

# THE **Rum** UNIVERSITY

## Rum Appreciation In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Lesson X





# Lesson X - Beyond Premium

## Classic Rums

There are many rums in the world which have endured the test of time. These are rums that manage to be mentioned over and over again when people talk or write about fine rums. These products have slowly but surely gained a reputation for being “classics”. But what exactly is a “Classic Rum”?

In trying to define a Classic Rum we are helped by numerous observations about literary classics, such as:

*"Perhaps a classic is a work that one imagines should be common knowledge, but more and more often isn't."*

W. S. Merwin in “Lost Classics”

*"A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say."*

Italo Calvino in "Why Read the Classics?"

We are all familiar with the term classic, using it and hearing it used in a wide variety of circumstances. An automobile can be advertised by its manufacturer as a "contemporary classic". A literary use of the term may be found in a statement by Somerset Maugham in his comment on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: "What makes a classic is not that it is praised by critics, expounded by professors and studied in college classes, but that the great mass of readers, generation after generation, have found pleasure and spiritual profit in reading it." Another account of classic literature, which directs itself more to the thing itself than to its supposed effect, is found in James Russell Lowell: "A classic is properly a book which maintains itself by virtue of that happy coalescence of matter and style, that innate and exquisite sympathy between the thought that gives life and the form that consents to every mood of grace and dignity, which can be simple without being vulgar, elevated without being distant, and which is something neither ancient nor modern, always new and incapable of growing old." If we could find such a thing as a “Classic Rum” (and we are hereby suggesting this is possible), it would share many of its characteristics with classic literature and other items which are considered by their users as “classic”.

## So what makes a rum a classic?

Some people suggest that what makes a classic is the quality of its “genericness” or applicability to other ages, other cultures, in short its universality. Others feel the very antiquity of a classic is at its core of value. Both views we oppose strongly. In the case of rum, the consumers actually make a Classic themselves, by imbibing its history, tradition, details and spirit, fondling them over and over and polishing them in their memories over the course of many years, maybe even over the period of a life time. Thus we frequently find older generations speaking about the rums they grew up drinking as “classics”. This is not merely a situation driven by reinforced memory patterns, but something subtler. A Buddhist mantra, for example,



may be just four words, but it attains a towering profundity by use and continual reuse. A few examples of Classic Rums are those produced in Cuba during its Golden Age, along with Barbancourt from Haiti, Appleton from Jamaica and Pampero from Venezuela, which always manage to earn medals in all the competitions they enter. Contemporary rums which are well on their way to becoming classics include products such as Ron Zacapa Centenario from Guatemala and Flor de Caña from Nicaragua.

## Rare Rums

Rare, adjective, from Old French, from Latin “rârus”:

1. Infrequently occurring; uncommon: a rare event; a plant that is rare in this region.
2. Excellent; extraordinary: a rare sense of honor; a rare friend.
3. Thin in density: rarefied: rare air.

Rare Rums are those that, by environmental, marketing or production reasons, are very limited in their existence and thus are prime material for collectors. These rums rarely become classics, as they are never produced in large enough quantities or for prolonged enough periods of time for a large number of people to scrutinize them. Rare rums are frequently produced to mark anniversaries and special occasions.

Perhaps the world’s rarest rum is Royal British Navy Imperial Rum (see May 2001 issue of “Got Rum?”). Other top contenders for the title include pre-Castro bottles of Cuban rum, Prohibition Era bottles of “Medicinal Purpose” rum and any un-opened bottle of rum from companies which are no longer around.

