



LOOK SHARP • LIVE SMART

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Really

What You Need to Know About > Rum

RUM USED TO BE EITHER HARSH & WHITE OR HARSH & SPICED.

BUT THESE DAYS, HARD-CORE MIXOLOGISTS ARE MAKING TIKI DRINKS, AND YOU CAN PICK UP SUGARCANE JUICE AS COMPLEX AND DELICIOUS AS A SINGLE MALT FOR MUCH LESS CASH. It's time to get to know your rums



WHAT IS RUM, EXACTLY?

The simple answer: It's anything distilled from sugarcane or sugarcane by-products. Unlike scotch or bourbon—which are defined by provenance and production method—the rum category cuts a broader swath. Distilled from fermented molasses in New England? Call it rum. Made from Nicaraguan cane juice? That's rum, too. It's a



lawless liquor, about as regulated as offshore banks on Caribbean islands (where some of the best rums come from). The age on the label of a blended scotch must be the youngest whiskey in the bottle, but a

twenty-three-year Gran Reserva can be mostly younger rums with a thimble of the older stuff. The upside to this lack of oversight is that producers can do things like ship rare artisanal rum from Panama to Islay, Scotland, and age it in wine casks from Château Haut-Brion in Bordeaux. Deregulation didn't work out for the economy, but it's been great for rum.

WHITE RUM
• It's time to revisit

the clear stuff if you grew up drinking rail rum mixed with Coke. Colorless doesn't mean unaged or uninteresting; the white rums we're pouring are barrel-aged and charcoal-filtered, which gives them the heft and body of their darker brethren without the oaky taste and color. Their crispness and clarity make them good for cocktails, and high-end white rum, aged and filtered, does fine with ice and lime.

SPICED RUM

The patron saint of freshman hangovers, spiced rum gets a bad rap, which is mostly deserved. A spice infusion made sense back when rum was undrinkable without something to mask the harsh flavor, and even today copious amounts of caramel and vanilla are used to disguise second-rate base spirits. To avoid the swill, look for a brand that isn't strictly in the spiced market. If a distiller sells a great unspiced rum, you know the aromatic additions are more than just a cover-up.

GOLD/DARK RUM

The color comes from charred oak barrels—or from caramel-colored additives, if you're drinking the cheap stuff. Because the laws of bourbon-making stipulate new oak for every batch, most rum is aged in casks that once held whiskey. Medium-bodied gold or amber rum is generally used in cocktails. And while the older, darker, more complex stuff is suitable for sipping on the rocks, don't be afraid to swap it with the bourbon in your old-fashioned or the rye in your Manhattan.

MAKE THIS DRINK

THE PAINKILLER DAIQUIRI



The daiquiri is simple to execute and—except for a great rum—is made from ingredients available at any grocery store. Sweet, sour, and strong, this classic cocktail is refreshing in summer and transporting when the weather sucks. This recipe comes from Painkiller on New York's Lower East Side, part of the new breed of tiki bars that take umbrella drinks very seriously.

- 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- ¾ oz. simple syrup (1 part sugar, 1 part water, boiled)
- 2 oz. rum (under 100 proof)

BY Stan Parish

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Bruce Hutchinson

Shake over ice; serve in a cocktail glass.

FIVE RUMS for RIGHT NOW

1. CHAIRMAN'S RESERVE SPICED \$20

Infused with a blend of bitter orange, clove, and nutmeg that changed our mind about spiced rum.

2. BANKS 5 ISLAND \$28

A charcoal-filtered blend of twenty aged rums, this fresh newcomer has hints of ginger, pepper, and grass.



3. CRUZAN AGED LIGHT RUM \$14

Crisp, complex, and ideal for daiquiris. This may be the best \$14 you can spend on any spirit.

4. RENEGADE RUMS \$98

Ultra-limited single-vintage spirits, aged at Scotland's legendary Bruichladdich distillery. Well worth the splurge.

5. RON ZACAPA CENTENARIO \$35

Layered, decadent, and smooth as hell. Smells so inviting, you'll want to dab some on your wrist.

