American Rum

From Pirates to Pineapples, its History and Innovations

“Rum makes a fine hot drink, a fine cold drink, and its not so bad from the neck of the bottle” —Fortune Magazine, 1933
“How beverage alcohol is produced, distributed, consumed, and regulated...offers a key to the nature of a society and how it changes over time”

Jack S. Blocker Jr.,
Journal of Urban History, 2003
Summary

• Dark History
• Economic Myth
• Possible Origin
• History of New England Rum
• What were the colonist drinking?
• Massachusetts and Hawaiian Rum
A little dark history...

Source: Wikipedia.org
A little dark history…

• The History of Rum in the United States can not be told without the mention its dark origins

• Traders in Africa exchanged Rum for Slaves. Around 50 gallons for children and 100-150 gallons for an adult.

• These traders then sailed to the Caribbean to trade the slaves for sugar and molasses

• Then to New England to exchange the sugar for rum, then back to Africa
Dark History…

• If not for slaves, sugar could have been a very minor footnote in economic history
• The industry demanded an army of laborers.
• Without them the number of fields need wouldn’t have been planted, harvested or the amount of sugar produced.
• The population of Barbados peaked to 20,000 from 1650 to around 1770s, while the slave population was approximately 50,000
Economic Myth

• The simple elegance of the trade triangle and its economic impact is largely a myth
• Traders rarely completed more than one part of the journey
  • No records of traders from New England completed any part of the triangle
• Very little of the triangle fueled N.E. economy
  • More molasses went into beer, baked beans, and pudding than into the making of rum
• Exports of from New England to Africa accounted for less than 4% of all rum produced
• Less than 1% of all cargo ships sailing from the northern colonies were destined for Africa and the slave trade
• As horrific as New England’s involvement in the slave trade was, the economic theory of the triangle is overblown and how much it contributed to its prosperity is largely inaccurate
Possible Origins of Rum

• Though it has been argued that medieval alchemists could have made an early rum, sugar was scarce and very expensive at the time. It would not have made sense for continuation of research
  • If they did discover rum, it was not recorded and quickly forgotten
• Sugar production in the Caribbean was very profitable, and had a very high level of waste production
• The curing process for sugar involved storing crystallizing sugar in clay pots with holes at the base, which let the waste matter bound up between the sugar crystals to ooze out.
• For every two pounds of sugar produced, there was one pound of waste
Waste or Gold?

• That waste was molasses in the mid-seventeenth century was an annoyance for the Caribbean Islands
  • No demand for it and it was very difficult to ship economically
  • Most sugar plantations would throw it away
  • 1680s the French islands were discarding half-million gallons annually
  • While exports of molasses was less than 1%
Barbados?

- No one knows where the first drop of rum was distilled in the New World but the best argument is Barbados.

- The first time the words ‘kill-devil’ was in Barbados, 1652 “…they make in the island is Rumbullion, alias Kill-Divil, and this is made of sugar canes…”

- In 1658 “Rum” was in mentioned for the first time in recorded history in a planation sale “four large mastrick cisterns for the liquor for rum”
New England History

• First reports of commercial distilling was the Providence, RI in 1684
• Distilleries were built wherever molasses could be unloaded/stored
• Boston quickly become the forefront of continental rum
  • In six months 1688 MA imported 156,000 gallons of molasses from B.W.I.
  • ½ was converted to rum
  • 1717 customs officer in Boston reported 200,000 gallons of rum annually
  • 1750 Boston had 25 distilleries, with another ten in the surrounding area
• New England rum was regarded as low in price and quality
• One exception was the village Medford, Paul Reeve apparently took a drink or three during his famous ride while resting in Medford
What were the Colonist drinking?

- Water was not always the healthiest to drink and the Colonists found their health improved when they didn’t drink it.
- 1600s was dark beer, 6% abv close to what is stout/porter today.
- Hard Cider was the most popular among early settlers:
  - Very little investment or effort to make.
- A single tree could make 5 to 6 barrels of cider and patience for outdoor fermentation:
  - However, it caused gastric distress if consumed too early and vinegary if too late.
- Maderia (unfortified) was imported by the richer colonists.
Then Rum Arrived: The Flip

- The second most popular way of drinking rum was “the Flip”, not to be confused with the modern day version
- A pewter mug was filled 2/3 with beer, some sweetener usually molasses
- Then 5oz (!!) of Rum
- A Loggerhead, an iron bar with a bulbous end the size of a small onion was heated and doused. It was removed when the cocktail stopped bubbling
Then Rum Arrived: The Rum Punch

- The most famous way (other than straight) was the Rum Punch. It was the first global cocktail enjoyed from the ports of India, England and the West Indies
- The name could be from the Hindu word “Panuch” for five as the original ingredients were: tea, lemon, sugar, water and Batavia Arrack
- Molasses Act, Sugar Act, Townshend Acts
- Some famous punch bowls were famous, “the Glorious 92”
Modern Massachusetts Distillery

- Andrew Cabot, a Privateer and Distiller who lived from 1751 to 1790 in Massachusetts.
- A direct descendant six generations later, also named Andrew Cabot, Founded Privateer Distillery in Ipswich, MA
- Produce at present four rums (and one tiki gin). A White, Amber, Queen’s Share and a Dark Navy.
Massachusetts Style?