## Rum Styles

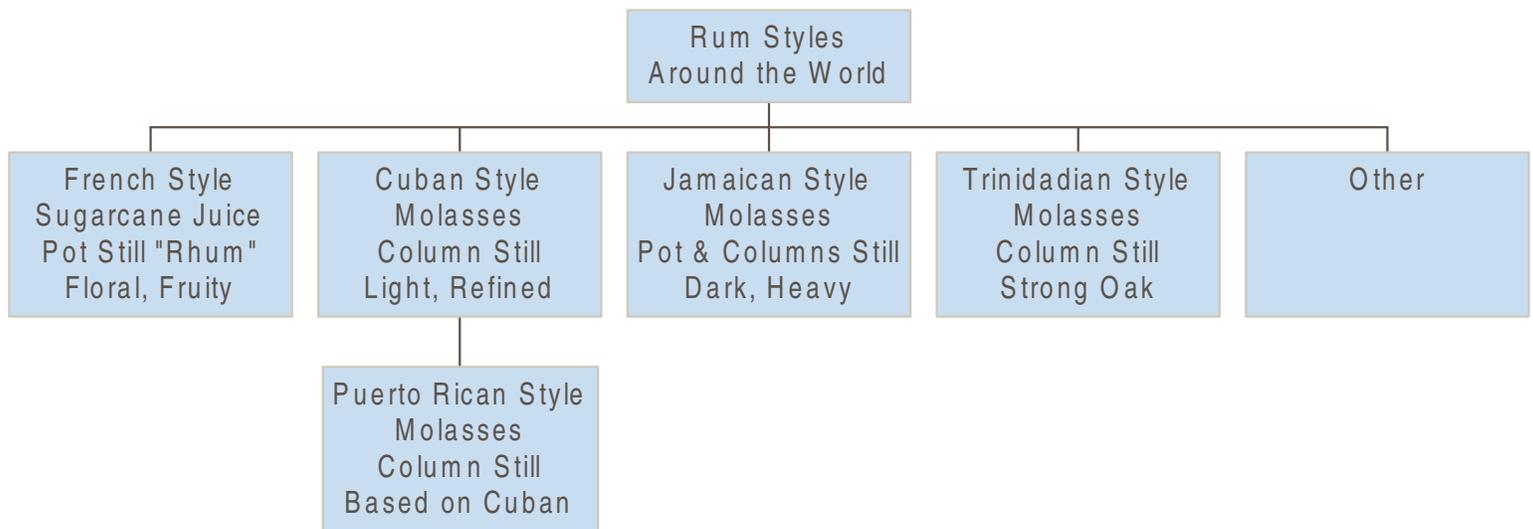
As we discussed earlier there are many choices to be made between the sugar cane processing and the final product. These choices, along with the philosophy and goals of each rum producing company, help produce styles.

The styles in rum could be compared to those found in beers: just like a Pilsner can not be compared with a Porter or a Stout, rums that belong in one style can not be easily compared to those found in another style.

In the following chart you can see some of the most dominant (or popular) rum styles in the world today. The French Style has stronger fruit and herbal elements in its aroma, the Cuban Style emphasizes cleanliness through distillation and adds back flavor into the rum through aging and careful blending, the Jamaican Style is all about richness, from color to taste, and is the result of combining pot and column still rums. Trinidadian Style rums tend to contain more fusel oils than any other style and are characterized by a strong oak flavor.

As you can see in the chart on the opposite page, Puerto Rican rum is a sub-category of Cuban style rum. Other main styles have also given birth to sub categories, but none as well defined as Puerto Rico. One could argue that countries such as Guyana and Venezuela have developed their own styles, however the number of different rums produced in those countries is so large, that identifying one single rum as being the “ambassador” of its country makes it quite hard.





## Know Thyself

If you have been with us from the beginning, now you know about the different production methods, raw materials, aging factors, blending techniques and rum styles that exist throughout the world. Now it is time to formally and honestly come to grips with the inescapable reality of our individualism: each person has developed preferences and has associated mental and emotional states to certain stimuli to react differently to the same rum.

Can anyone tell you that a rum you don't like is very good? Could it be true? Who then can tell what is good and what is bad? Only one person: you! Is it okay to like an inexpensive bottle of rum? Absolutely! Is it okay not to like expensive rums that the experts rave about? Certainly!

