Rum is a sugar cane brandy, retaining its characteristic aromas to distinguish it from cane vodkas (formerly Cane Spirit Rothschild of St Kitts, of the 90s). It cannot be flavored but can be legally watered down (nothing prohibits it in the current regulations). Some opportunistic producers land with cuvées whose aging and bottling techniques such as excessive sweetening masks the characteristics of the cane and its derivatives (such as syrup, sugar and of course molasses) when they do not aromatize certain products without mentioning it, which is reprehensible and contemptuous for the category and the consumers. This phenomenon affects all categories of rum and there are many countries where these practices have been documented for more than a century, but have not disappeared. Therefore, it is more difficult to criticize those producers who made the commercial fame of rum, even before its first legal definitions at the beginning of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, certain industrial techniques have tended to make the rums lighter and lighter for nearly a century. There are then three types of rums: traditional rums, close to the original techniques of the eighteenth and nineteenth century which made it famous, the light industrial rums that made it an international, commercial success, especially thanks to mixed drinks and typical rums, inspired by old local recipes but sometimes incorporating ingredients and aromas exogenous to the cane (should one then call them tafia [a drink similar to rum, distilled from molasses or waste from the production of brown sugar] or aguardiente de caña [strong alcoholic beverages, obtained by fermentation and later distillation of sugared or sweet musts, vegetable macerations, or mixtures of the two]?). Of course, these are not rigid cases and hybrids exist at all levels.

All are made from sugarcane and belong to the family of rums, even the spiced rums (if one recognizes well the character of the basic rum, directly or indirectly), Haitian soaked, cremasses, punches or liqueurs to Base of rum and arranged rums. In order to define rum in the 21st century, it is necessary to study the history, methods of production of each country and to engage freely between producers and consumers. But in any case, be vigilant, because the attraction of rum brings back the temptation of the coupage with neutral spirits at low prices of beet or cereal, which are sold to you at low prices or in Cocktails premixed in bottle or in pressure and whose rum is not the main ingredient: is a mojito at the pump always based on rum? Nothing guarantees this.
When is rum no longer rum? This is the question that was asked by Ian Burrell at a conference / debate at Tales of the Cocktails in New Orleans and the debate that has been animating and still animating the rhumosphere for months. We chose to give the floor to those who make rum. A handful of them agreed to answer us and we asked each of them the same questions by directing the debate on technical details often neglected or not at all controlled by lovers certainly enlightened but sometimes under influence, of which we have Also invited a colorful representative.

Our questions (below), some of our experts have answered point by point and others have chosen to free themselves from them to embark on lyrical but uncompromising surprises (Alexandre Gabriel), to mention only rum in a positive way (François Longueteau, or a technical precision and ultra-pointed (Marc Sassier) ... Opinions of real experts and an amateur.

**OUR QUESTIONS: - WHEN IS RUM NOT RUM?**

**CAN YOU GIVE YOUR POSITION ON ...?**

- Special fermentations: very long fermentation, development of fungus or bacteria (great aroma, clairin, batavia arrack, shochu).
- Extra pure distillation around 96.5% (or very low non-alcohol content).
- Assembly / Cutting with pure (cane) distillate.
- Aging in special barrels (wine barrels, essences other than oak).
- Use of wood chips.
- Use of woody solution.
- Very strong filtration (activated carbon).
- Sweetening (sugar, syrup, molasses - black rum, etc.) And what threshold?
- Flavoring (fruits, spices - spiced rum - etc.)
"Want to codify rum in some simple formulas even simplistic in wanting to put it in boxes would be a serious mistake"

Alexander Gabriel, Plantation Rum, Maison Ferrand, Charente.

To answer the question directly, rum ceases to be rum when, at the tasting, it no longer has the characteristics of its raw material, which is sugar cane, under its different forms. This principle is central. So, the work of the Distiller and the Blender is to make a superb spirit of character by working according to his own technique and which is often the heritage of his country and natural environment. Thus, excessive rectification by distillation, to an excessively high degree, may alter the rum. This for us, is the moment when it then changes category and becomes vodka.

Same for activated carbon filtrations that would be too strong and which would again alter the natural qualities of the product. With Plantation, we work and offer rums above all for their character which is cut and marked. Indeed, it is necessary to think the rum knowing him in the diversity of his cultures and his knowledge. It is fundamental. To codify rum in some simple or even simplistic formulas by wanting to put it in a box would be a serious mistake. To understand the richness of the culture of rum, one must think of that of wine, of all the wines of the world. It seems ridiculous to want to summarize or codify according to a single rule for all the wines of the world (same grape variety, same vinification, etc.). The same must be true for rum, because cultural wealth is comparable or even superior (Editor’s note: it is a cognac producer who says this).

