

**COOKING WITH RUM - ANGEL'S SHARE - CIGAR & RUM -  
MUSE OF MIXOLOGY - RUM HISTORIAN -  
RUM IN THE NEWS - EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW -  
RUM UNIVERSITY**



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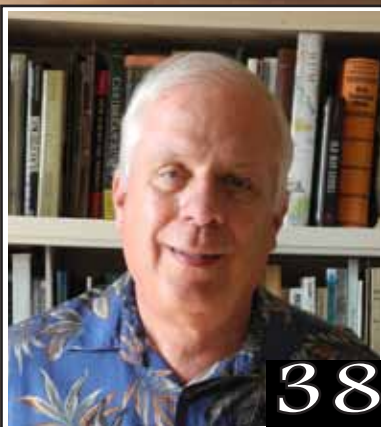
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# Got Rum?®

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FRONT COVER: A Warming Welcome

INSIDE SPREAD: The Giving Cask

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Last but not Yeast

Offering bottled rum for sale to consumers requires the collaboration of many different groups of people. All of them may say that they are *committed* to the success of the brand, but in many cases they are simply *involved*.

*Commitment* and *involvement* are concepts that represent different levels of importance, dedication and consequences for the participants. One of the best analogies used to explain the juxtaposition is both humorous and pragmatic:

*“The difference between **involvement** and **commitment** is like ham and eggs. The chicken is involved; the pig is committed.”*

Brand owners are financially-committed, more so than any other group of people along the supply chain.

Sugarcane farmers, mill operators, distillery personnel, bottle and label suppliers and most others are usually just involved, but there is a whole community of individuals that, like the pig in the saying above, are committed to their death: yeast! Yeast colonies literally sacrifice their lives in the process of giving us the sought-after alcohol needed to quench our thirst and soothe our spirits.

Yeast is the cornerstone of all alcoholic beverages: it is responsible for the transformation of sugar into alcohol, yet many of its evolutionary transformations remain a mystery. This issue of “Got Rum?” marks the beginning of a new series devoted to



the exploration of the mysterious and magical world of yeast.

As you reach for your next glass of rum, I hope you will pause for a moment to appreciate the evolutionary path that led to the modern yeast and to all the wonders we are able to enjoy thanks to its *commitment* to alcohol production.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis'.

Luis Ayala, *Editor and Publisher*

**LinkedIn** <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](http://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!

## Bacardi Añejo Cuatro

During 2018 Bacardi released two new products Añejo Cuatro and Grand Reserva Diez. Both rums were created by Bacardi's team of Maestros de Ron who supervise the creation of all of Bacardi products.

The blend of rums that makes up Añejo Cuatro is distilled in Puerto Rico using their column still system, charcoal filtered, and aged in used American White Oak Bourbon Barrels for a minimum of four years. For the North American market, the rum is shipped to Jacksonville, Florida and bottled at 40% ABV.

### Appearance

The 750 mL bottle provides the basic information about the rum and the liquid is secured with the standard metal screw top. The rum has a bright amber color both in the bottle and glass.

Swirling the liquid creates a thick band around the glass that spins off and drops fast moving legs. After a good bit of time the rum began evaporating leaving behind a ring of large pebbles.

### Nose

When I poured the rum in the glass a strong spicy vanilla notes filled the air. After the rum settled I found notes of toffee, cloves, ginger, with a hint of charred oak tannins.

## Palate

The first sip delivered a swirl of sweet vanilla, alcohol, and bitter cloves that is smoothed out by a honey note. Additional sips reveal toffee, pencil lead, black pepper, and subtle cooked banana notes. As the rum begins to fade the caramelized vanilla note takes over with a dry baking spice twist in a medium fade.

## Review

At Tales of the Cocktail, I met with Bacardi representatives and they discussed that Cuatro was designed to be the first in the portfolio's age range that went beyond being used solely as a cocktail ingredient, but could be easily sipped as well.

While I thought the rum was a definite step up from Bacardi Gold, I am really not sure how well received it will be as a sipping rum. I have had a few Tiki and classic rum cocktails that used Cuatro and it seemed to work well across that spectrum.

Reasonably priced with a distinct Puerto Rican rum flavor profile, I think this is a good addition to the Bacardi portfolio.



www.bacardi.com

# THE ANGEL'S SHARE

by Paul Senft

## Havana Club Ritual

In 2018 my wife and I visited Cuba for the first time. Among the many souvenirs we brought home was a bottle of Havana Club Ritual. Originally released in March of 2012, this product was created for the Spanish rum market. This rum was engineered specifically to be used in the Cuba Libre cocktail. The company distills fermented molasses with a column still system. All rums from Cuba are aged a minimum of two years in used white oak casks. The rum is then filtered and put through a second maturation blending process before bottling. Havana Club Ritual is blended to 37.8% ABV and does not list a specific age range.

### Appearance

The 70 cl slender bottle has a metal screw top with a star centered just below its short neck. The front label features Havana's famous oceanfront Malecón and the basic information about the product is shared on both the front and back labels. In the bottle and glass the rum has a bright amber color with gold highlights.

Swirling the liquid creates a thick band that spins off thin fast moving legs, then a second wave of thicker slow moving legs drops before evaporating leaving behind a ring of beads.

### Nose

Pouring the rum releases a strong toffee note into the air. As the toffee aroma settles, I picked up the glass and discovered dark cacao, sweet prune, ripe tropical fruit, subtle spices, and old leather.

### Palate

The initial sip delivered a rush of sweet vanilla, cinnamon, and dark chocolate with a thick syrupy texture. Subsequent sips revealed brown sugar, black pepper, banana pudding, and old paper. As it begins to fade, the toffee note from the aroma takes over mingling and amplifying the spice notes before a mature tobacco note manifests and lingers in a medium bodied finish.

### Review

Before finishing the review I made a couple of Cuba Libres since the rum was engineered for that cocktail. The spices merged with the cola and lime flavors to create an enjoyable version of the drink. The tobacco note added an interesting twist bringing forward some of the earthier flavors in the drink.

This was my first deep dive in evaluating a Cuban rum and I was not disappointed. Some of the complex notes were buried deep in the flavor profile and were only revealed after several sips. I can understand why the tobacco note would be polarizing, but enjoyed the earthiness it brought to both the neat sip and the cocktail. Several of the markers from the texture to spice notes remind me of rums I have enjoyed from islands colonized by Spain. The next time we visit Cuba I will make sure to pick up another bottle, I do not think this one will last long.





[www.havana-club.com](http://www.havana-club.com)

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# COOKING WITH RUM

by Chef Susan Whitley



Hello, my name is Susan Whitley, I am passionate about great foods and beverages. I love finding recipes that incorporate my favorite ingredients and sharing the results with my friends and family.

Through this monthly column I will do my best to inspire you to incorporate the ***spirit of the tropics*** into your everyday cooking!

Sue@gotrum.com

## Eggnog Éclair Pie

### Ingredients

- 3/4 C. Water
- 1/4 C. Dark Rum
- 1/2 C. Butter
- 1 C. All-Purpose Flour
- 4 large Eggs

### Filling

- 1 (5.1 ounce) package Vanilla Instant Pudding
- 2 cups Old Fashioned Eggnog
- 2 Tbsp. Dark Rum
- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened

### Whipped Cream

- 1 C. Heavy Cream
- 1/3 C Powdered Sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Vanilla Extract
- 1/2 tsp. Rum Extract

### Topping

- 2-3 Crushed Candy Canes

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 400 F. Lightly grease a 9" x 13" glass baking pan.

For the Eclair Crust: In a medium saucepan, melt butter in water and bring to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in the rum and then the flour. Mix in one egg at a time, mixing completely before adding another egg. Spread mixture into pan, covering the bottom and sides slightly.

Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool.

For the Filling: In a large bowl, beat the pudding mix, eggnog and dark rum with a hand mixer. Add the cream cheese and beat until combined and smooth. When the crust is completely cooled, pour filling in and spread into an even layer.

For the Whipped Cream: In a large bowl, whip cream, powdered sugar and extracts until soft peaks form. Spread whipped cream on top of pudding mixture.

Sprinkle crushed candy canes on top. Chill until ready to serve. Cut into squares to serve.



Photo credit: [www.the-girl-who-ate-everything.com](http://www.the-girl-who-ate-everything.com)

## Eggnog Éclair Cake

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. Cream Cheese (softened)
- 2 C. Cold Whole Milk
- 3.4 oz. Vanilla Flavor Instant Pudding
- ½ tsp. Rum Extract
- ¼ tsp. Ground Nutmeg
- 8 oz. Cool Whip Whipped Topping (thawed, divided)
- 70-80 Vanilla Wafers (divided)
- 2 oz. Semi-Sweet Chocolate

### Directions:

Beat cream cheese in large bowl with mixer until creamy. Gradually beat in milk. Add dry pudding mix, extract and nutmeg; beat 2 min. Gently stir in 1-1/2 cups Cool Whip.

