

# Barbados Past, Present, and Future

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## Objectives

- Review Barbados' history, geography, and geology
- Review the sugarcane industry
- Review the history of the rum industry
- Review the main style of Barbadian rum
- Discuss current trends and the future of Barbadian rum



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# The Island

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## Size

- Total land size about 166 Sq Miles
- Barbados has 60 miles of coast line
- 21 miles long and about 14 miles wide



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## Cities and Population

- Total Population: 281,000 (as of 2021)
- Bridgetown – capital and largest city
  - Population: 110,000
- Speightstown
  - Population: 4,000
- Oistins
  - Population: 2,500



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## Geology and Soils

- Barbados is an island formed out of vast coral deposits
- It's largely flat, with some hills
- Soils are limestone based, good for variety of agricultural crops
- Not a lot of mineral deposits



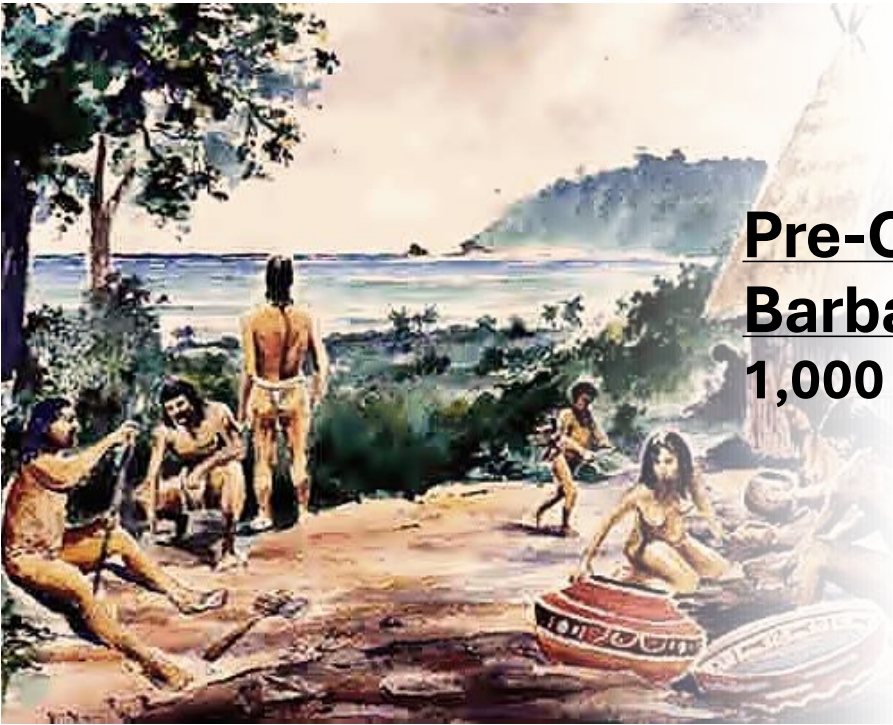
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## Climate

- Barbados is tropical
- Average high temperature is 75-85
- Lots of sunshine
- Consistent rainy season, typically corresponding with the hurricane season
- Prevalent Tradewinds



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## Pre-Columbian Barbados 1,000 – 1,500

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## Taino (Arawak)

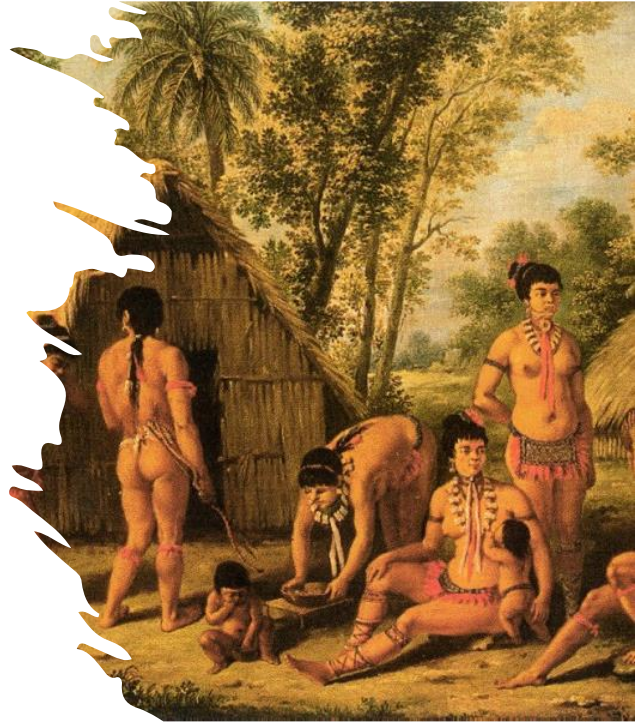
- The Arawak were an Amerindian tribe that settled the Caribbean from South America
- They were seafaring and settlement of the Caribbean likely began as early as 850-1,000 CE
- The Taino, a sub-tribe, settled Barbados
- Subsistence farming and fishing
- Small villages