For many years, with the team that works passionately with me for the Plantation Rum we study and practice the technical and cultural elements of rum and their diversity and we work to know them and master them perfectly. It is also because we know them well that we are fighting to preserve them. Within the Plantation team, we have an inflexible discipline whereby each of us refrains from discussing or criticizing (in the etymological sense of the word) a technique he does not master. We believe that ignorance is destructive and that pleasure comes with knowledge. We are always shocked to see some criticize techniques that they do not know or do not master because it is necessarily reductive. That is why, for example, we imported molasses and cane syrup to Cognac to distill ourselves. Not to make a marketable product but to further understand the raw material and fermentation techniques in a non-partisan way.

In the same way that for wine, traditions and production cultures are significantly different from one region to another. They are also historically and geographically for rum from one country to another and this is what makes it a fascinating product. This is what we tirelessly endeavor to highlight with the range of Plantation Rums.
WHY SHOULD RUM COPY WHISKY?

Yet some are trying to impose a narrower and still European framework to dictate to producing countries how to make rum. This often by imitating whiskey or some of its elements. Why should rum copy whiskey when it has so much to offer in the diversity and richness of its cultures and techniques? Should not one rather try to understand the rum in all its diversities that are exciting? For example, and specifically: should one impose a certain type of distillation apparatus by prohibiting the other? Should we impose a single time of fermentation by forbidding for example the long fermentations yet so interesting (as for the rum flavors of France, formerly called "industrial rums" or high ester of Jamaica, not to mention the Haitian clairins)? Should we impose a place where it must be aged while for centuries the best rums have also been elaborated in double aging? Should we impose a minimum age for the marketing of rum, forbidding certain countries to offer their rum in their freshness and florality at the end of the still (DOC Venezuela requires a minimum of 2 years, for example, and rare are rums Non-aged latinos, ed.)?

On all these points, some want to rewrite the history of rum and / or to enclose it in a single shackle. It would not only be idiotic, it would amputate the rum of a good part of its DNA. A simplification of the rum would be at its expense and at the expense of its diversity and its richness gustative and therefore our pleasure. This is something I have been thinking about over 20 years ago. I've done a lot of work on myself on this. As a young man, when I worked rum for the first time, I thought that a "real" rum could only be distilled in a still. Indeed, for me who knew well the richness and finesse of the distillation in small still of copper on naked fire, the column was an unacceptable compromise simply motivated by the cost price which is lower. And then, I tasted, listened, worked and learned. I discovered and then worked column rums that are delicious. The same is true for dosing. A country, France, with agricultural rums which are products that I appreciate, recently banned the dosage (late 1980s early 1990). Why not? However, must we prohibit it for all the rest of the Caribbean and the world that has been practicing it for centuries? We can’t ignore or erase parts of cultures and techniques of rum with a backhand. I think they should be learned and understood.

During the debate on the rum at Tales of a Cocktail where I was a panelist, I found some interesting remarks that illustrate my point. For one of the then present producers, Roberto of the Serrallés distillery, it is difficult to accept that other powerful distillers market a white rum that has not been aged because in Puerto Rico a rum must legally be aged 2 years At least before being marketed. I understand the frustration of Roberto because other countries do not have to wait 2 years before marketing their rum. What then? Impose to all countries to age at least 2 years? I say categorically no, with all due respect to my friend Roberto. I think we must understand and respect the tradition and history of each country and accept that there are differences. Rather than reducing them, you have to know and explain them. It is these differences that make the beauty of rum. We can not simplify here either because we could not then enjoy a super high ester of Jamaica when leaving the still or a very beautiful Clarin. That would be a shame. Again, the solution lies in knowledge and curiosity. It is up to us producers to work and explain those points of diversity that make the richness of rum. I sometimes say to some colleagues who criticize their competition, "explain to us what is unique in your way of
doing, educate us on your technique and what makes your specificity rather than criticism that of one or other that you do not really know its foundations ".

Thus, and according to the philosophy of the Plantation house, we are in favor of the use of different types of barrels. Not only the barrels of bourbon but also the other type of barrels allowing interesting double maturations like for example the barrels of port, cognac etc. The Plantation range also offers some rums that benefit from these expressions which, although rare, are often delicious.