When it comes to rum, you are now armed with the necessary knowledge to decipher labels, understand production methods and make sense of the marketing talk to get to the bottom of a rum's origin. The next question is: do you like it? If so, you have found a great companion, one which will be happy to fuel your imagination, refresh your memory or simply mesmerize your senses with its organoleptic qualities. If this rum happens to be a Classic, rest assured that it will probably be around for a very long time. If it is a Rare rum, you better buy as much of it as you can and only consume it sparingly, as it will inevitably disappear from the stores.

## Spotting Trends

Many years ago, Bacardi introduced "Bacardi Spice". Back in those days the only other serious competitor in the Spiced market was Captain Morgan. Today there are more than a dozen spiced rums with more being introduced every few months. As new rums are added to the category, the competition for the spotlight gets fiercer and fiercer. A sign of this struggle is the emergence of "Premium" and "Super Premium" spiced rums.



There was a time when the only Coconut Rum available was Malibu. Today there are as many different types of coconut rums as there are spiced rums. Then there are the citrus and fruit flavored rums: once the pride of Caribbean resorts staffed by creative bartenders, these fruit-infused ethanol concoctions are now as abundant as the grains of sand on any given beach. To stand out from among the competition, some of the flavored producers are starting to pay more attention to quality (by using aged rum instead of raw alcohol in the blend, for example) and less to outrageous marketing concepts and campaigns.

When one looks at white rums in the market, a few signs appear that a similar move is starting to take place, with aged white rums becoming more and more popular.

Can you spot any other trends in your market?

## Hands-on Exercise: Classifying Your Rums

For this exercise you will need: Paper and pencil, Snifters, 1 Paper napkin to cover each snifter and as many of your rum bottles as possible or practical. At the very least you should have one bottle from Cuba or Puerto Rico, one from the French West Indies, one from Jamaica and one from Trinidad & Tobago.

The purpose of this exercise is to help you link your olfactory and gustatory skills to the knowledge you have gained over the past 9 lessons. Start by lining up the rum bottles you will use. Grab the first bottle. Look at the label and determine if it is made from molasses or from cane juice. If made from cane juice, set it aside and write “Juice” on the napkin. Pour 1 to 2 ounces into a snifter and cover it with the napkin, with the writing facing DOWN. If the rum is made from molasses, see where it was distilled, then write “Molasses – and the country” (i.e. “Molasses – Venezuela”). Pour 1 to 2 ounces into a snifter and cover it with the napkin, writing side facing down. Repeat these steps with all the rums you have available or with the ones you have chosen for this exercise.

Now line up all the snifters in front of you. One by one, grab them and smell them, but do not taste. Go through all the snifters this way. Based on the aroma alone, align them in front of you from light to heavy (left to right). Now turn over the napkins so that the writing is facing up and you can read it. Any surprises? Typically you will find that the lighter aromas come from rums made in Puerto Rico and Cuba (and countries which have adopted these styles). Floral, herbal and very fruity aromas will come from sugarcane juice rums (French Style), while rich, molasses-coated aromas will emanate from some Jamaican or Trinidadian rums.

Turn the napkins upside down again and repeat the experiment, but this time take a small sip from each snifter and arrange them from light to heavy taste (left to right). Once you are done, turn the napkins over and look at the results. Did the order of the rums change a lot? Did some remain in the same spot? What did you learn from this exercise?

Do not feel frustrated if the aroma and the taste give you a different message, some rums are like that, sometimes purposefully, other times due to poor blending skills.



## From the Rum Bar - Featured Cocktail: Grog

From the earliest days of sail, men needed liquids during voyages. The most readily available liquids were water and beer which were stored in casks. As there was no method of distillation or preservation, water quickly developed algae and turned slimy, and beer turned sour, so the custom was to drink the beer before it soured and then turn to water.