Line a 9" x 5" loaf pan with plastic wrap. Arrange 15 wafers, top sides down, on bottom of pan; cover with 1/4 of the pudding mixture. Repeat layers 3 times. Top with 15 of the remaining wafers. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

Invert dessert onto plate; remove plastic wrap. Microwave chocolate and 1 cup of the remaining Cool Whip in microwavable bowl on High for 25 seconds; stir until chocolate is completely melted and mixture is well blended. Cool 1 min. Pour over dessert. Garnish with the remaining Cool Whip and wafers.



Photo credit: [www.kraftrecipes.com](http://www.kraftrecipes.com)







FROM

SUGAR

Into

Alcohol

## Q: What is Fermentation?

The simplest answer is that fermentation is *the transformation of sugars into alcohols by yeast or other micro organisms*. In reality however, entire industries exist thanks to fermentation and what it is capable of producing in the food, beverage, biofuel and medical fields. Enormous budgets are spent each year worldwide, studying its processes and searching for ways to improve them. The study of fermentation is so important that it even has its own name: **zymology**.

Despite having a science dedicated to its study, many questions about fermentation still remain unanswered. Questions such as:

- Why did yeast develop the ability to ferment sugars into alcohol in the first place?
- What is the evolutionary future of yeast?

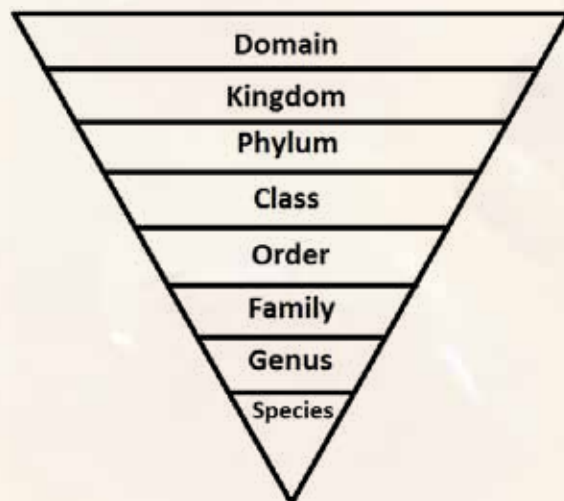
For us in the distilled spirits industry, fermentation represents a key transformation of raw materials: neither our distilleries nor our products would exist without it!

In order to fully understand the importance and impact of fermentation in rum production, we must start by taking a closer look at the organisms responsible for it: yeast.

Yeast are a species of single-celled organisms from the **fungi kingdom**. Currently there are about 1,500 species of yeast identified, most of which are in the **phylum Ascomycota** (also known as “sac fungi” for their sac-like structure), only a few being **Basidiomycota**. Yeast are found worldwide in soils and on plant surfaces and are especially abundant in sugary mediums such as flower nectar and fruits. There are hundreds of economically important varieties of ascomycete yeast; the types commonly used in the production of bread, beer, and wine are selected strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

Some yeast are mild to dangerous pathogens of humans and other animals, especially *Candida albicans*, *Histoplasma* and *Blastomyces*.

The sac fungi are separated into subgroups based on whether asci (the sexual spore-bearing cell) arise singly or are borne in one of several types of fruiting structures, or ascocarps, and on the method of discharge of the ascospores. Many ascomycetes are plant pathogens, some are animal pathogens, a few are edible mushrooms, and many live on dead organic



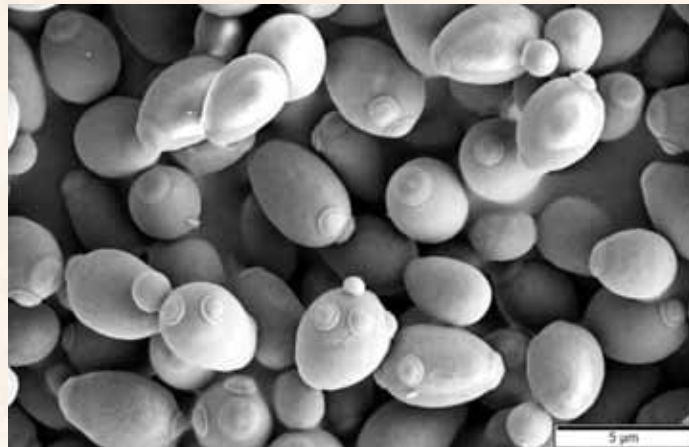


matter (as saprobes). The largest and most commonly known ascomycetes include the morel and the truffle. Other ascomycetes include important plant pathogens, such as those that cause powdery mildew of grape (*Uncinula necator*), Dutch elm disease (*Ophiostoma ulmi*), chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*), and apple scab (*Venturia inaequalis*). But perhaps the most indispensable fungus of all is an ascomycete, the “common yeast” (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*), whose varieties leaven the dough in bread-making and ferment grain or sugars to produce alcoholic beverages.

One of the most prominent features of *S. cerevisiae* is its ability to rapidly convert sugars to ethanol and carbon dioxide at both anaerobic and aerobic conditions. Under aerobic conditions, respiration is possible with oxygen as the final electron acceptor, but *S. cerevisiae* exhibits alcoholic fermentation until the sugar reaches a low level, thanks to its glucose repression mechanism. This phenomenon is called the Crabtree effect, and the yeast expressing this trait are said to be “Crabtree-positive”.

On the other hand, “Crabtree-negative” yeast lack fermentative products and, under aerobic conditions, biomass and carbon dioxide are their only output. It is interesting to point out that science does not yet know if the glucose repression mechanism was the original step to promote evolution of the Crabtree effect, or if it is the result of the evolution of some yeast lineages.

The Crabtree positive yeast, such as *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, prefer fermentation to respiration, even under fully aerobic conditions. The selective pressures that drove the evolution of this trait remain controversial because of the low ATP yield of fermentation compared to that of respiration (ATP or Adenosine triphosphate is a molecule that plays a key role in metabolism, particularly in energy transfer within cells). The rate advantage of fermentation over aerobic respiration is insufficient to provide an overall growth advantage. Thus, the rapid consumption of glucose and the utilization of ethanol are essential for the success of the aerobic fermentation strategy for the yeast, suggesting that selection derived from competition with bacteria could have provided the impetus for the evolution of the Crabtree positive trait.



Electron microscope photograph of *S. cerevisiae*, by Mogana Das Murtey and Patchamuthu Ramasamy

Join us again next month, as we continue our deep-dive into this fascinating world!



# THE MUSE OF MIXOLOGY

by Cris Dehlavi



My name is Cris Dehlavi and I am a native of Arizona, but have lived in Columbus, Ohio for the past 13 years with my daughter, Desi. I have been running the bar program at "M", of the Cameron Mitchell Restaurant group since 2005. I am currently the President of Columbus USBG as well as a consultant for bars and restaurants nationally.

In 2013, I attended the rigorous B.A.R. 5 Day Spirits Certification and have been recognized as one of the top mixologists in the U.S.A. I am one of the senior managers of the prestigious apprentice program at Tales of the Cocktail and work as a mentor to many bartenders around Ohio.


My contribution to Got Rum ? magazine will include everything from reviews of national cocktail events, articles on mixology, garnish trends, recipes and techniques, to interviews with some of the leading bartenders in the industry.

## Corn and Oil

The name, Corn and Oil, certainly doesn't *sound* appetizing, and I don't know about you, but I definitely don't want oil in my drink!! This classic Tiki cocktail, however, is delicious, and not one I often have the pleasure of making. Last week a guest at my bar ordered it from one of my fellow bartenders, and he came over to me and said "Oh my gosh this lady just ordered a drink with corn and oil in it, what do I do ???" Fortunately for the guest, I knew what was in it and didn't run to the kitchen to get an ear of corn and some extra virgin olive oil.

The name Corn and Oil refers to the use of dark, blackstrap rum, which has the look of crude oil. The history of this cocktail is murky (much like the look of the drink) but it likely originated in Barbados. Blackstrap rum often gets a bad rap..... it doesn't have an official category in the world of rum or the TTB, and it's black color certainly does not come from years of ageing in a barrel. Even a rum aged for 40 years would not be black as oil. The idea behind it is to taste like molasses, but if you have ever had real molasses, which is thick and moderately sweet, blackstrap rum is definitely not the same. Blackstrap rum (most commonly





the brand Cruzan), is much sweeter, and yet has vegetal and herbal notes to it, combined with ginger, licorice, and molasses. There are many rum lovers out there that dislike blackstrap rum but in certain cocktails I must admit I love it. (Sorry Chad). In Martin Cate's book *Smuggler's Cove*, the Corn and Oil recipe calls for blended, aged, Barbados rum.

Falernum is the second ingredient in the Corn and Oil cocktail, and one of my favorite bottles behind the bar. Falernum is a rum based liqueur, with flavors of clove, almond, lime, ginger, and allspice. It is common in many Tiki cocktails, and is versatile enough to be used with many spirits, including bourbon and gin. The most common brand is John D. Taylor, but I also really love the Falernum made by Maggie's Farm in Pittsburgh.

