
Why Havana Club is Unique and Why in Miami Mojitos are not Sold

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A BBC report of the last year affirms that there are two versions of the Cuban rum Havana Club: “one which is for sale in the United States and another that is sold in the rest of the world.”

However, Yahima del Pilar Rodríguez Álvarez, communication specialist for San José rum distillery, where Havana Club made in Cuba is produced, the one which is commercialized in “the rest of the world”, assures that there’s only one and she explains some features of the process that makes it unique:

To obtain the base liquor “the raw material, the first ones which are water and the molasses, have to be authentic. The molasses is a by-product of the Cuban sugar industry, must be diluted in water and we add something that from the know-how point of view, or technology is only property of Havana Club, any other producer, even if it’s Cuban can use it which is the yeast.”

I say, those who produce Havana Club and sell it in 8th Street, for example, do they import the molasses from Cuba? Well, no. This would be a Puerto Rican Havana Club, fruit of those brother sugar plantations, but foreign anyway.

On top of that the recipe of the Cuban rum is very demanding, Yahima herself told us other details that differentiate it from the rest of domestic and foreign light rums:

“The yeast in the interaction process contributes certain compounds like ethers needed to obtain a liquor of unique quality and then the structure of the distillation column complete the unique taste of the sugarcane liquor that serves as base for our Havana Club rum.”

There are other important data: “The aging is natural, there is no control of temperature, neither control of humidity, it’s the exchange between that liquor, the oxygen that penetrates through fibers of the barrel and the barrel itself.”

"The natural aging distinguishes the light Cuban rum, in the case of Havana Club, it's identified completely by a natural aging, in barrels of white oak that have already aged whisky before, that is part of the tradition that has become a law, that is, it's part of the regulations established by Cuba Ron which is the Cuban party to which we belong. The aging must natural, full, and continuous, those are the characteristics we try to preserve in order to give the client that rum of quality.

So patiently, and with a lot of care "it's obtained a dynamic system of rum bases and with different formulas, in different proportions, the rum master is able to tell apart one product from another, creating a taste profile for all dark rums of Havana Club trademark, beginning with the Especial, the Especial Plus, the Ritual, the Reserva, after that come the age markers, as in the case of the 3-year and the 7-year aged rums..."

Of course also the exquisiteness of the rum master and the taste judges put some spice in the process: "The rum bases have a minimum age which is that of the rum being produced, but more difficult than having the correct bases is to attain the same taste profile in each edition of the product, rum masters also contribute to that, because it's them who make the adjustments to the formula to find the exact taste profile."

It's not like we don't want to make a toast with a Mojito...

The recipe of the drink includes peppermint, sugar, and lemon in short that any bartender anywhere could fix the drink, but it clarifies: Cuban rum. Then I understand why in the United States, regrettably, mojitos cannot be sold.

It's even clearer in times of a fundamentalist administration in the White House and systematic return to badly conceived plans like the Helms Burton Law, created to separate two towns, even families, like seas haven't been able to do it. The blockade forbids raising a toast, each one in their side, with the same drink:

"We are present in more than 120 countries around the world, we work approximately with 60% of the total demand of rum worldwide, because the 40% appears in the United States and we don't have access to the North American market", says Yahíma. Her colleague Venus Carrillo, Communication and Public Relations Specialist of Havana Club International S.A. adds:

"On the data collected through visitors from the North American market we know the rum Havana Club has good acceptance therefore sales would be guaranteed. The masters themselves have publicly said that Havana Club rum has today the capacity to cover the North American market, for both the pleasure and the production, but we cannot sell due to the limitations of the blockade."

The hindrances of the blockade to our Havana Club began earlier: "Aging barrels are made from white American oak, they are imported, the U.S. manufacture them, we don't have direct access to the North American market, then we buy them from Ireland or Scotland, after they are used to age Jameson, Chibas, we buy them from these producers already used, to give a bit, but not so much, because if they were new it would be whisky what we obtain. Undoubtedly just the transportation would reduce the costs, although they are trademarks commercialized by Pernod Ricard, and the negotiation among partners lowers the price, the distance increases", Yahíma explains.

Venus shares eloquent figures, those that opened eyes wide: "Despite that, we are in 120 countries, we are today the number one in Premium and Super Premium rums, is the world trademark, although Pernod Ricard, to which we belong, is second as for commercialization, we have a very good position regarding rums."

According to the BBC report, the litigation has been long and expensive, those "condemned" assure that they have "the recipe", the owners have demonstrated they have the origin, the raw material and also, the recipe (you have tasted it). I tell you we have the molasses as thick as our will and of course, when the blockade is lifted, not the embargo as the BBC timidly names it, we will have a toast with mojito.

By the way, we'll do it in our homes, using the Havana Club rum born in sugar cane factories, our factories... if we defend the mojito with such strength, imagine how it will be with our homes and land, with the freedom and the principles...