CERTAIN SIMPLIFICATION THEMES MUST BE MISSED

In the same way, we are currently working some of the Plantation rums in barrels of other wood species such as Amburana or Grappia which are fantastic essences of the Amazon rainforest. This type of farming brings interesting notes of taste. For this, we worked with the University of São Paulo to use trees that are not threatened. It is necessary to be wary of certain types of simplification, which are often defended for purely commercial purposes. This has always been the case, not just for rum. There are technical and historical principles that are intrinsic and inalienable for rum. They are moreover well set out in Regulation 110/2008 of the European Community. I encourage everyone to read it if it is not already done (in its entirety and with its interactions with the whole regulation, to avoid the hasty interpretations, editor's note).

On the substance, the cardinal principle is that of transparency on the part of producers and that of education in its noblest sense. Sharing knowledge. At the production, the more one knows things the more pleasure one has to work the rum. I think it is the same for Consumers. It is for that reason that I am always delighted to see this enthusiasm and curiosity for this wonderful product.

It is sometimes forgotten that a great rum is above all the creation of a person or a team carrying a knowledge, an inheritance and also a vision. It is only very rarely the result of a barrel that would have been there by chance and which by a miracle would be good. Excellence is hard, it requires talent, passion, work, a lot of work. It is also worth recalling that, modestly, all this tends to a single thing, to give rise to emotion. And rum is so much emotion.
« There are too many marketing methods - So that the consumer really knows what he is going to drink " » Hervé Damoiseau, 
Oiseau de Grande-Terre, producers of the best agricultural rum in the world.

A rum is not a rum when it is produced from other raw materials than sugar cane and there is so much added sweeteners and flavorings, that one would rather catalog it in the range of liqueurs or punches.

Special fermentations: very long fermentation, development of fungus or bacterium (great aroma, clairin, batavia arrack, shochu). 
To each his methods and his corporate culture. Each producer considers that his method brings the aromas that he likes to share with his consumers. This is what makes our rum diverse and must not be standardized.

Extra pure distillation around 96.5% (or very low non-alcohol content). 
Here too, each of its methods and its corporate culture. At Rhum Damoiseau, we are between 86 and 88% while guaranteeing the 225g of TNA that bring the necessary flavor elements! Well known international brands are close to 60g and are therefore more neutral, which does not correspond to our habits and is far removed from the taste appreciated by us. That may be why we represent only 1% of the world market. One could smile and say, "All that is rare is precious."

Assembly / Cutting with pure (cane) distillate. A blend? Why not on aging but the white rum must remain as is.

Aging in special barrels (wine barrels, essences other than oak). 
Originally two species were allowed, oak and chestnut. The finishes as they appear in recent years, in barrels of Sauternes, Porto, etc., are very interesting but I wonder if this will not lead to an evolution of our current GIs or AOCs because we could ask the question whether it is not a form of light sweetening?

Use of wood chips.
As long as we stay in the natural why not.
Use of woody solution.
If added before aging ... Never after, otherwise it becomes flavoring.

Very strong filtration (activated charcoal).
If some people find it interesting, why not.

Edulcoration (sugar, syrup, molasses - black rum, etc.) And what threshold?
I am against it and if it is necessary to change the legislation on the matter, we should not exceed 15g / L because it must be clear that the consumer loves sweet products, which also poses a health problem with obesity. The addition of colorant as it is natural caramel in order to refine the coloring is OK but, here too, within defined limits.

**Aromatization (fruits, spices - spiced rum - etc.)**

No problem as long as the product loses the denomination "rum". There is too much marketing method so that the consumer really knows what he is going to drink ... but there is the problem of taxation of the product.

"Would you ask a wine not to be a wine ...Because yes we are at this stage "  
Marc Sassier (à titre personnel),  
**Director of production at Saint James, president of**  
**the Cane and Sugar Technical Center (CTCS) and of the Martinique AOC Tasting Jury.**

This cane brandy, which sometimes takes the name of Cachaça or more generic of Arrack according to the production zones, is defined at European level by Regulation 100/2008. Behind the term hides several approaches and definitions of the term, there is not a rum but rums. While it is commonly accepted that its origin is linked to cane or molasses derived from the manufacture of sugar, other countries are wider, thus some additions such as aromas (see national standard of Guatemala COGUANOR NGO 33011 for example) when others open the field of possibilities (Definition of India 2012 point 2.5 authorizing as raw material the beet but prohibiting any artificial color!). So, a minima rum should be produced exclusively from cane juice or molasses, which is reflected in European legislation. This raises the problem of the consumer’s readability of what he consumes with the content and the labeling of the container, these are some personal reflections.

