

Rum

Modern day rum is believed to have originated more than 400 years ago in the Caribbean. Rum is made from water, yeast, and sugar. The sugar is derived from sugar cane, sugar cane syrup, sugar cane molasses, or other sugar cane byproduct. To produce rum, sugar cane is crushed. The juice that is extracted is boiled and put into a machine that spins around at high rates of speed to crystallize the sugar and separate it from the remaining particles. At this point, it is called molasses. The molasses is re-boiled and mixed with water and yeast, allowed to ferment, then distilled to produce rum. Rum may be distilled in either a pot still or a continuous still. Rum is usually bottled at 80 proof, however, some rums are bottled at higher proofs (as high as 151 proof).

There are several classifications of rum. Each classification depends on the amount of time the product is aged and/or the distillation process.

"White or "light" rum must be aged at least one year in oak barrels. It has a light, dry taste.

"Gold" or "amber" rums are aged for a minimum of three years in oak barrels. It has a deeper, mellower taste than light rum. Gold or amber rums receive their color from aging in the wood casks and sometimes from the addition of caramel.

"Anejo" rums are aged four to six years in oak casks. It has an even deeper and mellower taste than gold or amber rum.

"Dark" or "full-bodied" rums are aged five to seven years in oak casks and have a deep, pungent aroma and strong taste. Dark rums add the residue from a previous distillation to the molasses and then allow the combination to ferment for 5-20 days (similar to sour mash whiskey production). The fermented liquid is then distilled twice.

Some experts lump all of these types of rum into two categories: Light-bodied and full-bodied. White, gold and anejo rums are considered light bodied by these folks. Light bodied rums may be produced anywhere, but are produced primarily in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Nearly 80% of all rum consumed in the United States is made in Puerto Rico. Dark rum is considered full-bodied. Dark rums may be produced anywhere, but are found extensively in Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Martinique, and Trinidad.