

ANOTHER SQUEAKYWHEEL MEDIA PLACEMENT

Massachusetts Beverage Business

RUM

LIZA WEISSTUCH

Somewhere, the ghosts of colonists are smiling. The spirit that the New England settlers not only consumed by the punch bowl, but produced in great volumes and used as currency, is undergoing a major revival. But this resurgent interest is hardly a rush for rum and colas or a nostalgia-driven longing for piña colada paradise. It's a fast-growing understanding among distributors, retailers and bartenders, and, hence consumers, that rum can be as diverse as whisk(e)y or wine and as seasonally non-specific as beer. As Pete Wells, the dining editor of the *NEW YORK TIMES*, wrote in a story that graced the cover of the Dining section on December 1, "A small rum rebellion may be starting in the cocktail world, exemplified by places like the Tar Pit and Smuggler's Cove in San Francisco, which also begins pouring this month. The rebels are inspired by the staggering variety of well-crafted sugar cane distillates on the market. Nearly as staggering are the bargains some of those bottles represent, compared with high-end whiskies and brandies." From value brands to the top of the luxury continuum, from sailing enthusiasts to sports fans, brand managers are reaching out to consumers far and wide, shattering the image of rum as a pool side indulgence and ramping up its urban street cred.

WHAT'S NEW

The Great Recession was no obstacle in any company's long-planned design to unveil new products. In 2009, Diageo released Captain Morgan 100 Proof and in the summer, they expanded their ready-to-drink line with Captain Morgan-branded Long Island Iced Tea. Tom Herbst, their Marketing Director of Rums, said they've both been a huge success for the brand and done a lot to strengthen the trademark. Additionally, the brand launched a 40-pack – a 1.75 handle of Captain, which is forty 1½ ounce servings, packaged with a 2 liter bottle of cola. In December they released Captain Morgan Lime Bite, made with their original Silver Spiced Caribbean rum and natural lime flavor. On the luxury end, Diageo's Ron Zacapa Rum, a Guatemalan spirit launched in 2008, recently introduced its XO in a few markets, though it hasn't arrived in Massachusetts yet. According to Connie Reyes, Diageo's Brand Manager for Premium Rums, it's a blend produced by the solera method (which is common to the Sherry industry) that's similar to their 23-year-old marque, but the components' ages range from between 6- to 26-years. It's finished off in French cognac barrels, yielding a dryer drink.

The Appleton Rum distillery in Jamaica, which has been distilling rum for 260 years, has directed efforts at expanding the availability of Appleton Estate Extra 12 Year Old and Appleton Estate Reserve, a blend of 20 different aged rums that mature in oak barrels, that had only been available in a handful of markets until 2009. "We focused on two products over past year, having seen that there's a premiumization of the entire rum category," said Jo-Ann Craner, Senior Brand Manager for Appleton Estates, which is from Kobrand. "There are premium consumers of single malts and small batch bourbons that have started to turn toward higher end, complex, rich rums. We've started to focus on that consumer using our Appleton Estate Reserve." Coruba, another Jamaican rum in the Kobrand portfolio, just launched a line extension of flavored rums.

Malibu Rum launched the Malibu Senhouse, Senior Manager of a limited edition, vivid sea charity that monitors reefs.

Following the introduction of infused with dragon fruit. Director: It was one of the Massachusetts is a big market for their flavored rum line will Bacardi Global Brands also Massachusetts is one of the island to find new land; each bean and sun-baked Indonesian

Brugal Rum, produced at the largest distillery in the Dominican Republic, grew by 29% in 2008 and similar gains were projected for 2009, according to Rod Simmons, Brand Manager for Saw-Ross International Importers. He added that Massachusetts is a very important market for Brugal, as it's the fourth largest in the US. That has been reinforced now that the company brought its Extra Viejo (extra aged) marque to the US. "The decision to launch Brugal Extra Viejo in the US was prompted by consumer demand," Simmons said. "There have been numerous inquiries from tourists who had the pleasure of drinking Extra Viejo while on vacation and wanted the opportunity to buy it stateside. Another factor was the growing popularity of premium sipping rums."

original coconut. Sheila also launched Malibu Reef Check, Reef Check, a Malibu-based

erry, strawberry rum fruit," said Joe Santos. Brand thing no one's tapped into yet. added that the next addition to

and Florida in June. does that set forth from the d spices, like Madagascar vanilla

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After eight months of working on recipe formulation with Polar Beverages, the Gosling's brand brought its own ginger beer to the marketplace in May. "We got to the point where we could say: this makes the ultimate Dark 'n' Stormy," said Malcolm Gosling, President and CEO of Gosling-Castle Partners. A diet variety arrived a few months later. Both are produced at the Worcester-based plant and will soon be available in every state. To hear Malcolm tell it, the sodas were developed to offer the general consumer a means for making quality Dark 'n' Stormies, the popular drink that Gosling's trademarked.

According to Rich Cardoza, Manager of Murray's Liquors in Newton, the Gosling's brand's decision to develop and introduce a branded ginger beer is proving an incontestable success. In a way, it helps communicate the message to consumers that the Dark 'n' Stormy is entirely owned by the brand. (Even though the mixed drink is trademarked by the brand, it's still not uncommon to see a Dark 'n' Stormy mixed with other rum brands.)

On the fast-growing rhum agricole segment, there's news from Rhum Clement. In 2003, the company bought Rhum JM, the smallest producer in Martinique, and helped make its three rums – which has three styles: Blanc, Gold and VSOP – available outside Martinique. Now it's in 40 countries around the globe. According to Ben Jones, Managing Director of Clement USA and a descendent of the Clement family of Martinique, Boston is one of the top five markets for the product. The two brands have always had separate estates and separate production facilities and that will be maintained, however in 2010, Rhum JM and Clement are jointly launching a new sugar cane spirit.

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...surely after-dinner
sipping to a refreshment after
surfing, rum is once and for
all proving to be extremely
versatile. Drink companies
of all sizes are staging
comprehensive advertising
campaigns and offering grand
promotion initiatives
to consumers and
retailers and
delivering
the rum's
tail,