**FOR THE RUM**

By remaining in sugar cane raw material, we have the dichotomy between "agricultural rum" and "rum of candy or rum". From there, the fermentation affects the aromatic potential of the raw material by modifying it, exalting it or transforming it, giving products that are specific, such as the Grand Aroma. The distillation stage is to raise this aromatic potential because, if the influence of the raw material is always residual (thus no notes of sugar burnt in "agricultural"), the degree of distillation and the assembly of the still will greatly influence. For the degree of distillation, it is possible to go to light rum distillate to a high degree where hardly more than 5 g / PAH of non-alcoholic strength (TNA) remains today, against a Martinique AOC agricultural rum for example which, Cast between 65 and 75%, has at least 225 g / PAH of TNA. The latter, having no right to extractions / pasteurizations, successive columns and re-distillation, retains its initial potential and therefore all its variety.
It is also a historical question of use, in traditional rum for French GIs, this high TNA minima responded to the control of the market of wine spirits after the attacks of mildew and phylloxera, when for Anglophones, in particular to get rid of the taste of rum, made ironing and alcohol as neutral as possible (extra pure!), Especially in the late nineteenth century with the search for absolute alcohol. Then the French criterion for rum will be to have its organoleptic characteristics (as early as 1903). So much so that the rum lightens to the maximum becomes a base that is then flavored to sell it under the name rum ... the raw material is not enough? To each his art in terms of equipment (see the number of Rumporter dedicated to the distillation).

FOR FINISHING, ADDITIONS

Fermentations (controlled temperature, bacterial, yeast ...), distillations (distillations, distillations, etc.), Column, iron, with or without extraction ...) which leaves many possibilities. But here again a great deal of room for maneuver is offered to the producer. Will he leave it white, pass it undergrowth ... but then what relationship to the wood, big thunderbolts or small barrels, what kind of wood, what heating, what previous use ... And this is where we will play on strategies to reveal one character in relation to another. The problem is not the possible combinations but what is behind it, namely, whether the tree does not hide the forest and I invite you to read the books of adulteration of brandy from the early 1900s to the present. 1920 where we find neither more nor less than a debate quite similar to that of present day. For me the specific character of rum must be the driving force of its conception.

For example, the woodlot has been authorized since the decree of 1921 in France, but it has not been included in 110/2008 except for spirits of wine. Technically one adds extract of aqueous wood with brandy to supplement the extraction of the barrels thus allowing the re-use of old barrels which bring many other things without forgetting the economic advantage when one knows the current price of drums on the market in the face of lack of availability. If the wood is oak, extracted in an aqueous manner and not by any other altering process, as in rum, should it be seen as aromatization? For my part, not as long as one remains in a moderate practice (see degree of obscuration) because we must not leave the door open to a woodwork at all odds to supply barrels with an industrial manufacture in stainless steel tanks for example. Similarly, the chips do not reflect a use proper to natural aging, they may have undergone heating, flavoring also do not make it possible to be as safe. On the other hand, to add aromatics, herbaceous extracts, do we not leave the usual process of manufacture of rum? For then the aroma gives an exogenous component. What about a definition of rum that would allow such an addition, which Europe forbids besides and then foresees the term liqueur or punch for these categories? Similarly, when we speak of "finish", that shows us: a choice of barrel to bring the natural flavors in a particular evolution or a commercial display to help to sell a product and to create the novelty while leaving the nails, to have a product that has forgotten to be rum and that becomes phagocyte by the added product? The texts on this subject in France and at European level (Article 103 of the EC 1308/2013) point out that the mixing of two product categories with or without geographical denominations leads to a ‘spirit drink’ ... and the Regulation provides for categories of Compound names and their labeling (INCO and 110/2008).

The addition of sugar comes into the same debate: is sugar added to correct an imbalance, to bring roundness or make the product attractive to the taste when it is not enough to itself
naturally? Here again Europe has foreseen the categories of punch and liqueurs ... but also categories of sugar, caramel (which comes under the same debate) yet well differentiated: coloring, sweetening. But, to quote a friend, "is not this a false debate, which indirectly already conveys the idea that sugar is necessary, and therefore already accepted? A simple way is to limit the obscuration or masking (difference between real degree in alcohol and degree measured by density) brought by these additions, for by changing the density they vary the degree by lowering it (hence the term Obscuration or masking of the true degree), especially sugar in a quasi-linear manner. Thus for 1° of masking it is necessary to count between 3 and 4g of sucrose per liter, on the other hand in old one must then integrate the interaction with the components extracted from the wood. And the masks of tells additions add up ... In Martinique AOC rum (without additions) the obscuration increases with age, it is maximum after 15 years without ever having exceeded 2°. Thus, the degree of obscuration very simple to measure remains a good marker of a natural spirit vs an improved “drinking-water”, whether by wood, sugar or any other molecule, should limit it, the GIs and the AOC did so, why not the others?

