

## YO HO HO, AND SOME BOTTLES OF RUM

In the Caribbean, it's customary to not only soak up the sun and splash in the surf, but to also savor and stock up on its signature libation.

By Jill Becker



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When visiting Germany, smart travelers sample the noted local brews, and when vacationing in France, knowing tourists taste-test its award-winning native wines. And in the Caribbean? It's rum, of course. The intoxicating liquor was invented there, and sipping a delicious rum concoction is as much a part of a trip to the islands as snoozing in a hammock under swaying palms or heading to the beach and working on your tan.

### THE HISTORY OF RUM

"Rum has a much more colorful history than most drinks," states Ian Williams in his book *Rum: A Social and Sociable*

*History of the Real Spirit of 1776*. The lively origins Williams alludes to reflect rum's inescapable ties to the sea and a cast of characters that includes everyone from decorated British naval commander Horatio Nelson to the notorious pirate Blackbeard. Believed by historians to have originated on the island of Barbados in the 1600s, rum, as we know it today, was a product of the area's plentiful sugar cane plantations, and it soon became a staple on ocean going vessels whose crews required cheap and readily available liquid rations (unlike rum, water and beer stored in the boats' oak casks quickly spoiled). Its maritime explorations continued through the years, introducing rum to nations near and far.

The drink's popularity received a major boost following the Spanish-American War when American troops tried mixing it with Coca-Cola and a wedge of lime and created the Cuba Libre. Its status spread even more in 1945 when The Andrews Sisters recorded their version of the calypso hit "Rum and Coca-Cola." Today, rum is a staple in bars and liquor cabinets across the globe; in fact, Bacardi's white label rum is the world's best-selling spirit.

### THE MAKING OF RUM

The more than 50 distilleries scattered throughout the Caribbean — from Havana Club in Cuba to Cruzan Rum in St. Croix — produce the majority of the world's

rums. Caribbean rum is made with the juice of sugar cane, or occasionally molasses, both byproducts of sugar production. The juice is first fermented by adding yeast and water, then distilled to remove impurities. The last step is to let the rum age in wooden casks. Varieties of rum abound, based on the region where it is distilled, the length of fermentation, and even how it is bottled. Light rum, for instance, may ferment for as little as 12 hours, while dark rum may ferment for as long as two weeks. The most common Caribbean rums are blended, combining a mix of styles and ages, while single barrel, or single mark, rums are produced from a single cask or from a particular vintage by a single distiller.

#### THE SAMPLING OF RUM

Visitors can whet their whistle with piña colodas, daiquiris, mojitos, and other favored rum drinks at bars such as the new Bullion Bar at the British Colonial Hilton Nassau, which

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## Sipping a delicious rum concoction is essential on a trip to the islands.

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gives a nod to its colonial heritage with classic cocktails showcasing rum and its diverse personality. In addition, numerous factories\* and museums are devoted to the savory spirit. At the St. James Distillery in Martinique, after watching machinery shred some 60 tons of sugar cane per hour, you can sample finished products like the rich, well-aged Rhum Vieux Saint James, then follow it up with a visit to the adjoining Musée du Rhum, which documents more than 300 years of industry development. The Callwood Distillery in the British Virgin Islands features the Callwood family's host of "all-natural" rums, which they claim will never produce a headache or

a hangover. A trip to try Bacardi's selection of best-selling rums involves a scenic ferry ride from the capital of San Juan, Puerto Rico, to the company's 127-acre complex in Cataño, where trains shuttle onlookers between the visitors center and guided distillery tours. Malibu's factory and visitor compound in Barbados is conveniently situated along a pristine beachfront and features a seaside bar and restaurant. You can also contact an island's convention and visitors bureau for details and information on Caribbean rum distilleries. *M*

\*Note: Many distilleries are only open seasonally (typically from March to September), so confirm opening dates and times before visiting.

## RUM-SOAKED RECIPES

#### THE PAINKILLER

Featuring Pusser's, a dark rum dating back to the 1600s, this is the signature drink of the popular Soggy Dollar Bar on Jost Van Dyke island, just off Tortola. Their exact proportions are top secret, but here's a common combination.

4 parts pineapple juice  
1 part cream of coconut  
1 part orange juice  
2 parts Pusser's dark rum

#### TORTUGA KEY LIME PIE

Rum cakes are a Caribbean staple, and one of the area's most famous is the Tortuga Rum Cake. However, the popular confection involves an ample pouring of premium five-year old Tortuga Gold Rum, which isn't available to the public, and is based on a well-guarded family recipe, so its exact ingredients aren't known. But we

find their recipe for Tortuga Key lime pie equally delicious.

#### Crust:

1 1/4 cup crushed graham cracker crumbs  
3 tablespoons butter, melted  
2 tablespoons light brown sugar, packed  
1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon grated lime zest

#### Filling:

4 large egg yolks  
1 teaspoon grated lime zest  
1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk  
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons fresh key lime juice  
1 tablespoon Tortuga Light Rum (or other favorite Caribbean rum)  
2 dashes Angostura Bitters

#### Topping:

1 cup heavy cream  
1 tablespoon confectioner's sugar  
1 tablespoon Tortuga Light Rum

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350. For crust, combine ingredients and blend well. Press into 9-inch pan, covering bottom and sides to top. Bake for 8-10 minutes and then remove from oven and allow to cool for 20 minutes. For filling, use mixer on high to beat egg yolks and lime zest until slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. On low, gradually add condensed milk, blending well, then add lime juice, biters, and rum, mixing until just blended. Pour mixture into cooled pie crust and bake about 12-15 minutes or until center is firm and set. Allow pie to cool 20 minutes on rack, then refrigerate uncovered for at least 4 hours. When ready to serve, whip the heavy cream, sugar, and rum until it forms stiff peaks. Mound onto the pie and spread evenly.