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## Kalinago (Carib)

- The Kalinago were a separate Amerindian group that arrived in Barbados after the Taino
- They were also referred to as the Carib and were the largest culture throughout the Caribbean on the eve of European Arrival
- No indication of conquest, but peaceful co-habitation with the Taino



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**European**  
**Colonialism**  
**1500s – 1966**

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## Spain & Portugal

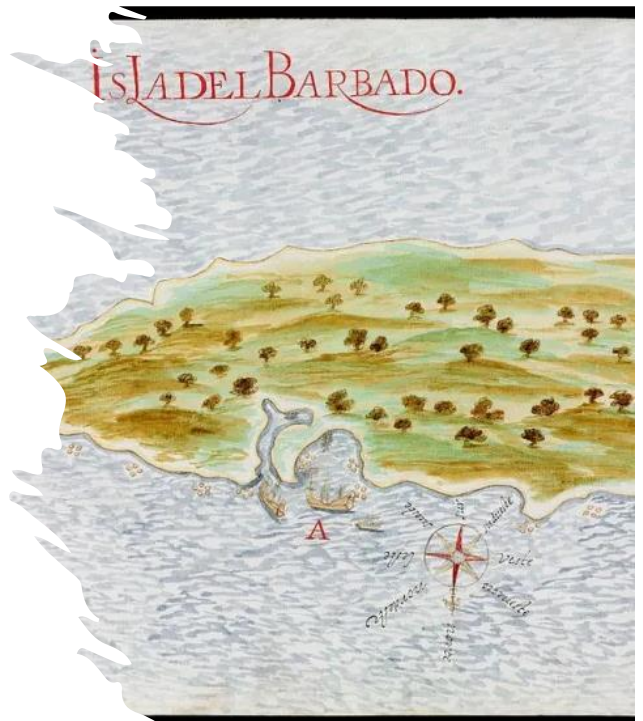
- Spain and Portugal explored most of the Caribbean throughout the 1500s, settling on many islands
- Pedro Compos, a Portuguese explorer, was the first European to visit Barbados
- Due to its lack of mineral resources, neither the Spanish or Portuguese settled permanently on Barbados
- Likely a supply point for ships crossing the Atlantic
- Likely introduced European viruses/diseases to the indigenous population



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## English Colonialism

- England creates first permanent European settlement in Barbados in 1627
- Desirable for agricultural and strategic location
- Sugarcane quickly introduced
- Oppression of indigenous population
  - Enslaved
  - Violence
  - Land taken
  - Cultural ways destroyed



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# Sugar Industry

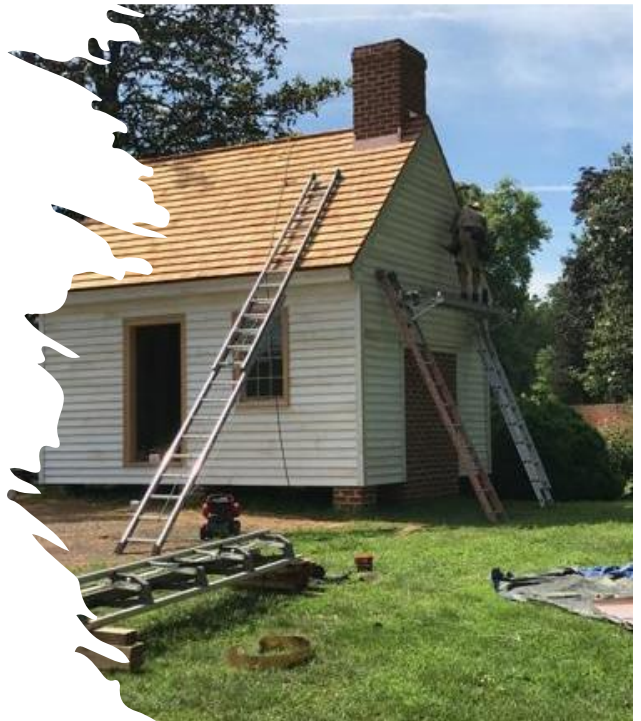
- England brings African slaves to Barbados
- Barbados' climate ideal for sugar production
- Demand in Europe and England high
- Luxury commodity
- Key commodity of the triangular trade with the American colonies
- Molasses seen as a mostly useless byproduct of refining
  - Typically used as calorie source for slaves