At the moment when rum is distinguished by its origins too, how can we not erase them by the addition of sugar, level any intrinsic difference of the product in its matter and its process? How can we speak of agricultural rum which excludes any derivative of the manufacture of sugar when one wants to drown it from this matter? Curious to hear about adding sugar without ever hearing any limits, influence on the product as if it should be and would be natural. It is then necessary to reflect on the incidence of sugar on the final taste in order to know if this would come into play the notion of origin, imagine a chocolate whose soil would be consecrated by its sugar content!

In conclusion, as an individual, certainly the rum has the wind in its sail, from the oldest producers to the novices who want to participate in this craze, but at what price and for how much time? The stakes are enormous both financial and in the modification of the existing. So what to ask of rum? The moon? Would you ask a wine not to be a wine? Because yes, we are at this stage, where to differentiate some want to defend the gains. However, In all the parameters evoked in the process, of what to find particularisms without using artifices that do not make rum but that divert it from its nature? At the apogee of this reflection must we sacrifice specificities of origins and originals and ultimately join the common? Is not this to abandon one's know-how, one's art to a mere bargain? But then what will remain when all these modes, these good-thinking ones will have passed?

Let us not make legislation an enemy, the responsible of all evolution, diversity ... as in the time of the pirates! In short, do not attribute to it our failings, our mercantilism, but that it remains our safeguard. The current success of French geographical names Which lead other countries to take an interest in it, is it not the expression of a know-how that has managed to make it known by a rigorous and controlled definition guaranteeing its typicity? And the current enthusiasm for "agricultural" would not hold to this rigor which gives all its exception to the product? But it is not enough just to define principles, must they also be enforced and enforced to protect the consumer, display it by means of labeling regulated, that he knows what he consumes, it is his right! And this does not go against diversity, do not reverse roles to destroy what exists.
"The first cultural identification of rum was born in Barbados"

Richard Seale
Master Distiller, Foursquare Rum Distillery in Barbados (family business, 4th generation).

I think we live in an era of written definitions and many people think that the specifications were first written and then we started to make rum. Obviously, it is the opposite. First there was rum, a spirit identified by its flavor, and this flavor came from sugar cane wine. Then we began to codify what is supposed to be a culturally-named spirit called rum. Codification is a modern phenomenon, which occurred at the turn of the 20th century. Therefore, the identity of a spirit comes from its flavor, not from a specification.

The next point revolves around culture. So even if two spirits are made in the same way and one is culturally rum and the other of the clairin, then they each have their identity. The cultural aspect is important. So, for me, cachaça or batavia arrack are not rums, they have a different cultural identity. The fact that they have a technical distinction further emphasizes this difference.

The first cultural identification of rum was born in Barbados. But it is certain that the distillation of a sugarcane wine was not invented in Barbados. The technology came from Brazil, brought by the Dutch, just like sugar cane. We know this because the distillation of the 1640s in Barbados is far too advanced to achieve such refinement in just a few years. However, what we understand culturally and socially as rum is a beverage invented in Barbados.

Agricultural rum is rum, although it is a special subcategory as it is an evolution of rum in the Caribbean with a common heritage. Note that the earliest trace of rum production in Barbados evokes the use of scum and not of molasses. The first Production of rum comes directly from the grinding of the cane even if it has evolved to use molasses. Regulation is not a restriction, it is protection. It does not prevent anyone from doing what he wants. So, if your personal tradition is to macerate fruit in your rum, then you make "rum with macerated fruit" and you identify it / label it as such. The rules of bourbon, scotch whiskey or cognac exist to protect their identities. You want to borrow the valuing names of these on your label because of the value they carry, so you must meet the standards or create your own standard, your own identity and build the value of your own identity.

The use of yeasts and bacteria (dunder) has a long tradition in the production of rum. Of course, there are certainly fungal spores / fungi involved. Just visit a historic distillery like Hampden to know that this is the case (Ed, Richard went there this year). But we must be careful, a rule is written to codify the practice. It is not because the involvement of certain mushrooms is not regulated that it is a reason to create a cane wine with little flavor identifiable as rum.

A: About ultra-pure distillations with more than 96% alcohol like vodka?
A spirit derives its identity from its flavor. If it is tasteless, then it has no identity. It is not enough for a spirit to be based on molasses to be called rum, just as it is not enough for spirits to be based on cereals to be whiskey! As for the assembly with this type of spirits without flavor, it is no longer rum: a rum must be 100% rum.