So..... how do you make a Corn and Oil? If you Google it, you will find many variations on the recipe so I will give you mine. I encourage you to make it with Blackstrap rum, because the rich and robust flavor makes this a delicious and complex tasting drink. However, if you must, you can also switch it out for a dark rum. As I always say, rum is such a vast category, it is hard to pick just one to use. You can set out 10 dark rums and they all have unique qualities and flavor profiles. I have made this cocktail also with Myers, Angostura 7 and Gosling's Blackseal which all work great and make for a wonderful cocktail.



### CORN AND OIL

- 2 oz. Cruzan Blackstrap Rum (or whichever dark rum you prefer)
- ½ oz. Maggie's Farm Falernum
- ½ oz. Fresh Lime Juice

Build all ingredients in a rocks glass, stir, and fill with ice. I prefer to use cracked ice rather than crushed. Some recipes will tell you to use crushed ice but it will dilute the ingredients very quickly. Top the cocktail with 2 dashes of Angostura bitters and garnish with a twist of lime.

Cris



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Welcome to The Rum University Library. In addition to the material found on our official website, we also periodically publish on "Got Rum?" reviews of books on topics including fermentation, distillation, aging, mixology and many more. You can also find additional valuable material at

[www.RumUniversity.com](http://www.RumUniversity.com)

## Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD) of Sugarcane

(Publisher's Review): "Sugarcane is the oldest energy source for human beings and more recently is a replacement of fossil fuel for motor vehicles. World wide in 107 countries, sugarcane cultivation occupies an area of 20.42 million ha with a total production of 1333 million ton.

At present, there is an appreciable gap between cane and sugar yield of plant and ratoon crops. There is an urgent need to elucidate behavioral differences between the productivity gaps.

This book provides complete scientific information of an important bacterial sugarcane disease (Ratoon Stunting Disease), which is the major cause of ratoon failure in the world. Due to this approach (in the form of this book), plant pathologist can identify the disease and can develop control measures.

This book will be good addition for sugarcane scientist for identification, isolation, characterization and screening of sugarcane varieties against bacterial disease. Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD) is a bacterial disease of sugarcane and is considered one of the potentially dangerous diseases of sugarcane. RSD is an important seed-piece transmissible disease of sugarcane. This book provides complete data about RSD."



Syed Zia-ul-Hussnain  
Shahid Afghan  
Khalid Hussain

### RATOON STUNTING DISEASE (RSD) OF SUGARCANE

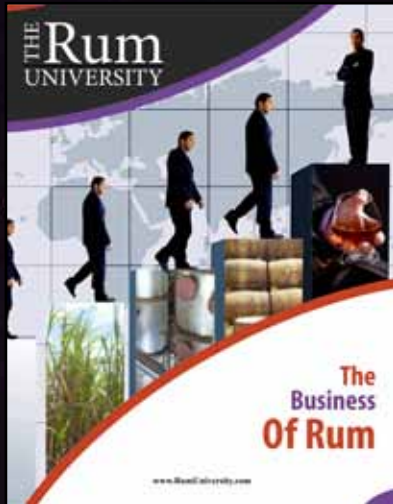
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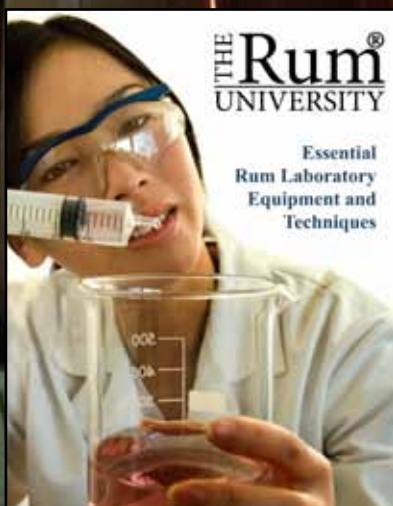
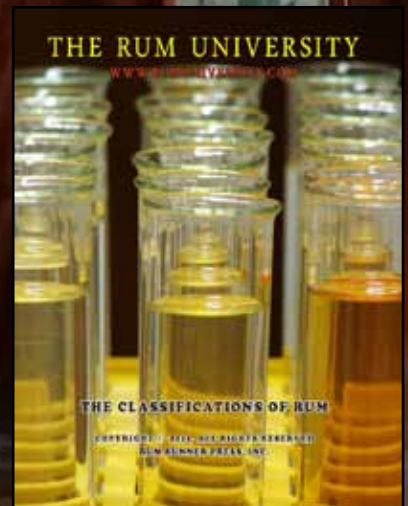
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# THE RUM BIOGRAPHY

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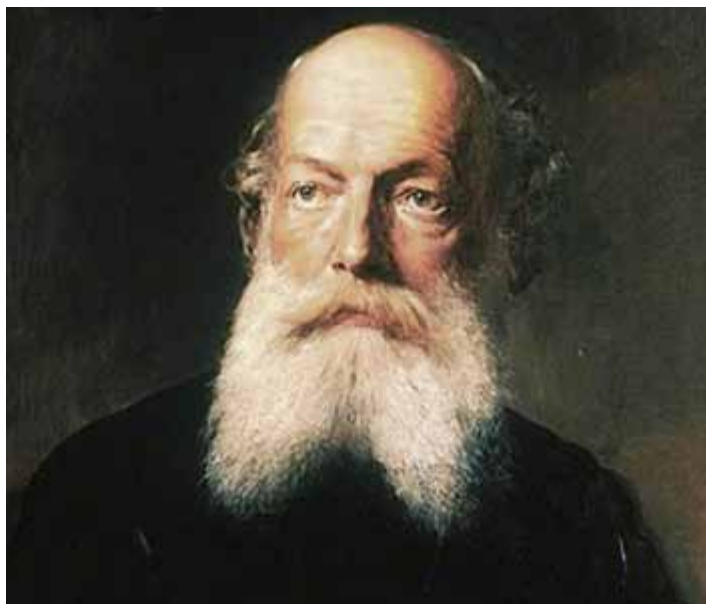
THE **Rum**<sup>®</sup>  
UNIVERSITY

The rum industry owes its present success to many people who, through their vision, wisdom, ingenuity and/or dedication, were able to innovate or improve existing processes. In this new series we will explore these individuals, to honor their memories and to –hopefully– inspire a new generation of game-changers.

### Featured Biography: August Kekule von Stradonitz

August Kekule von Stradonitz, whose original name was Friedrich August Kekulé, was born on Sept. 7, 1829 in Darmstadt, Hesse and died on July 13, 1896 in Bonn, Germany. He was a German chemist who is best known for establishing the foundation for the structural theory in organic chemistry.

Kekule was born into an upper-middle-class family of civil servants and as a schoolboy demonstrated an aptitude for art and languages, as well as science subjects. Intending to be an architect, he entered the nearby University of Giessen, but soon he was “seduced” (as he later expressed it) to the study of chemistry by the attractive teaching of Justus Liebig.



Kekule received a doctorate in 1852, but no teaching positions were immediately available, so he continued with postdoctoral work in Paris, Chur (Switzerland), and London. In Paris he formed friendships with Charles Gerhardt, from whose “type” theory of organic composition Kekule began to develop his own ideas, and with the important chemical theorist Charles-Adolphe Wurtz. In London he was particularly influenced by Alexander Williamson, who had recently begun to expand this type theory into what became an incipient understanding of atomic valence.

Early in 1856 Kekule moved to the University of Heidelberg, where he qualified as a lecturer and began to produce important research in organic chemistry. He had a prodigious memory for chemical details, a complete mastery of English and French in addition to his native German, and -most importantly- one of the most fruitful scientific imaginations of any scientist of his day. He was also energetic, intense, and a superb teacher. In 1858 he was called to the University of Ghent in Belgium, where he taught chemistry in French. Nine years later he was hired as a full professor and chairman of the chemistry department at the University of Bonn, where he took charge of a large new laboratory and where he remained for the rest of his career.

Kekule’s most important single contribution was his structural theory of organic composition, outlined in two articles published in 1857 and 1858 and treated in great detail in the pages of his extraordinarily popular *Lehrbuch der organischen Chemie* (“Textbook of Organic Chemistry”), the first installment of which appeared in 1859 and gradually extended to four volumes. Kekule argued that tetravalent carbon atoms could link together to form what he called a “carbon chain” or a “carbon skeleton,” to which



Lehrbuch

der

Organischen Chemie

oder der

Chemie der Kohlenstoffverbindungen

von

Dr. Aug. Kekulé,

o. Professor der Chemie an der Staatsuniversität zu Gent.

Erster Band.

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1861.

other atoms with other valences (such as hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and chlorine) could join. He was convinced that it was possible for the chemist to specify this detailed molecular architecture for at least the simpler organic compounds known in his day. Kekule was not the only chemist to make such claims in this era. The Scottish chemist Archibald Scott Couper published a substantially similar theory nearly simultaneously, and the Russian chemist Aleksandr Butlerov did much to clarify and expand structure theory. However, it was predominantly Kekule's ideas that prevailed in the chemical community.

Kekule is also famous for having clarified the nature of aromatic compounds, which are compounds based on the benzene molecule. Kekule's novel proposal for a cyclic benzene structure (1865) was much contested but was never replaced by a superior theory. This theory provided the scientific basis for the dramatic expansion of the German chemical industry in the last third of the 19th century. Today, the large majority of known organic compounds are aromatic, and all of them contain at least one hexagonal benzene ring of the sort that Kekule advocated.

