



Rum

By Dave Broom

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Rum is one of the world's oldest and bestselling spirits, often misunderstood, steeped in tradition, and with a colorful though not always honorable past. This is the first comprehensive, illustrated book to cover rum's history, production, and full range of flavors. The pure rums are detailed by their island or country of origin with an explanation of the climatic differences and productions methods that provides each with unique character. A guide to tasting and evaluating the full range of rums by style and class is provided along with a section on spiced and blended rums and how they are made and marketed. The book concludes with a directory of 180 of the world's most notable rums complete with statistics, tasting notes, label photos, and a rating from one to five stars. Beverage managers and bartenders, both professional and at home, will find this an essential buying guide and very entertaining reading.

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Rum By Dave Broom Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #965157 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Wine Appreciation Guild
- Published on: 2003-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.00" h x .80" w x 9.00" l, 2.57 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a most attractively produced illustrated book about one of the world's oldest spirits. The first rum may have been enjoyed some 2,500 years ago, but the modern drink began with moonshine fermented by Iberian New World settlers and later by the other Europeans when they established their Caribbean colonies. Perhaps the most popular rum comes from Cuba, where humidity levels are responsible for the sweetest sugar cane, and where in 1878 Don Facunado Bacardi imported the first still and created his famous brand. Dave Broom examines the colourful history of rum and explains production techniques from around the world. He also offers a directory of more than 200 rums with tasting notes and ratings.

About the Author

Dave Broom is an award-winning spirits writer, a regular contributor to the *Saturday Telegraph* and the BBC's *Good Food*, and is a host on UK Food television.

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INTRODUCTION

Rum is the forgotten spirit. Here is a drink that has been the catalyst for the birth of nations. It helped create capitalism and thereby colonialism and it is still there, center stage, as we move into a globalized world. Rum people have been slavers, pirates, and smugglers as well as artists, blenders, and barmen. Rum was slavery's currency; it made some people vast fortunes and helped others forget their misery. It gave sailors and soldiers courage in battle; was at the heart of Prohibition and, in recent years, it has been at the center of international trade wars. It has also become central to a Caribbean sense of place and self. No other spirit comes close to that. Yet this rum tale is one that few know – and fewer still have been allowed to tell.

That's why I wanted to write this book: that and the fact it also tastes so good! (Rum, that is, not the book.) The writing of this tale has taken me around the Caribbean and into South America as well as closer to home: to Glasgow, London, Bristol, and Amsterdam. It has made me happy, sad, and angry, and filled me with hope for the future of this remarkable drink. I've sipped cocktails in Havana, limed (hung out) in Guyana, sampled Carnival in Trinidad, and met generous, talented people who have spent their working lives creating some of the finest spirits you will ever taste.

The result is not a guide to every distillery or every rum. What it is, hopefully, is a taste of where rum came from, where it is made, where it is going, and why it tastes the way it does.

No other spirit can make you quite so happy in just being alive. All human life is contained, genie-like, within that bottle in front of you. One sniff and you are transported into a new, sweeter dimension filled with spices, honey, citrus and tropical fruits. Shut your eyes and you can hear the sound of the sea caressing the white sand. Rum is seductive. But it has much more to give.

When you taste great rum, you don't just think of what it tastes like, but how and why those flavors were put there. Enter this world and you will soon find that there is no such thing as "rum." It is diverse, multifaceted. Every island has its own style, every country has its own flavor, and every distillery has a variation on each. Rum speaks of its place. Its history is one of displacement, emigration, and creation: of a new drink, of new

aromas and flavors, of new societies, of new ways of doing business.

Rum was born in pain. “Like sugar,” said my Guyanan friend Zadok, serious for one moment, “it is tainted with the brush of slavery.” That, of course, is inescapable. Yet today, at long last, rum is being reborn into joy. Which is just as it should be, for rum is a drink unlike any other. It fuels laughter and good times, helps you shake off your inhibitions and throw yourself into the sheer joy of life.

Rum is hip at the moment, but unlike other marketing-driven fads, it can grow on the back of its newfound fashionability. Why? Because it doesn’t just have a range of flavors and styles; it can draw on its fantastic, bloody, passionate history: just as malt whiskey has, just as Cognac has. Rum has flavor, it has heritage, and it has quality. Vitally, its future is now in the hands of the people who best understand this: the rum makers of the Caribbean and South America, who can see a new quality era for the spirit.

In the twenty-first century, rum is no longer forgotten. Rum has come home.

It all started with a plant – a grass, in fact, known to botanists as *Saccharum officinarum* and to the rest of us as sugarcane, which was first cultivated in New Guinea some 10,000 years ago. By 6000 BC, it was being grown in Indonesia, the Philippines, and India. What was it used for? Not rum, that’s certain, but written evidence shows that, by 350 BC in India, sugarcane was being used to make sugar and fermented drinks. Around this time, Nearchus, Alexander the Great’s general, reported that, on a journey from the River Indus to the River Euphrates, he had come into contact with “an Indian reed [which] brings forth honey without the help of bees, from which an intoxicating drink is made.” The fact that there were Indian words, *gaudi* and *sidhu*, for fermented sugar drinks, suggests that this is what Nearchus may have tried. Man has always had a sweet tooth. Now here was a magical plant that could be cultivated easily and gave a product similar to honey, but in greater quantities – and with less risk of bee stings.

By the seventh century, sugarcane had begun its westward march and passed into the hands of the Arabs. As their empire spread into Cyprus, Malta, and Sicily, across the north African coast and into Spain and Portugal, sugarcane followed. The Moors not only brought with them a new religion, but advances in science and agriculture – and, therefore, sugar production.

Sugar wasn’t a lump of white stuff to drop in tea or coffee but an expensive spice which could be used in cooking and, more importantly, as a medicine. There is no evidence that Arab scholars made a potable spirit, but they did understand the art of distillation. Our words “alcohol” and “alembic” are Arabic, products of that hermetic science called *al-khem*, or as we know it, alchemy.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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