A: And the aromatization, the use of special drums and active filtration?
Regarding aromatization, if one changes the source of the flavors, then one changes identity (Editor's Note: Foursquare produces a spiced rum labeled as such, dry moreover). The use of special drums has always been accepted as an exogenous source of flavors, that is historically the means of transport and storage, including then also the barrels of wines. On the other hand, the use of drums made from other wood species than the oak is not in use so we do not need to regulate a use that is not present or omnipresent. Also, as oak is accepted as an exogenous source of flavors, one must always consider that a rum is a rum if one uses chips or extracts of oak. As for activated carbon filtration, for example, it does not induce the addition of exogenous flavors, so it is not a problem as long as it does not remove all flavors (Editor’s note: Foursquare offers a filtered 3-year old).

The addition of sugar in a rum makes it a "sweetened rum". It is a practice that is prohibited in whiskey, limited in cognac or well mentioned for the "cachaça adoçada". Labeling a sweetened rum as rum is incorrect and misleading!

"Rum is also a transmission from generation to generation of know-how"  François Longueateau
Has chosen to choose a positive angle and turn it otherwise. His answer is, in a way: "the rum for me is that."

My oldest memory of rum dates back to the age of 5, in the early 1990s, and I lived on the estate 400 meters from the distillery. I probably had to play with my little plastic tractor when the wind brought me a sweet fragrance of sweet cane juice. I would then go to join my father at the distillery, to taste for the very first time fresh cane juice. Rum, for me, is above all sugar cane, more precisely cane juice, its sweet side that is obtained from the first chew of the stick as a totally natural sweet that I could eat without my parents forbidding it.

It was much later, around ten years ago, that I became aware that all the cane juice that was crushed was actually used for the production of rum. I remember walking around with the tourists through the distillery, explaining how we made this famous rum from the sugar cane juice that everyone could drink and taste and which ran just a few meters away.
Rum is also a moment of sharing, of conviviality. You will understand that later I did not put much time to ask for my first rum punch, obviously under the strict control of my mother, disconcerted by my request, and under the amused eye of my father who expected very clearly to see me make a nice grimace. It must be clear, at that time, the rum was not my cup of tea ... how a juice so sweet and fruity could give a drink so strong to sting my throat and nostrils?

It’s also the rum, it tams! Its youthful and powerful character may surprise more than one. Whether in the vat or in the glass, it is necessary to aerate it. Giving the time necessary to develop its aromas, but we also need time to prepare to appreciate such a beverage.

Rum is also a transmission from generation to generation of a know-how. I remember my grandfather who did not miss a day without walking through fields, watching with his sharp eye the quality of plantation growth. He continued his walk to the distillery to control the juice and distillation to ensure complete continuity between the fields and the distillery.

Later the rum knew to accompany my student evenings, becoming also a festive moment: pure, in punch, in planter, in cocktail ... but also greedy in pancakes and cakes. Finally, it is also a moment of relaxation at the end of the day, being aware of the time it took us to arrive until then. If man controls the workings, only nature preserves its authenticity.

It is true that, in the past, legislation could require that only a sugar cane-producing country could sell "rum" as such, but the collapse of colonial empires has led to the gradual extinction of sugar production and thus the disappearance of cane fields in most of the small West Indies, with the notable exception of the French West Indies where the production of agricultural rum cohabits with sugar production, while Trinidad and Puerto Rico for example uses imported molasses. It is therefore not certain that a child growing there knows the taste of cane juice and makes the link with the rum.

"It is mainly these additions that disturb me. They are neither more nor less, lies by omission, intended to deceive the consumer"

*Od Underwood*

*Enlightened amateur, member of the rum brotherhood and creator of the agricultural rum community.*

I discovered rum in the evening through cocktails and mixes more or less happy, usually with low quality rums. I then discovered better quality products on trips, but it was four years ago, during a stay in Martinique, that I fell "in love" with rum by discovering Houses like Neisson, Depaz, HSE or Three Rivers. Since then I have sought to deepen my knowledge first by tasting as much rum as possible and then by taking an interest in manufacturing processes and history.
After a round of the world of rum, having caused me many disappointments, I returned to my first love, agricultural rum.

When does, rum stop being rum? A wide-ranging debate that raises several issues, including information about bottles. For some years now, we have witnessed the emergence of new brands, surfing on the infatuation for rum, with great blows of seductive packaging. This is not an evil in itself, but what I consider problematic, and which therefore refers to the question asked, is the elaboration of these products and disinformation that goes with it. Rum is a distillate derived from sugar cane. Whether it is based on molasses or sugarcane juice. Different visual, olfactory and flavor properties arise from several factors. Cane, fermentation, distillation, aging, barrels used, assemblages, all these parameters bring the wonderful diversity that we know. Unfortunately, with these new brands, appears a new factor, that of the additions.