In addition to his theoretical contributions, Kekule produced a large volume of original experimental work that considerably widened the scope of organic chemistry. His studies of unsaturated compounds, organic diacids, and aromatic derivatives were particularly noteworthy. He also led a significant research group, consisting of advanced students, postdoctoral workers, and junior colleagues, at both Ghent and Bonn. After the death of Liebig, Kekule was invited to succeed him at the University of Munich, but Kekule declined and suggested the name of his first doctoral student, Adolf von Baeyer. Baeyer was later to receive one of the first Nobel Prizes; his teacher did not live long enough for that.

In 1890 the 25th anniversary of Kekule's first benzene paper was marked by an elaborate celebration in his honour. This was the occasion when he publicly related the stories that have since become well known, about how the ideas for structure theory and benzene theory came to him while daydreaming or dozing. The first of these events happened, he said, on the upper deck of a horse-drawn London omnibus (if true, it was probably in the summer of 1855). The second occurred in his residence in Ghent (perhaps in early 1862) and involved a dream figure of a snake that seized its own tail in its mouth, giving him the idea for the benzene ring. However, the precise dating of these dreams, and even their very existence, has been contested.

#### **Did you know that...**

- ... Consistent and controlled fermentation and distillation would not be possible without a full understanding of organic chemistry.
- ... Organic chemistry is a highly creative science in which chemists develop new molecules and explore the properties of existing compounds.
- ... Organic compounds are all around us. The very foundations of biochemistry, biotechnology and medicine are built on organic compounds and their role in life processes.
- ... Organic chemists are responsible for the formulation of beverages ranging from fruit juices to Ready to Drink Cocktails (RTDs).



# THE RUM HISTORIAN

by Marco Pierini



**M**y name is Marco Pierini, I was born in 1954 in a little town in Tuscany (Italy) where I still live. I got a degree in Philosophy in Florence and I studied Political Science in Madrid, but my real passion has always been History. Through History I have always tried to know the world. Life brought me to work in tourism, event organization and vocational training. Then I discovered rum. With Francesco Rufini, I founded La Casa del Rum (The House of Rum), that runs a beach bar and selects Premium Rums in Italy, [www.lacasadelum.it](http://www.lacasadelum.it)

And finally I have returned back to my initial passion: History, but now it is the History of Rum. 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 has a terrible and fascinating history, made of slaves and pirates, imperial fleets and revolutions.

All this I try to cover in this column, in my FB Profile: [www.facebook.com/marco.pierini.3](https://www.facebook.com/marco.pierini.3) and in my new Blog: [www.therumhistorian.com](http://www.therumhistorian.com)

I have published a book on Amazon: *"AMERICAN RUM - A Short History of Rum in Early America"*.

AND IF IT WERE THE FRENCH  
CARIBBEAN THE FIRST CRADLE OF  
RUM?

### 3. THE BUSINESS OF DISTILLING IN FRANCE

In the first article of this series, "SAINT CHRISTOPHE, MARTINICA AND EAU-DE-VIE" published in the November issue of 2018, I stated that according to some documents, a commercial production of rum may have started in Saint-Christophe, Martinique and other French islands, a few years before it did in Barbados.

In the second article, "ADAM'S WILL", published in December, I maintained that in order to understand historic documents properly it is not sufficient to just read them. We have to contextualize them, that is, put them in their proper historical period. I also stated that in the 1620s and 1630s, when the French began to settle in the Caribbean, they knew America and its resources well. In particular, they had a long experience of travelling to and trading with Brazil, a great producer of sugar and where, at least from the beginning of





French ancient alambic

1600s, rum was produced too.

Now I want to delve further into another part of the historic context: when the French began to settle in the Caribbean, were they already familiar with commercial alcoholic distillation?

As far as I know, a scholarly work dedicated to the full history of alcoholic distillation in France does not exist and, as often when doing research on rum, distillation and alcohol, we have to look for evidence by perusing different and sparse sources. Having said this, let's start from the very beginning.

"Between about 1270 and 1285 news began to spread from Bologna through northern Italy and beyond concerning a marvelous new panacea called aqua vitae [water of life]", C. Anne Wilson writes in her interesting and innovative book, *"WATER OF LIFE. A History of Wine-Distilling*

*and Spirits 500 BC – AD 2000"* 2006. And later she writes "In the *Archives de l'Artois*, dating from 1308, an entry refers to burning water prepared on behalf of the daughters of the Countess Mahaut. It is listed among items for which payments are due from the Count of Artois, and it records: '20 sous, 10 deniers for wine which Master Girard bought to make *leau ardent* ...to care for our damoiselles." Probably this is the earliest evidence of alcoholic distillation in France.

Moreover, we know that at the court of the Popes in Avignon, scholars addressed the question of preserving health with water of life in the early decades of the 14th century, and that in 1330 Pope John 22nd had an alembic made to produce it.

This early production and consumption was, of course, for medical purposes. The passage to pleasure consumption and commercial production occurred first in



Enrico Vasari The Wedding of Caterina de' Medici and Enry of Valois

Italy, at the beginning of 1400 at the latest, as we can learn from the "*Libreto de Aqua Ardente*"- "Booklet of Burning Water" - written by Michele Savonarola in Ferrara, Italy between 1444 and 1450, possibly the first treatise entirely dedicated to water of life. There is no reason to think that in France it would happen much later. Actually, we know of the existence of a true professional corporation of distillers (*ayga ardentierius*) in Provence as early as 1411.

A few decades later, however, partly thanks to the invention of the printing press, works dedicated to water of life and to alcoholic distillation sprang up everywhere, especially in Italy and in Germany, and its production and consumption spread throughout Europe. I have not found further evidence in the France of 1400s, but probably simply because I have not looked hard enough.

In 1514, the French King Louis XII allowed the vinegar manufacturers' guild to distill spirits and, in 1537, King Francis I encouraged the same among wholesale grocers. By the mid-sixteenth century, French distillers organized themselves

into a separate guild, and distilled wine (brandy) soon became a beverage of more general use.

At the beginning of the 1500s, in Florence, the *Fonderia Medicea di Palazzo Pitti* (the Medicis' Foundry at Pitti Palace) was at the leading edge of the production of spirits of many kinds. When Caterina de' Medici in 1533 married the future King Henry II in Paris – the French discovered the virtues of Florentine liqueurs, which in Florence at the time were already served at the end of a meal, and in particular of "*rosoglio*". During Caterina's long Regency, the custom of drinking liqueurs spread rapidly in France.

According to G. Comet in "*L'eau-de-vie, naissance et premiers pas*" in La Rochelle, in 1559, an official declared that "le vin est médiocre, mais il est excellent pour faire de l'eau-de-vie' et les bateaux sur Londres emportent tonneaux de vin et battiques d'eau-de-vie." That means, more or less, "the wine is mediocre, but it is excellent for making water of life and the vessels to London import tuns of wine and barriques of water of life"

Let's read now some sentences from the fundamental book of Henriette de Bruyn Kops: "*A SPIRITED EXCHANGE The Wine and Brandy Trade between France and the Dutch Republic in its Atlantic Framework, 1600-1650*" (2007).

In that period, Holland was the most modern and technologically advanced country all over Europe. Their merchant fleet was by far the largest in the world, Amsterdam was the center of the world's trade and finance and the Dutch were the pioneers of commercial distillation on a large scale.

"Dutch brandy consumption has been documented as early as 1536, when tavern keepers were prohibited from selling it for consumption off the premises. ... the States of Holland started taxing 'all fired wines' in 1583, a sign that *brandewijn* consumption was high enough to warrant the revenuers' attention. By 1588, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Hoorn and Enkhuizen had resident distillers. The



Melchior Tavernier - View of Nantes - 1634

Dutch did not confine their operations to the distilling of wine into proper brandy, but knew how to distill '*jenever*' [gin] from a variety of raw materials, including beer, malt, wheat and barley. The step from brewing beer from grains to distilling wine, beer or grain into brandy was a natural one, and Dutch brewers quickly embraced the *brandewijn* industry. Rotterdam's distillers produced enough brandy by 1604 that they had a surplus that could be exported."

And from the Netherlands we have a lot of indisputable evidence about distillation and alcohol consumption. "By the mid-1580s, the brokers' guild had started to publish the commodity prices on the Amsterdam Bourse on a weekly basis. These '*Pryscouranten*' have thus far been used

in Dutch price history, but ... they also allow us to discern early modern consumer preferences. The sole sixteenth century survivor of the series [a single week in 1586] does not list any wines, but various French and Spanish wines and brandies were listed on a regular basis starting with the one remaining list of the first decade of the seventeenth century, dating 1609."

The trade with France was very important for the Dutch economy. "French brandy was listed from 1609 onwards, initially under the generic heading of 'French' brandy, but starting with the list of 1630 the French brandies were sold under their regional label. Brandy from Bordeaux and the Cognac area made the list in 1630, followed by those from Nantes from 25 April 1633 onwards."