In 1655 Vice-Admiral William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, captured Jamaica when he arrived in Barbados. This is when Penn began to use rum aboard his ships and it became common to issue straight rum to the sailors. By 1730 when Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon came into power he faced the issue of drunkenness and lack of discipline from the sailors (also called "Jack Tars") and as a result on August 21, 1740 he issued that rum would be mixed with water. To make the drink more palatable sugar was added to it. Later on, lime juice was incorporated also, as it provided vitamin C, a supplement needed to prevent scurvy while at the same time enhancing the flavor of the grog.



Admiral Edward Vernon

The sailors aboard ship gave him the name "Old Grog" because of a waterproof boat cloak he wore. The cloak was made of grogam, a thick material made from a combination of silk, mohair and wool. Thus Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon became known as the father of grog. Grog was served as a ration in the US Navy until Sept. 1, 1862 and in the Royal Navy until 1970.

### The Admiral's Grog

Pour 2 oz. of Gosling's Black Seal Rum over ice and add a squeeze of lime.

### Navy Grog

2 oz. Dark Rum

1 Cube Sugar

3 Cloves

1" piece of Cinnamon Stick

1 Tbsp. Lemon Juice

Slice of Lemon

Boiling Water

Place all ingredients except boiling water in an 8 oz. mug. Stir to dissolve the sugar, leaving the spoon in the mug. Pour in boiling water to fill and stir.



## Grog

2 Bottles Dry Red Wine  
1 Bottle Brandy  
25 Whole Cloves  
20 Crushed Cardamom Seeds  
4 Cinnamon Sticks  
2 C. Currants  
2 C. Blanched Almonds  
2 oz. Dried Orange Peel  
1 Pink Aquavit  
16 oz. Sugar Cubes

Put all ingredients except sugar and aquavit in a large pan and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Place a strain over pan and spread sugar cubes over it. Pour the aquavit over sugar. Ignite in pan and let sugar melt into mixture. Stir. Serve in heated mugs.  
([http://thetreasureship.com/grog\\_recipe.htm](http://thetreasureship.com/grog_recipe.htm))

## Captain Roger's Grog

1 Shot of Rum  
tsp. Powdered Sugar  
tsp. Lime Juice  
1 Cinnamon Stick  
Boiling Water

Pour all ingredients in a cup or mug.

## Old Grog

2 oz. Dark Rum  
2 oz. Hot Water  
2/3 oz. Lime Juice  
1 tsp. Brown Sugar  
2 Cloves  
1 Cinnamon Stick

Combine all ingredients in a small sauce pan. Heat until the sugar is dissolved. Strain into a cup or mug.

## Pusser's Grog

2 oz. Water  
1 oz. Pusser's Rum  
Lime Juice (to taste)  
Dark Cane Sugar (to taste)

Pour all ingredients into a cup or mug and fill with boiling water.



Rum measuring cup for serving rum to sailors.



### Hot Grog

2 oz. Rum

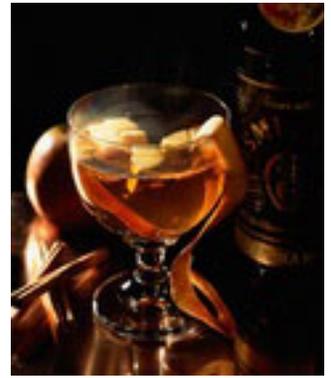
1 Sugar Cube

Juice of Half a Lemon (or Lime)

2 Cloves

1 Small Stick of Cinnamon

Put all of the ingredients into a heat proof mug and fill with boiling water.



### Navy Grog #1

1/2 oz. Light Rum

1/2 oz. Gold Rum

1/2 oz. Dark Rum

1/2 oz. Grand Marnier

1 oz. Grapefruit Juice

1 oz. Orange Juice

1 oz. Pineapple Juice

Pour liquors into an ice-filled Collins glass. Add the juices and shake. Garnish with a cherry, an orange wedge and pineapple chunk.

### Navy Grog #2

1 oz. Light Rum

1 oz. Dark Rum

1/2 oz. Falernum

2 oz. Lemon Juice

2 oz. Orange Juice

2 oz. Pineapple Juice

1/2 oz. 151- Proof Rum

Blend light rum, dark rum, falernum and juices. Stir or shake. Float 151 rum on top. Garnish with orange slice, cherry and pineapple. Pour in rocks glass.