In order to give these new rums "character", it is customary (test in laboratories to support) to resort to the addition of various artifices. Sugar, honey, caramel, spices, wood chips (ideal to make believe in an aging process) or even glycerine are as much joyousness that is found in these drinks. And that's where, in my opinion, we can no longer talk about rum. In addition to the deceptions on the more than doubtful ages mentioned on the bottles (I think of bottles advertising 7, 10 or 12 years for brands appeared in 2012 or 2010), these are mainly additions that disturb me.

It is nothing more or less, than lies by omission, to deceive the consumer. That a rum has a subtle note of fruit is normal. It is the fruit of a know-how ranging from the choice of the cane until its aging via the work of goldsmith of the cellar masters. But that it has the taste of a Grand Marnier with vanilla and caramel or banana Haribo is not. These opinions bind only me and I may be wrong, but I wait for it to be proved to me. Now, for the moment, between the various analyzes and the palaces of many connoisseurs, I am afraid to be in the truth even if I know that my remarks could be, if not thwarted, at least nuanced.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of finishes. Very fashionable recently. For some this denatures the rum and as a result, we might consider that the appellation is usurped. I do not agree. Certainly, the touch brought by these barrels containing other alcohols, modifies the taste or even the sugar content of the finished product, but it must be borne in mind that certain rums are fully aged in barrels that other brands use in Finishing (I think of Longueteau whose rums are aged in cognac barrels) and that in any case, with rare exceptions, all rums are aged in drums that have already been used. My remarks could be considered as those of a sectarian intransigent who appreciates only the agricultural rum of the French islands. There's a bit of truth. These are my preferences. But I can still appreciate and recognize the quality of other rums that come from molasses or pure cane juice. Mauritius, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Barbados ... many countries offer a quality offering without resorting to these modern methods.
Interview with Javier Herrera

When we learned that Javier Herrera was flaunting his "rum manifesto" to bring ALL producers together on a set of common principles, he was initially called laughing at the positions and cultures of both others seem irreconcilable at the regulatory level. He was asked if they had succeeded in getting all the rum crops to agree that the sky was blue. But Javier did not disassemble and revealed to us the existence of a very real threat to the appellation: the appearance on the market of the first prices and under the denomination 'rum' of large quantities of coarse mixtures of 'Alcohols, from cereal to beetroot, and cut from a little of our favorite cane brandy.

Rumporter: You just launched the "Manifesto of Rum" at your show in Madrid in June. Tell us what it is.

Javier Herrera: First of all, it is an initiative of the producers themselves, taken at the 'Rum Congress' in Madrid last June (congress that Javier organizes every year in spring). They are the ones most affected by threats to Cane alcohol. Personally, I just served as a witness and a spokesperson for its drafting and dissemination. At no time, am I the initiator of this step, even if I am united with it in front of the appearance of products that claim to be rums, while they are vulgar mixtures of all kinds of alcohol. At the moment, in these mixtures, we find mainly rice alcohols in Asia, grapes and beets in Europe, sorghum in the Americas, but there are many others. There is deception for the consumer and if the real producers of rum do nothing against this recrudescence of false rums, we are going to a disaster. It is time to unite and set aside the other debates. What is the use of fighting for the recognition of still and unedicated rum if at the same time, it is possible to produce and above all to sell without control the 'rum' which is a mixture of sorgo alcohol and Life of cane?

A: How will you organize your association?

What did you call it?

JH: It’s called the Hermandad Vigia del Ron (Editor's Note: the Vigilant Fraternity of Rum). In principle, it is up to the producers themselves. It should take time since they hold and have to do it themselves. In a first move, I will undertake to have it registered by the Spanish Ministry of Industry, to give it a legal identity, in at least one country. After that, it will be up to the producers to decide if they want to do something with it. As always, it is money that, if not the engine, will be the fuel to structure the movement. It is reasonable to assume that the European Union, which is already largely funding WIRSPA for example, can contribute to the protection of European consumers. Producers and consumers themselves can also contribute.

A: How does this threat come about and what measures do you think this association can push to implement?