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# Slavery in Barbados

- Harsh, unending work
  - Sugarcane year-round crop
  - Exceptionally labor intensive
- Lack of food
  - Often expected to grow own food even while working everyday
- Unsanitary housing
  - Dozens of slaves cramped into a small clapboard building
- No medical care
- Average lifespan could be 20-30 years



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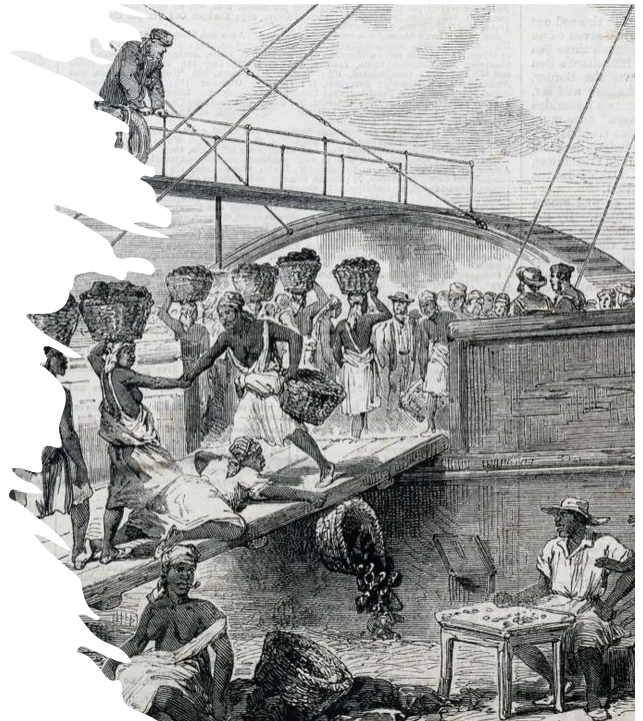
# Slavery



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## British History of Slavery

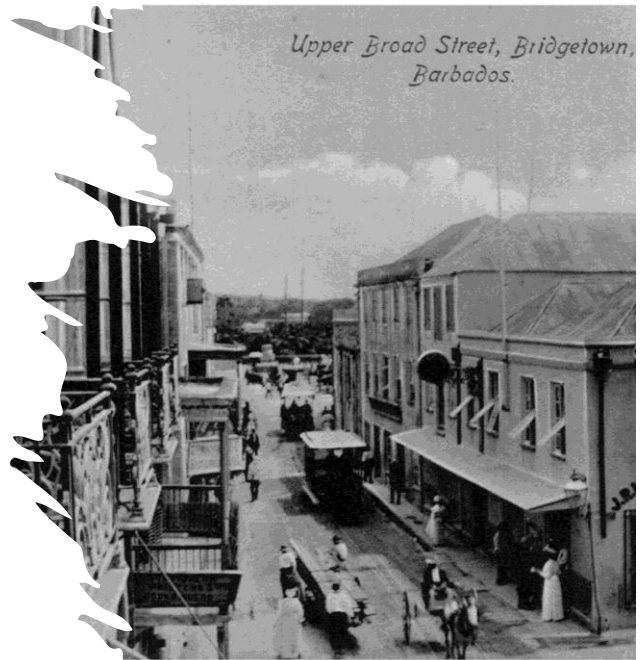
- Participation in Transatlantic Slave Trade
  - Late 1500s-1807
- Importation of slaves to the Americas and Caribbean
- Slave Rebellions
  - Largest in early 1800s
- Britain outlaws slave trade in 1807, but slavery still legal
- Britain abolishes slavery entirely in 1833



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# Barbados After Slavery 1833-1900s

- Difficult transition for freed slaves
  - Social Inequality
  - Treated as second class citizens
- Wealth Inequality
- Industrialization
- Some commercial diversification