## Lesson 10 Questionnaire

Q. What are some of the characteristics of a Classic rum?

Q. Name at least three rare rums based on the definition offered in this lesson.

Q. What are the main rum styles in today's market?

Q. What rum style contains both column and pot still rum and is heavy/dark?

Q. What has been the trend among spiced and flavored rums in the last few years?

Q. Name at least 3 coconut flavored rums.

Q. Blending is a very important aspect of rum production. What are some indications that the blending process is not as refined as it can be?

Q. Admiral Edward Vernon became known as the "Father of Grog". Why and how did he obtain the name "Old Grog"?

Q. Why were sugar and lime juice added to the rum and water mixture that was given to sailors?

## Answers to Lesson 9 Questionnaire

Q: Do weather conditions affect the way rum ages?

A: Absolutely Yes! High temperature fluctuations force the rum to be absorbed into the pores of the oak faster, speeding up its transformation.

Q: Can a barrel be made from a tree that is younger than 10 years?

A: Usually not. It is only after a tree has been alive for 10 years that its wood becomes hard enough and water tight enough to produce barrels that will not leak.

Q: Why is it important to use toasted (or charred) barrels when aging rum?

A: Because the toasting of the wood produces molecules which in part desirable aromas and characteristics.

Q: How much of the taste and aroma of rum comes directly from the oak barrel?

A: More than 60%.

Q: Does rum get better and better the longer it is aged?

A: No! At a certain point in maturity the rum can "turn" becoming too oaky and bitter.

Q: Who invented the Mai Tai?

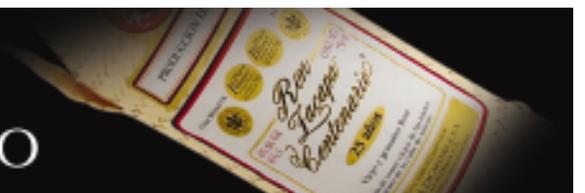
A: It is claimed that it was Mr. Victor J. Bergeron (also known as "Trader Vic").

Q: What are the basic ingredients in a modern Mai Tai?

A: Light and dark rum, orange curacao (or orange juice), pineapple juice and lime juice.



EL MEJOR  
RON DEL MUNDO





*Best perfumes come  
from France...*



*...and the best rum comes  
from Guatemala.*



For five years in a row, Ron Zacapa Centenario has been granted the award to "The Best Rum of the World". For that reason, it is now the first and only rum to enter the "Hall of Fame" of the International Rum Festival.



## Origin

More than 2000 years ago, our ancestors, the Mayans, prepared spirits and firewater based on corn and wild fruits to drink during their religious ceremonies.

In the year of Our Lord of 1492, Christopher Columbus arrived to the New World. The discovery of the Great Navigator represented, besides the arrival of the first Sugar Cane coming from the Canary Islands and master distillers from the Old World, a tradition in beverage preparations. Some historians support that the name Rum derives from the Latin word "saccharus" which means sugar.

Guatemala produces and exports huge amounts of Sugar, in the same fashion that the Rum and Spirits industry have expanded, currently becoming one of the major and most renowned producers and exporters of Rum and Spirits in Latin America.

Rum has always been linked to the Caribbean in the heart of America, its original birthplace and in its sunny beaches. Guatemala holds a privileged position in the region that by its nature is the area in which the best Rums in the World are produced.

## Our Commitment

FROM GUATEMALA TO THE WORLD, that is our projection, a mission that commits us to be the best and always offer unique and incomparable quality of our Rums and Spirits, becoming our best award the complete satisfaction of our consumers.

We have provided a noble origin, a guaranteed quality, to each and every one of our Rums and Spirits. Furthermore, we have created products with its own personality, assuming the challenge of excellence.

The Rums and Spirits of Guatemala are a real tradition... tradition that we want to share with the world.