JH: There are few brands that are concerned with deception, it is especially at the level of the white brands (or private labels) that the problem is encountered, with distributors who want to create their brands at impossible prices. It is imperative that the European authorities introduce traceability of cane alcohol. In Spain, we have 'bloody' cases with rums sold 4 € HT. When you
know that excise taxes are around 2,70 €, it leaves 1,30 € to pay the dispenser, the rum, the bottle, the capsule

**A: Who has signed so far and how do we sign the Manifesto and join the association?**
JH: It's in the congress that everything will happen. Depending on the interest aroused, we will organize something during the days of our festival. It is nevertheless already possible to sign the petition online (here) and join the movement on our Facebook group (*Editor’s Note: La Hermandad del Ron*).

**A: Finally, the question of the summer, which will be debated at Tales of the Cocktails under the moderation of Ian Burrell, "When is Rum not a rum?"**
JH: A rum must be 100% alcohol from sugar cane. Only caramel must be allowed to harmonize the color and, in the European case, it must be bottled at least 37.5%. Only natural aging should be allowed and control on artificial additives should be rapidly available, which for the time being is not possible.

**A PROPOSAL TO GO FORWARD:**
**THE "TRADITIONAL RUM"**

*By Alexandre Vingtier*

What if the use of the "traditional" label on rum tags, as defined in the European regulations, offered the rum sector the opportunity to clarify the current debate? It is true that there is, on the one hand, a lack of clarity regarding the sugar levels of certain rums (which the labeling of nutritional information for spirits might improve shortly) and, on the other hand, often imagine that rum producers use local cane juice or molasses from local sweets ... while molasses can come several thousand kilometers since several islands have no more sweets.

During the France Quintessence exhibition, the question was raised during the conference on the relevance of the French model in terms of definitions of production and labeling of rums produced under AOC or IG (Geographical Indication).

It is also known that it is extremely difficult to create new regulations at European level on such a broad category, but an existing text already defines a reference guaranteeing a local origin of cane and a lack of sweetening. Here is what the European regulations tell us about this:

> the term 'traditional' may supplement one of the geographical indications mentioned in category 1 of Annex III where the rum is produced by distillation at less than 90% vol after alcoholic fermentation of alcoholic products exclusively originating in the place of production concerned. The volatile content of this rum must be equal to or greater than 225 grams per hectolitre of alcohol at 100% vol and shall not be sweetened. The use of the term 'traditional' does not preclude the use of the terms 'from the production of sugar' or 'agricultural', which may be added to the sales description 'rum' and geographical indications.
Thus, for rums under Geographical Indication (Guadeloupe, Réunion ... but also Malaga, Granada, Madeira and Guatemala), the mention "traditional" guarantees the total absence of sweetening, 0 grams of sugar per liter, a wealth (A fermentation and a distillation giving a naturally rich rum at the exit of the column) and finally a distillation to less than 90% vol (which excludes assemblages of very rich rums with light rums). In addition, all the raw material must be local, juice, syrup or molasses. So even most francophone producers use the traditional term to refer to molasses rums, which is a common mistake, unfortunately. But here is the catch:

*This provision shall not affect the use of the term 'traditional' to qualify all products not covered by this provision according to their own specific criteria.*

And if we were just asking for an extension of this mention to all rums marketed in Europe? Producers in the Caribbean and elsewhere could thus guarantee the use of local raw materials, derived from cane fields of the island or archipelago concerned for example, the absence of sweetening and a certain aromatic richness thanks to fermentation and distillation techniques. The use of state-of-the-art columns born in the 1930s for the production of light rum (and ethanol) cocktails and blends would not be able to avail themselves of this mention "traditional rum".

Or, and this is the trend observed with the extension of GIs to third countries like Guatemala, it is first expected that producer countries will create a GI to meet the European criteria. Venezuela prides itself on having a DOC, Cuba has created its Geographical Indication, Barbados has a project since at least 2011, the Brazilian cachaça has made great strides in its regulation, classification (artisanal or industrial, watered down or No ...) and its protection, Jamaica has a legal arsenal, Mauritius could follow ... they only have to finalize their specifications and file their application for recognition to the EU! Thus, we know better the specificities of each origin and its types of rums and thanks to the mention "traditional rum", one would guarantee the absence of sweetening and a fermentation / distillation giving a rum naturally rich in aromas. Indeed, it is easy to control the level of alcohol, but also the level of obscuration and also sweetening, as well as the level of non-alcohol. A perfect guarantee for the consumer which should be systematic and pronounced aromatic deviations should help to unmask the flavors to excess (the lighter ones are in fact virtually undetectable). So, what do you think of the Geographical Indications and their specifications and this mention "traditional rum"? Because without clear and precise legislation, a more or less relevant classification is only a vision and does not provide any guarantee beyond a mere declaration by a producer. Legislating is not a panacea but still allows producers to compete on an equal footing in the European market if serious and systematic controls are put in place.