“In the early part of the seventeenth century, a growing and increasingly well-to-do population plus the sailors of the mercantile and naval fleets expanded the Dutch consumer base and spurred the demand for wines and brandies from France. Specific conditions in local viticulture combined with technology imported by Dutch entrepreneurs – and especially those of Rotterdam – boosted the production of brandy in the region around Nantes and changed the nature of its alcohol supply.”

“The region around Nantes itself produced inferior wines that most contemporaries considered to be undrinkable. Sometime before 1600, Dutch entrepreneurs figured out that this poor white wine was the perfect and cheap raw material for brandy-liquor distilled from wine.. ... Anthonie Casteleyn [*Quisthlin* or *Chastelin* in the French records] from Dordrecht must have arrived in Nantes well before 1609. That year the holder of a royal brandy monopoly complained about Casteleyn’s five stills near the bridge at ‘Pillerny’, his illegal export of 40 barrels of brandy to La Rochelle and about his Dutch assistant, a barrel cooper named Adrien.”

“Nantes had always been a transshipment point for the quality wines coming down the upper Loire valley from Anjou and Orleans, but it is significant that the first mention of Nantes as a center of Dutch efforts to produce exportable alcohol concerns brandy (*eau-de-vie*) instead of wines. The wines of the lower Loire area were deemed barely fit for human consumption but they made fine brandy. The Dutch introduced and commercialized the technology which distilled the Nantes wines into excellent brandy, a highly drinkable and thus marketable product. Some of this ‘*gevuerde wijn*’ [fired wine] was in turn used to fortify weak wines so that they lasted longer.”

“The French government recognized this development as early as 1605 when King Henri IV granted Isaac Bernard, one of his court officials, a ten-year monopoly on the transport of brandies from Nantes destined for export.”

In 1631, Nantes exported 1,382 tons of brandy and in the same year Dutch entrepreneurs shipped to Nantes 235 stills. Other 10 stills were imported by other entrepreneurs. Total: 245 brandy stills from the Netherlands in that year alone, transported by 29 ships. This is an early example of delocalization. “When Dutch merchants imported 235 brandy stills into Nantes in 1631, they did so in order to control the production of brandy at the source of the raw material, to achieve a vertical integration of the brandy trade, to reduce their costs and maximize their profit. In the process they transformed Nantes’ regional economy.” Thirty-three Dutch and seven French vessels participated in the brandy trade by either importing stills or exporting the finished product.

It is important to emphasize that Nantes was only one of the French ports from which French brandy was exported, and the Dutch were not the only importers. For instance, a scholar has estimated that in 1628-29 Bayonne and Saint Jean-de-Luz exported about 250 tons of brandy and in the mid-1640s the Dutch alone exported about 3,000 oxheads of brandy from Bordeaux, where an oxhead was about 200/250 liters. More, “In 1631, the city of Hamburg imported 3,801 tons of wine plus 242 tons of brandy from Nantes on 87 ships. All the brandy was imported by five French ships: 119 tons of brandy from Nantes, 88 tons from the upstream Loire region, plus another 35 tons of brandy from Anjou for a total of 242 tons.”

This is enough. In conclusion, in the 1620s and 1630s, when the French settled in the Caribbean, they already had a long and successful experience of producing and exporting *eau-de-vie de vin*, water of life from wine, in a large commercial scale. Or, to say it in another way, in the 1620s and 1630s the business of distilling had been well established in France for some time.

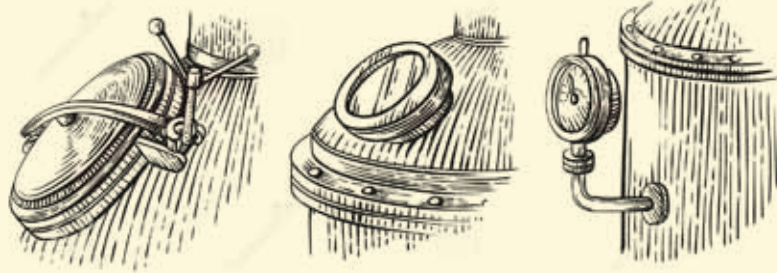
Marco Pierini





# RUM CENTRAL

## EQUIPMENT MARKETPLACE



### Available for Immediate Shipping:

10,000 liter (2,650 gallon), used Chalvignac copper pot still, designed for distilling Brandy or High-Congener (heavy) Rum.

This is a large, traditional onion-shaped copper pot/kettle with an onion-shaped copper hat and a copper swan's neck. It also features:

- New machine-welded, insulated boiler pedestal with stainless steel access stair and ramp.
- New valves, gauges and copper parrot (alcohol meter holder).
- New gas burner, latest generation, efficient and safe.
- New cabling, exhaust chimney and electric installation.
- New heating management cabinet.
- New condenser with new coils and exhaust piping.

If ordering new, the manufacturer's turnaround time would be 11-12 months, but you can get this beauty shipped to you in about a month and for 25% less than the cost of a new one. Don't delay, act now, there is only one available and it will not be around for long.



Photo shows similar still, not the actual one for sale

For additional information, please send an e-mail to: [marketplace@rumcentral.com](mailto:marketplace@rumcentral.com), subject line "Chalvignac Used Pot Still" and include your name, company name and phone number.

# RUM IN THE NEWS

by Mike Kunetka



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](mailto:Mike@gotrum.com).

## BACARDI

As part of their efforts to push their new premium rums, Bacardi has hired Black Panther star Michael B Jordan to co-direct a new film, *Angel's Share*. The film, co-directed by Jordan and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Paul Hunter, follows three characters: Carlos, a rum master blender; Isabel, a bartender in a Caribbean bar; and Santiago, meant to be a member of the original Bacardi family. Each tell a story revolving around the angels' share, a term for the amount of spirit which is lost while it is aged in barrels. Roberto Ramirez Laverde, Vice President of Bacardi North America, said: "We first connected with Michael last year when he attended No Commission, our art platform in partnership with The Dean Collection. Watching Michael on set during the shoot was amazing. He has an eye for storytelling and was extremely adept at bringing the story to life." "This is an exciting time for rum, and as a rum guy, I knew I had to be a part of this project," Jordan said. "I think rum is timeless. It's always been there and it's always been consistent." The

drinks giant launched Bacardi Añejo Cuatro and Bacardi Gran Reserva Diez in April this year, as well as repackaging private family blend Bacardi Reserva Ocho. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAYavks3kro>

### FRED MINNICK'S BEST RUMS OF 2018

Fred Mininick, Sprints Contributor to Forbes Magazine, Editor-in-Chief of the new Bourbon+ magazine and author of last year's great book Rum Curious, came up with his list of the best rums of 2018. Here are his choices and comments:

- Foursquare Premise – “Foursquare is simply on a roll. The distillery releases the best rums year in and year out. This beautiful spice-forward rum exudes an in-your-face style more aligned with cask strength styles than 92 proofers.”
- Foursquare 2005 – “This is quite simply one of the best spirits in the world. In the same league as its predecessors—2004 and 2006—Foursquare 2005 is a complex beast with flavors pouring out of the palate”
- Appleton 21 year old – “Beautiful opening notes of baking spices, including clove, cardamom and nutmeg. Then a steady dose of molasses, bacon, maple syrup and crème brulee. It finishes long with a hint of sugar maple char.”
- St. Lucia Distillers 17 year old John Dore – “It starts with mint, basil and rich molasses. Then, it's tapioca, bananas and baked apples. On the palate, it really comes alive, just zinging the palate with spice and peppermint”
- Caroni 2000, 100 proof – “Spirits lovers will love this: pepper, anise, blueberries, bread, floral, honey, earth, funk and earth. It's rangy and everything about the unique flavors of rum you hope to find.”
- Appleton 30 year old – “Absolutely amazing. This rum features coffee, hazelnut, taffy, chocolate, coconut, almond, walnut and more. It's absolutely stunning.”
- Transcontinental Guadeloupe 2013 – “This is on the sweeter side with a bit of funk and just enough kick. It's bringing honey, marzipan, cinnamon, butterscotch, pepper, banana, licorice and pie crust.”
- Transcontinental Fiji 2014 – “Lots of funk. In fact, get on that funky ride, with hints of peanut butter, clove, Jamaican jerk, nutmeg and apples. I can't say this enough.... this is funky.”
- Barrell Craft Spirits Rum, 124.2 Proof – “Blended in the United States, this is a

blend of stocks from Jamaica, Guyana and Barbados. It begins with chocolate, oak, coconut and molasses. Then its beautiful mouthfeel takes you down a flavor highway that walks a line between smoke, savory and sweet.”