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# Modern Barbados

- Voting Rights granted to all in 1950
- Self Governance enacted in 1961
- Independence November 30<sup>th</sup> 1966
- Still member of the British Commonwealth
- Tourism main economic driver
- Lingering socio-economic disparity from slavery



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# Sugar Production

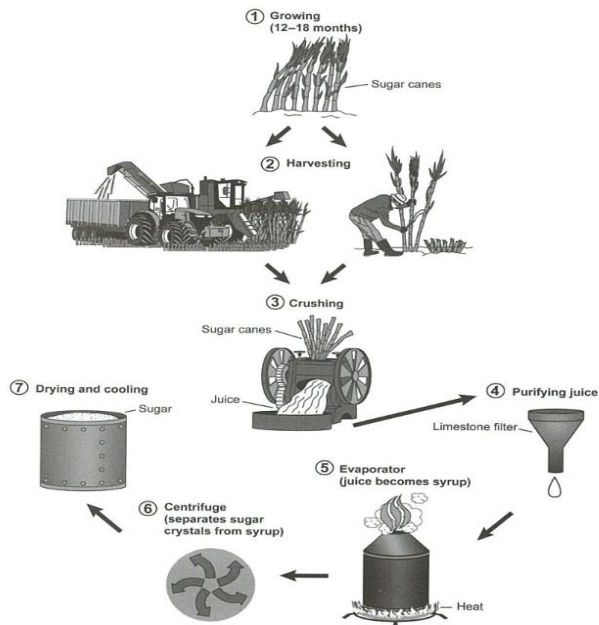
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## The Process

- Harvest Cane
- Juice extraction/Milling
- Purification/Clarification
- Evaporation
- Crystallization
- Separation



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## Barbados Sugar

- 500,000+ tons annually
- Molasses yield around 3-4%
- Most distilleries source sugar or cane from the Island
- Moderate contributor to the Barbados economy
- Emphasis on sustainability and soil preservation



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# Modern Sugar

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## Barbadian Rum

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# Rum

- Fermentation
  - Molasses fermented in open top vats
- Distillation
  - Pot Still, Column Still, or Blend
- Aging
- Finishing
- Bottling



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# Rum History

- Barbados is quite possibly the birthplace of rum
- Mount Gay founded in 1703, worlds oldest distillery
- Production arose out of sugarcane plantations
- Rum became a valuable export in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and another part of the triangle trade
  - Pre-revolution, America's most consumed spirit



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# Barbadian Rum

- Combined production capacity around four million cases
- Four active distilleries:
  - West Indies Rum Distillery (WIRD)
  - St Nicholas Abbey
  - Foursquare (RL Seale)
  - Mount Gay
- Almost entirely molasses based with product made on Barbados
- Usually blend of pot and colum still
- Tropical aging
- Most product exported
- No GI - yet



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Foursquare

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Mount Gay



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WIRD



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Saint Nicholas Abbey



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## English Style

- Typically produced in former English colonies
  - Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, etc.
- Typically produced with a blend of pot and column distilled rums
  - With certain exceptions such as Jamaican 100% pot still
- Usually blend of pot and column still
- Usually molasses-based
- Dark profile and flavor
- Dried fruits
- Some esters/fatty acids



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## Local Consumption

- Corn and Oil
- On the rocks
- Punches
- Cocktails based around tourism and visitors



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## Impact on the US Rum Market

- Throughout the 80s and 90s, rum was a cast off spirit in the US
  - Rum and Coke
  - WIRD/Malibu
- Post-2000, the craft cocktail movement, and tiki renaissance, led to a surge in rum popularity
- Mount Gay was a long stalwart of high-quality rum
- Foursquare and Plantation/Planteray lead to modern Barbadian rum being a standard in the market



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## Trudiann Branker

- First female master blender at Mount Gay
- Dedicated to tradition, but open to new ideas
- Background in chemistry
- Started with Mount Gay in 2014
- Led the updating on Black Barrel and XO Blends
- Current Master Blender releases include
  - Madeira Cask Finish
- Created the first Estate Rum release **23|01|Bn\_Qa**
  - 100% Pot Still
  - \$400/bottle



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## Richard Seale

- Fourth generation rum blender
- Foursquare distillery commissioned in the 1990s
- Embraced finishing and extended aging to create premium rums
- Foursquare rum referred to as the “Pappy” of rums
- Maker of John D Taylor’s Velvet Falernum
- Maker of Doorlys, The Real McCoy, and R.L. Seale
- An active and passionate ambassador for both Barbados and rum
- Dedicated to establishing a GI