- Colder than Scotland, at times is gets close to as warmth/humidity of the Caribbean
  - What styles this create?
  - Some what French in style as it is very aromatic though not an agricole because it is lacking the “funk” of fresh press cane
  - Unfiltered and unsweetened for mouthfeel.
  - Steel wine racks for lots of air flow
  - The oxygen transfer adds to the mature favors achieved
  - Stacked low 2-3 levels like Scotland but the amount of air flow is similar to the Caribbean
  - Lots of rotation with approximately 200 barrels
Privateer Methods

• Most of the sugar and molasses is from low processed makers from Florida and Louisiana.
• Many rums are fermented in 24 hours at 105F, Privateer is 6 days at 74-78F
  • mingling of the yeast with the wash after this period gives richness and complexity to the spirit
• Twice Distilled
• Maritime influence, with summer humidity shift and alcohol evaporates, the aggressive alcohols in particular. In the winter the water evaporates which causes which adds to the concentration
• Style of the rum is swinging and the key is to catch the Amber rum at the right moment
• Similar to the idea of Wet (humid) and Dry cellars in Cognac
• Little temp control in the distillery, just to the pipes don’t freeze
• After 18+ months, the chalky, salty notes from the Maritime influence occurs
Privateer Barrel Room
Privateer White #1

- Grade A sugar, real brown sugar and yeast
- Fermented in Winter and Spring for more reflux
- Cold air temp around the still causes reflux ergo more purity
- Production
- TASTE!
Maggie Campbell, Privateer
Queen’s Share

- Saved “Tails”
- Butanol and Fusel Oils
  - 20 gallons
  - Around ½ is Fusel Oils etc. and ½ is ethanol
  - These are collected until you have 200 gallons, then run via the still very exactly to shear off the remaining ethanol, this is known as a Queen’s Share run
  - Its very densely favored
Ah, Hawaii....
Manulele Distillers: Home of KoHana Rum

• Produce single varietal agricole style rums
• From heirloom Hawaiian sugar cane
• Have 51 genetically unique canes and use 11 for current production
• Not one is used outside of Hawaii for rum production
  • Each is genetically different from any other cane used for rum production
  • An Ethnological Guide to Hawaiian Sugar Cane Varieties, Noa Kekuewa Lincoln, 2010
KoHana

Hybrid distillation
500 gallon pot still for first distillation
Then 4 bubble plate column still
White rums are rested a minimum 3 months
   in stainless steel
Aged rums are in new American oak barrels,
   level 3 char and either used Bourbon barrels or
   second fill barrels
Kohana: Mahai’ula (Kea) #2

Very little history is known about this varietal. Brix 14-16

Named after the Red Trevally fish because of the red coloration and green stripes.
KoHana: Lahi (Kea) #3

Lahi: means frail or delicate
Used extensively in traditional medical practices, slightly less prized than Kea
Brix 18-22
Kea refers to white rum from KoHana and is (slightly confusing) also one of the cane varietals. Hawaiian: “White Cane”

Kea is thought of one of the originally introduced canes and was the common planted in the early 1800’s

Very sweet juice, used for eating and historical Hawaiian practices

Typically most produced from KoHana

Brix 18-22
KoHana: Manulele (Kea) #5

Named after the ‘iwi bird used in ancient love magic ceremony

“The flying bird wings prayer laden with power to induce love or yearning”

Brix 16-20
Privateer Amber #6

• Aromatic
• Into barrel at lower proof than the traditional 125, at 110
  • Lets more esterification occur, oak is slower to extract so its addition is controlled and nuanced
  • Angular rums go into new casks, 36 months air seasoned wood American oak cask, level 3 whiskey char (one step below alligator)
    • This brings polymerized tannin to the spirit. Otherwise the spirit can taste gritty
  • More rounder spirit goes into used Bourbon casks, which adds favor but not as intensive as new oak barrels. As well as softer notes and less fleshy texture
KoHana Koho (aged) Kea #7

• Kea cane aged in 2 months new American Oak then 10 months in a second fill barrel
• TASTE
Kohana: Koho (aged) Manulele #8

- Manulele aged in 2 months new American Oak, then 18 months in used Bourbon Barrel
- TASTE