- Richland Rum Cask Strength – “Richland's new charred oak style is quite evident. It noses similarly to a bourbon, with hints of oak, caramel, butterscotch and vanilla”. [www.fredminnick.com](http://www.fredminnick.com)

### DRAKES ORGANIC SPIRITS

Drake's Organic Spirits announced today that it has signed a distribution agreement with Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits, the world's pre-eminent distributor of beverage alcohol, that will make Drake's award-winning premium organic vodka, white rum and other products available in multiple states throughout the country. Drake's is the first and only spirit line in the world with all five health certifications. “We are excited to partner with Southern Glazer to rapidly expand our organic spirits line. Distribution is key for new brands to effectively reach consumers. This agreement will introduce Drake's around the country and communicate our brand's unique story,” said Drake's CEO and Founder Mark Anderson. “As the only certified organic, non-GMO Project Verified, gluten-free, vegan and kosher vodka and rum in the world, Drake's meets the growing consumer demand for health and wellness in every aspect of daily life.” Anderson added “The beverage alcohol industry is experiencing the same sea change of consumer preferences we have seen play out in food and other consumables over the last decade. This national partnership positions Drake's and Southern Glazer to be the first to meet the overwhelming consumer demand for these certified products.” Drake's has also expanded internationally into Puerto Rico, Canada, Guam, China and the Philippines. Proceeds from the sale of Drake's Organic Spirits help support Long Lake Animal Rescue, an animal rescue foundation that takes in animals in need of a second chance at life. Minneapolis-based Drake's Organic Spirits was launched in 2017. Drake's uses the highest quality USDA organic and non-GMO Project Verified ingredients to create a line of ultra- premium spirits. Drake's Organic Vodka, Drake's Organic White Rum and Drakes Organic Spiced Rum offer no grain, no gluten, no GMO, ultra-premium, 12-times distilled handcrafted spirits at a better price than the leading premium brands. [www.drakesorganicspirits.com](http://www.drakesorganicspirits.com)

## WESTER SPIRITS

Glasgow's first rum distillery in more than three centuries has arrived, Wester Spirit Co. Named after the original Wester sugar house in Candleriggs founded in the 17th century, the firm hopes to put the city back on the map for the much-loved spirit. Zander MacGregor teamed up with Allan Nairn last year to deliver their very own craft spiced rum, infused with nine delicious natural flavors, including ginger, orange peel, lime zest, star anise and nutmeg. Macgregor said: 'After working tirelessly to turn the original, blank-canvas industrial unit into a fully functioning, innovative rum distillery in the heart of Glasgow's West End, this gives us the opportunity to spread the news of, and our passion for, Scottish rum on a bigger scale. We have experienced such tremendous growth since inception in 2017, we're excited to begin collaborating and experimenting with other brands to grow our product range and develop our ampersand concept in the months that follow. The Limited Edition Batch 001 bottles are unique and numbered, sealed with a wax top, to mark the first time rum is flowing in Glasgow in over 300 years. [www.westerspirit.com](http://www.westerspirit.com)

## RUM JOURNAL'S RUM AWARDS

The Rum Journal, part of the popular blog The Caribbean Journal, just completed its seventh annual rum judging. This year's slate of winners is as impressive as ever, hailing from across the Caribbean and the United States and demonstrating, again, the wonder of the world of rum. But remember, as they like to say at Rum Journal, the best rum in the world is the rum that's in your glass right now.

- Rum of the Year: Havana Club Seleccion de Maestros, Cuba - Havana Club's Seleccion de Maestros, bottled at a robust 45 degrees, is a blend of reserve-stock rums, brought together by the company's master rum makers. This is a delicate, luxurious rum that just kept holding up after repeated tasting, one that is consistent from start to finish and that simply begs you to pour another glass. Plainly, it's an exquisite rum. [www.havana-club.com](http://www.havana-club.com)
- Rhum Agricole of the Year: JM Multimillesime, Martinique - A "Multimillesime," or multiple-vintage, that blends the vintages of 2002, 2007 and 2009 into one of the greatest rum agricoles you will ever try. It's a true masterpiece, a must for any collector, an extraordinary spirit, and from a distillery like JM, that really says something. <http://www.rhum-jm.com>
- Best New Rum: One Drop, Harbour Island, Bahamas - Toby Tyler, the master blender behind Afrohead, is at it again, this time with a blend of 10-year-old and 12-year-old Jamaican juice. The result is a rum (hand-bottled on Harbour Island) that is delightfully drinkable, with a fruit-forward flavor profile and a funky but velvety finish.
- Best New Rhum Agricole: Rhum Depaz Cuvee Victor Depaz, Martinique - a blend of rums aged for three and four years in American oak, so something that's effectively a mix of VO and VSOP rums. The result? Something surprisingly special, a bit smoother around the edges than most of Depaz's stuff (at 40 degrees), with notes of vanilla and candied fruit and grilled pineapple, with another level of drinkability for the brand. <http://www.depazrhum.com/>
- Rum Company of the Year: St Lucia Distillers - St Lucia Distillers consistently puts out a world-class range of expressions that is as authentically made as it is diverse. And it's the latter that is perhaps most impressive: whether you're trying the locally-popular Bounty Gold Rum, the Chairman's Reserve Forgotten Cask, Admiral Rodney or 1931, every marque is unique. <http://www.saintluciarums.com/>
- Best White Rum: Koloa Kua'i White Rum, Hawaii - This white rum is unusually good. There's just something remarkably clean about this cooper pot-still rum, something beyond the smoothness and the cane and-citrus-zest notes. It's best used in a daiquiri, but it could hold its own on the rocks, too, the true test of any white rum. <https://koloarum.com/>
- Best White Rum Agricole: A1710 La Perle Brute, Martinique - In a small plantation in the northeast of Martinique, a tiny distillery is quietly reinventing the world of white rum agricole. The brand's latest expression is yet another stunner: the 66-degree, simultaneously robust, funky, sophisticated, elegant La Perle Brute that is a journey right into the cane itself. [www.rhum-a1710.com](http://www.rhum-a1710.com)
- Best Spiced Rum: Clifton Estate, Nevis - Mark Theron has produced a delightful, honest, truly Caribbean spiced rum that simply wowed the folks at Rum Journal this year. It's got some punch, but it's also got the smoothness that so many spiced rums typically lack, making it, yes, sippable <http://www.cliftonestaterums.com/>



- Best Gold Rum: Island Company Rum, Trinidad – It’s an eminently drinkable expression that’s quintessentially Trini, but also a bit smoother and refined, perfect for cocktails but one that can hold its own neat, something that can’t be said for the vast majority of “gold” rums. [www.islandcompanyrum.com](http://www.islandcompanyrum.com)
- Best Overproof Rum: Sunset Very Strong Rum, St Vincent and the Grenadines - Bottled at 169 proof, St Vincent Distillers’ overproof masterwork is powerful to be sure, but also smooth, so smooth that the locals in Kingstown will promise you there’s no hangover in the morning. <http://www.sunsetrum.com>
- Best Bottle Design: Rhum Dillon Farandole - Rhum Dillon’s inspired, beautiful painted scenes of traditional culture and rum life in Martinique, with winding yellow stripes and multi-color sketches of rum lovers, it’s almost too beautiful to drink. Almost. [www.rhums-dillon.com](http://www.rhums-dillon.com)
- Rum Person of the Year: Gregory Vernant, Rhum Neisson, Martinique - The man behind Neisson is CEO Gregory Neisson, who has been thrusting a historic distillery into the 21st century, making world-class rums and breaking new ground, too, whether he’s experimenting with different barrel char patterns or, more notably, launching the Caribbean’s first certified organic rum. <http://www.neisson.fr/>

### SEBAGO LAKE DISTILLERY

Sebago Lake Distillery just released its fourth offering, Barrel Rested Portland Rum. Sebago has had success with its three other rums, Sebago lake Original Rum, KOPI Coffee Flavored Rum and Spider Island Rum. The Original Rum incorporates a blend of five carefully selected aromatics and a special Caramel infusion to give its distinctive color and amazingly fragrant notes. KOPI Coffee Flavored Rum uses custom roasted Indonesian Sumatra for a subtle coffee flavor that is intended not to cover up the rum, but to simply enhance it. Spider Island Rum is molasses forward and, like a very old whiskey, finishes with a wee bit of heat on the fat part of your tongue. Sebago Lake’s Head Distiller, Dan Davis, described the Barrel Rested Portland Rum as a “new rum with an old soul.” Davis added, “The spirit has all the oaky goodness of old Bourbon, some spiciness from the Rye that formerly inhabited the barrels, and the full mouthfeel and caramel goodness you would expect from this 100% pot still rum. While the

rum has been aging patiently in barrels for over a year, we have been impatiently waiting for its awakening. We are thrilled to say, the rum has aged perfectly and we are now ready to share this distinct, handcrafted spirit with our fans and inquisitive consumers.” Sebago Lake Distillery, located in Gardiner, ME, crafts only high quality rums, in small batches, sourced from the best ingredients. Each step of the process, mashing, fermenting and distilling, is executed from scratch at the distillery and every batch is tasted and refined to create superior quality rums that can be enjoyed neat, over ice or mixed in classic or contemporary cocktails. Sebago Lake Distillery and its rum brands are the creation of five long time friends: Dave Tomer, CEO; Dan Davis, Distiller; Brock Tredway, COO; Allen Tait, CFO; and John Tyler, Sales and Investor Relations. [www.sebagolakedistillery.com](http://www.sebagolakedistillery.com)