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## The Future

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## Geographical Indicaton

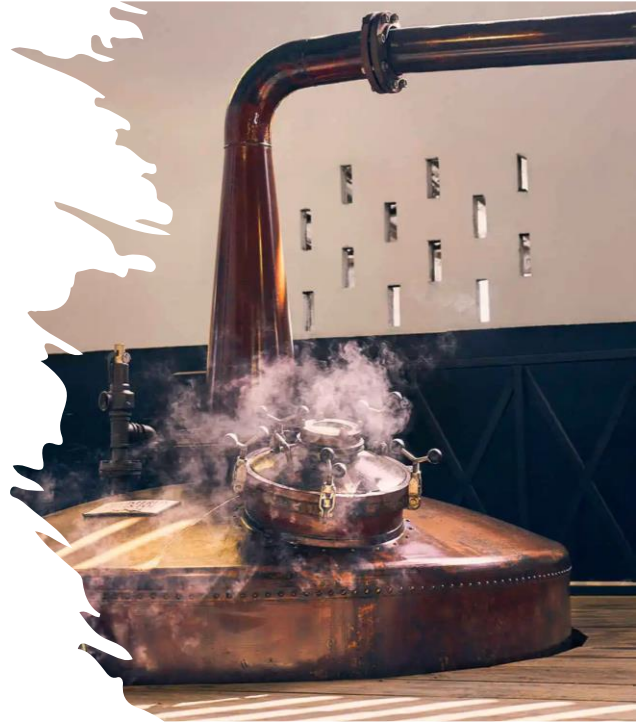
- Proposed Barbadian GI
  - Requires rum to be distilled, matured, and bottled in Barbados
  - No “adulteration”
  - Provides for a separate category for estate grown rums
- St Nicholas, Foursquare, and Mount Gay all agree
- WIRD, owned by Maison Ferrand/Planteray, is against the GI
  - Planteray, formerly Plantation, relies on continental aging in France where they also bottle
- Begs the philosophical question, is it Barbadian rum if it isn't tropically aged and bottled?



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## Trends

- Increased acceptance for high-end, premium rums
  - Driving largely by Barbadian rum
- Extended aging
  - 10+ years now common
- Diversity of finishing
  - Port, Sherry, Wine, etc.
- Rum predicted to increase in market presence and sales through 2032
- Fat-washed Spirits and Cocktails
  - Coconut Oil, Milk, Butter
- Coffee Cocktails
  - Rum natural fit with coffee
- Emphasis on environmental sustainability



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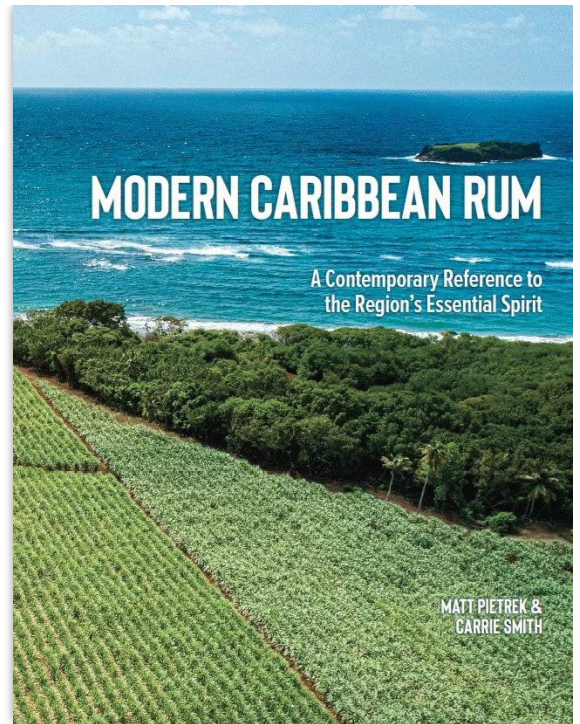


**Any**  
**Questions?**

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## Sources and Suggested Reading/Resources

- **Modern Caribbean Rum** by Matt Pietrek and Carrie Smith
- **The Oxford Companion to Spirits & Cocktails** edited by David Wondrich
- **A History of Barbados** by Hilary McD. Beckles
- **Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History** by Sidney W. Mintz
- **RumWonk.com**
- **The Rumcast**, podcast hosted by Josh Gulla and Will Hoekenga



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