### NUSA CANA

Nusa Cana is a blended rum founded in 2016 by four friends with serious beverage experience: Andy Gaunt, Joe Milner and Marc Rodrigues, former Diageo executives, and bartender and consultant Sam Jevons. Inspired by Indonesia’s long distilling heritage and 8,000-year association with sugarcane, the team wanted to create a new rum that re-connected the country to an era in the 17th and 18th centuries when the majority of sugarcane spirit consumed in Europe’s punch houses and taverns was Indonesian arrack, not Caribbean rum. Nusa Cana has Batavian arrack at its heart, one of the few Indonesian arracks based on sugar molasses, and is distilled on Java (Batavia is the colonial name for Jakarta), according to Chinese distilling traditions. According to Drink Magazine, molasses, water and fermented red rice cakes, plus yeast, are added to 20-litre clay jars (the cakes act as a fermentation starter, similar to the qu used for Chinese baijiu), then that wash transferred to another jar and more fermented rice added. This long, multi-stage fermentation generates plenty of congeners. It is distilled twice in steel Chinese pot stills before being matured in large, teak casks to give the rum a “drier” finish. This Indonesian spirit is then blended with fine Caribbean rums to produce Nusa Cana. Bottled at 37.5% abv, Nusa Caña Rum is available in Indonesia and now in the UK through sales, marketing and distribution agency Craftwork. <http://www.nusacana.com/>

# EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

by Margaret Ayala



Mr. Karthik Sudhir, Founder and CEO of Phenomenal Spirits

It gives me great pleasure to share this interview with all our readers. Central American rums are considered nowadays to be low-congener, column-rectified and very neutral. But this was not always the case. Ron Izalco embodies a return to a time when rum was more flavorful and rich, akin to a sugarcane brandy. Mr. Sudhir has done a great job and I wish him and his team much success!

Margaret Ayala, Publisher



**Q: Please state your full name, title, company name and company location.**

My name is Karthik Sudhir, Founder and CEO of Phenomenal Spirits, Inc. based out of Laguna Beach, California, USA.

**Q: Why did you want to get in the alcohol beverage business and what made you decide to start with rum over other spirits?**

It's a tough and easy question both. It's tough because we spend a lifetime trying to figure out what is that we are passionate about and what is our actual identity as such. It all becomes easy when you know exactly what you are passionate about and what is that gets you excited every time you wake up in the morning. I'm really blessed and fortunate enough to



know that spirits is something I'm really passionate about. This industry is a lifestyle industry and I'm 100% in my zone. Also, this provides the platform to tell my story through our consumers while they are drinking and experiencing phenomenal spirits. I can't think of a better way to share my story through people's joy and moments. That is why I choose the spirits industry.

Also growing up in India, Kingfisher Beer was the most iconic beer brand and their catchy marketing tagline was "king of good times". I have some of the fondest memories celebrating and drinking beers with my friends and family. The brand is so popular that it is still a household name. When I started my own spirits company, I took inspiration from this iconic brand. Phenomenal Spirits is all about Phenomenal Spirits for Phenomenal People for Phenomenal Moments.

Why rum? Great question! Besides the fact that I absolutely love rum, rum is very much underrated. Let me explain....

Timing is everything in life and in business. I sincerely believe the time for premiumization for Rum is coming. We are probably about 2-3 years away before we start riding the amazing rum wave in North America and world-wide. Look, Vodka had its moments in 2000's and thanks to Sidney Frank's efforts and his genius Grey Goose brand for premiumizing the white spirit. The current decade of 2010's is all about Tequila and Bourbon. These two spirits categories are experiencing high single digit and, in some cases, double digit growth. Tequila premiumization efforts were driven by Don Julio, Patron's Paul DeJoria, Herradura and many others followed. Similarly, in the Bourbon industry, Jim Beam, Brown-Foreman, Heaven Hill and





many other legendary companies have done a stellar job on driving the bourbon category into premiumization zone.

Premiumization does not happen by chance, it's a deliberate effort. We are already seeing prominent spirits companies investing heavily into the Rum Category. Constellation Brands recently acquired stakes in The Real McCoy rum. Bacardi released Ocho and Gran Reserva Diez expressions which are an 8-year and 10-year aged rum targeting for the premium market. Bacardi also went on to acquire Bank's Island blend rum. Edrington is betting big on Brugal 1888 and their marketing theme "A rum made to sip". Besides these, Stolli Vodka's parent company SPI Group acquired Bayou Rum and Domain Select bought Atlantico Rum Company. The heavy weights of the spirits industry are aggressively trying to fill the gap they have in their Super Premium Rum portfolio. Again, these are all proofs of deliberate efforts and I believe this trend will continue for the next foreseeable future.

All these factors, combined with my love for rum was the main reason why I started with Rum as the first super premium product for Phenomenal Spirits.

Ron Izalco is perfectly poised to be one of the most Super Premium and Ultra-Premium rum's in the market place. We cannot be more excited for the days ahead of us and we are diligently working on developing our brand.

**Q: I'm sure you faced many challenges and had to do a lot of research and learning about the industry prior to launching your rum. What are some of the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?**

To be perfectly honest, I didn't even know where to begin. So, I started by researching on distillation courses and spirits degrees. Through my research, I found Moonshine University in Louisville, Kentucky. This institute is specifically geared for people



like me who are trying to cross over into the spirits industry. So, I went ahead and attended the “Spirits Distillation Certification” course. That opened many avenues and then I went back again to take the “Route to Market for Spirits” certification. The following year I went to American Distilling Institute to learn “spirits blending, aging techniques, barrel selection and nose fault detection program” led by the incredibly talented Master Blender, Nancy Fraley. Same year I continued my education by touring several craft and big distilleries and probably read about 8 different distilling and blending books. All this knowledge building and curiosity opened opportunities to meet spirits industry professionals through alumni network. Once I started developing sincere relationships with them, I put together the vision and business plan for Phenomenal Spirits and the rest is history. It took me a full 24 months, but again, I’m not here for a quick buck. We are here to develop some of the best brown spirits people have ever tasted and experienced.

So, I put in my time to really understand the industry before getting into spirits.

To be more precise on the difficulties: (1) Spirits Licensing (2) Capital needed to operationalize and sustain the first 3 – 5 years (3) Understanding Three Tier Distribution Model (4) Route to Market (5) most importantly, what kind of product are you going to launch? Spirits is a crowded space and it’s easy to get lost with so many great brands out there. These are some of the difficult tasks I had to learn all by myself. My last 15 years of software industry and having served in several management, sales and go-to-market roles have prepared me well for this day. I came to America in 2005 with less than \$400 dollars in my pocket. If I can build my life and career all by myself, I’m sure with some luck and hard work, I can build a phenomenal spirits company too.

**Q: What was your inspiration for the name “Izalco”, what is its meaning or story?**

When my master blender and I started developing the rum formulation, I had to blind taste and build the formulation from ground-up. In plain English, blending rum and creating Ron Izalco was like building a house. First, you need a strong foundation, so that the house will sustain for a long time. So, we needed a rum which had strong characteristics of wood, oaky with barrel strength. Second, the house needed a structure, like the beams and railings to give the structural strength. So, we needed a rum which had that multi-dimensional structure which would blend well with the foundation. Third, you need the roofing. So, we needed a rum which would complement the base and structure with high congeners and to evenly balance to take out all the harsh/rough edges. And then finally, you need interiors and upholsteries which makes it look elegant and completes the house. So, we needed a rum which would bring out that long finish and with it some fruity notes to enhance the experience which we were striving for. After over a year of formulation and about 29 different iterations, to our surprise, I had blind chosen all rums from Central America, especially the high-congener *aguardientes*.

We were inspired with the whole process that we wanted to dedicate this beautiful master piece to Central America, its volcanic black soil and the sugarcane from the region. We decided to name this rum after Central America's most famous volcano "Izalco". Izalco has a beautiful true story. To read more about this amazing volcano, please visit this link: <http://www.izalcorum.com/volcan-izalco>

**Q: Ron Izalco is unlike most rums from Central America: the congener level is higher than average, the oak notes are deep and intense, the ABV is also higher than normal, yet it is exceptionally well-balanced. Why did you choose this profile and how did you achieve it?**

After tasting almost every single dark rum aged between 7 to 15 years that I could possibly get my hands on, I had made a long list of items of what I needed and I didn't need in Ron Izalco. Then I went to Brand Development 101 – The 3 P's

– Product, Packaging and Personality. Product needs to speak for itself, packaging needs to be luxe, stunning and elegant and finally, the face behind the product needs to have a personality. When we created Ron Izalco, we wanted to ensure every item which goes into developing the product is super premium.

The bottle is premium stock from France. The Cork is from Portugal, made from Mahogany wood cap with real S1 grade natural wood and even has "Ron Izalco" laser engraved on it. The labels are beautifully embossed with linen material and even the bottom front label rolling to the side is intentional to create curiosity. The gift box has the story, origin, taste notes, picture of the bottle and most importantly thin/slim to ensure it does not take too much retail/liquor store shelf space. So, as you can see, every detail has been well thought out with very high-quality, targeting for super premium consumers and lifestyle market. We wanted to make sure we take care of the 3 P's. Based on our market research and my personal observations from my travel to different markets and spirits festivals, curious rum drinkers and enthusiasts are very much aware of the premium rums and their taste profile. They are much curious and eager to move on to the next level or try something less sweet, full bodied, complex fruity notes, but evenly balanced with a long finish. This is what Ron Izalco-10 years has to offer to all our consumers. Also this is not Solera aged but straight 10 years in Ex-Bourbon barrel with 43% ABV, unlike many other regular 40% ABV. It is beautifully-balanced but there is an explosion of congeners right as it hits the middle of your tongue. We specifically developed the 10-year expression for sipping and for high-end craft cocktails.

**Q: What has been the response of consumers when they try the rum?**

I have only one word "PHENOMENAL". As a blender and creator, I'm humbled by the love and encouragement I have received from our consumers. There is no bigger joy when you see people's reaction and when



they take the first sip of Ron Izalco, their eyebrows goes up and after 6-8 seconds there is a smile on their face looking straight into my eyes. These are the moments which makes me believe all the hard work and risk is well worth it and we have truly created an exceptionally high-quality rum.

Our biggest industry recognition and acknowledgement came when we won a Gold Medal in 2018 San Francisco world spirits competition for 8 years and above aged super premium category. That followed by Tasting Panel Magazine, one of the highly influential wine and spirits publication rated Ron Izalco 98 points out of 100 in their October 2018 edition. These industry accomplishments earned an invitation as a panelist and present Ron Izalco at the deconstructing spirits session at 2018 Annual Sommeliers conference, SommCon.

With success comes responsibilities and all these recognitions from our consumers and industry has only given me more motivation to work even harder. We want to ensure we are able to deliver Ron Izalco to as many key rum markets as possible.

**Q: Where is Ron Izalco currently distributed? Where will you be distributing next?**

As of Dec 1st, 2018, we officially launched in France. We were thrilled to know that on the day one of release, we sold 100 bottles. These are special moments and small milestones to cherish.

We just signed up distribution for UK and Denmark and will start as of Feb and March 2019 respectively. For UK, we will focus on the London Metro on all the high-end bars, restaurants and then we will start moving out rest of the UK.

We are targeting Q1 of 2019 for US and Q3 for Canada. And meanwhile actively in conversations with Germany.

**Q: Is Ron Izalco available online as well?**

Absolutely! Being digitally native is incredibly important in today's day and age. We are going to take a chapter from the omni



channel retail and distribution strategy. That way, we are not only selling through brick and mortar but also online. For every market we are going to launch, we want our consumers to not only have the shopping experience in actual retail store, but we also want them to have the opportunity to buy online anytime and get it shipped anywhere.

**Q: Why did you choose to start distribution in Europe before the USA?**

As I had previously mentioned, timing is everything. Western Europe, UK, Nordic Countries and even some of the fast-growing Eastern European countries are riding the super-premium rum wave. This is the perfect platform to create a fan following and offer something very different, the kind of experience that our consumers are looking for.

After exhibiting Ron Izalco at Paris Rhum Festival, UK Rum Festival and Bordeaux Rhum Festival in 2018, we have enough market validation that Ron Izalco's 10-Year aged blend will be very well received by rum enthusiasts and rum lovers. We are predicting whisky, scotch and bourbon drinkers to cross over to rum and Ron Izalco has the potential to be that alternate they are seeking.

I believe USA is about a couple of years behind from Europe and hence I'm willing to wait till next year to release. But the timing is now in Europe and UK.

**Q: Do you have plans to expand your rum portfolio? What about including other spirits?**

Very good questions, Yes. We are currently working on Ron Izalco 15 year for Q4 2019 Release and Ron Izalco 21 year for Q4 2020 Release. That's where we are going to stop and focus 100% on maintaining high quality, brand development and brand expansions.

We are currently working on an incredible Rye Whisky with cask finish. This is still in incubation phase. We don't know the release dates as it's not ready until it's fully ready. We will not compromise quality over quantity.

**Q: What is the best way for people to reach you?**

Below is my contact information:

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Blender, Founder & CEO

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www.phenomenalspirits.com

Ron Izalco is active in Social Media through Instagram and Facebook Handle "Ronizalco". You can message / DM me directly.

**Q: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?**

First, I want to thank "Got Rum?" magazine for giving me this opportunity to share our incredible journey and story with their readers, rum lovers and industry professionals. Second, I want to thank all our rum critiques and Ron Izalco fans for your love and support. Third and final, to all my vendors who helped me build Ron Izalco and guided me whenever I needed and kept the product development on track.

I have great conviction that the days ahead are very exciting and rum lovers are going to make Ron Izalco as one of the most sought-after rum brands in the Super Premium and Ultra-Premium Market place. Phenomenal Spirits, Phenomenal People, Phenomenal Moments!

Cheers, sincerely and with love.  
Karthik Sudhir

**Margaret: Karthik, thank you again for granting us this interview. I am very happy to know that your rum has been so well received, I wish you continuous success!**

Cheers!  
Margaret E. Ayala

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# CIGAR & RUM PAIRING

by Philip Ili Barake





**M**y 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



## Stepfather Pairing

As we close one year of pairings and start to embark on a journey of new discoveries, I thought it appropriate to draw inspiration from another classic cocktail, adapting it into the world of rum. So for this month I selected the Godfather but renamed it Stepfather, a play with words but also significant in that it represents an outsider who comes into a family and is able to play an important and refreshing role.

### Stepfather

- 1.5 oz. Havana Club Rum 7 Year Old
- 1.5 oz. Amaretto Liqueur
- A couple of drops of Angostura Bitters

The technique involves mixing the ingredients directly in the serving glass, gently stirring the first two ingredients, then adding the drops of Angostura Bitters. You could optionally substitute for more citric bitters, like Orange Bitters. As you visually inspect the cocktail, you can see how the rum and the Amaretto are still mostly separated, due to the higher viscosity of the latter, causing a blurring effect. It is important to measure the proportions with a jigger: over pouring the Amaretto can easily cause the cocktail to be imbalanced (too sweet). Lastly, it is important to have big chunks of ice, which help cool down the cocktail without watering it down too much.



Photo credit: @Cigarili



Photo credit: @Cigarili

For the cigar I chose a Romeo and Julieta Robusto, named “Short Churchill” (50 x 124mm), with a medium strength. This will be ideal for a smoking session of about 30 minutes, enough to enjoy the cocktail without it getting too watered-down.

As it turns out, the rum I selected was ideal for this cocktail. If you cannot find this particular rum, substitute it with another light rum, with very little to no sugar or caramel added. The Amaretto will, undoubtedly, provide enough sweetness. If you use a sweetened-rum you will saturate the palate before finishing the pairing.

The pairing may appear to be simple, but sometimes the simple things are the best ones to master. I am happy that my first attempt to adapt the classic Godfather was successful. I normally do not enjoy very sweet things, but this cocktail paired well with the cigar, with a long finish, not saturated with sugar.

I am sure many of you will find this pairing easy and pleasant. Some of you may think it is too sweet, in which case it may be better reserved as a digestif pairing for after a meal.

Philip Ili Barake  
#GRCigarPairing



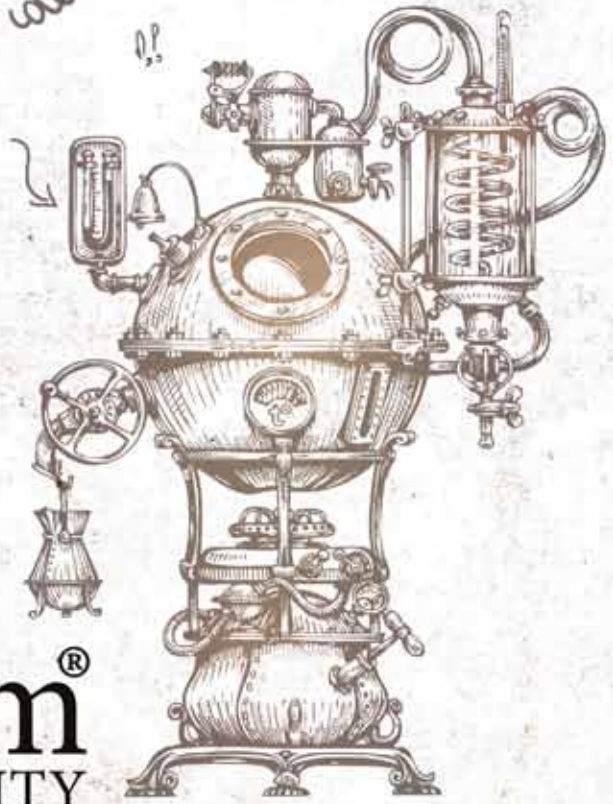
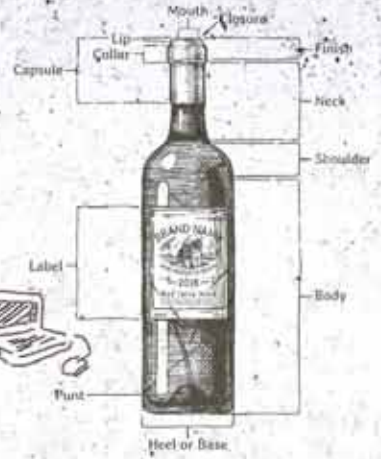
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