

WEST INDIES RUM DISTILLERY'S VIEW ON THE BARBADOS GI
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Many have asked us to partake in the discussion on the new Barbados GI and to share our insight on the topic.

THE PURPOSE OF A GI:

Under the laws of Barbados (Geographical Indications Act), geographical indications are defined specifically as,

“an indication that identifies goods as originating in the territory of a country, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin”.

This means the GI must concretely permit to:

1. Differentiate and characterize Barbados rums with the identification of the place of origin, of their quality and their process specifications
2. Promote the “Barbados Rum” and increase the export sales of our country, Barbados

A GI should strengthen us (the rum of Barbados). It should allow all Barbados rum producers to honor their heritage and continue to do what they know and enjoy doing. By no means, must the GI be used as a competitive tool by one interested party over another.

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE GI: THE FULL STORY

There are now four rum distilleries in Barbados: West Indies Rum Distillery, est. in 1893; Mount Gay, 1703; Foursquare, 1996; and St Nicholas Abbey, 2007. All agree that a good Barbados GI is necessary. The GI must protect all of Barbados’s rum heritage, not just those of modern practices (by modern, we mean in the last 50 years).

We truly believe that a GI must be inclusive and faithful to the roots of ALL Barbados rum-making and to the diversity of those who have, for centuries, created heritage and added value for Barbados. This is precisely what West Indies Rum Distillery and Plantation stand for. We have spent years researching the heritage of Barbados rum-making. We have created a non-profit foundation to fund research and to protect the historical techniques of rum-making. You will find some of our research references at the bottom of this document. Our goal with this is to shine light on the rich and diverse heritage of Barbados rum techniques.

A GI solely defined by what a few producers are doing, in disregard of historic practices would be contrary to this.

THE POINTS WE DEFEND IN THE GI: DERIVED FROM FACTUAL EVIDENCE

Below you will find a more technical analysis of the points we are defending in the GI, which are strongly supported by research into the heritage of Barbados and Caribbean Community rum-making.

Place of origin: Steps of rum-making that must occur in Barbados

According to the existing CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Rules of Rum and some ancient documents¹, the origin refers to where the rum is fermented and distilled. Both fermentation and distillation heavily impact the taste of rum. In fermentation, the climate as well as the yeasts and bacteria species and strains play an important role. Distillation is also a crucial step in rum-making and Barbados has its specificities when it comes to column, pot and chamber stills. Barbados is also well-known for the mastering of the blending of products from different stills.

We believe that both fermentation and distillation steps must be carried out in Barbados to claim its place of origin.

Ageing and double ageing

We are in favour of mandatory tropical ageing. Our proposed GI would require one year as it was commonly done in the past.²

However, the 350-year-old **double ageing historical practice** must also be preserved. West Indies Rum Distillery has been making rum that has been double aged since 1893 by producing rum in Barbados and then shipping it in its barrels to other countries where it was aged again before consumption (London Dock Rum & Navy Rums for instance).

Further, double ageing is unarguably a part of all Barbados rum heritage. It is an established historical fact that dock rums and navy rums³ have contributed greatly to establish rum as we know it. Importantly, the sea voyage⁴ of the rum in a barrel also contributes to its taste and aromatic character. This is not only a historical fact, it is a scientific fact.

This is why we want a GI that foresees ageing in Barbados but also preserves the tradition of further ageing in countries that legally respect the Barbados GI once it is registered. The key is transparency, which can simply be stated on the label.

Type of barrels

Nowadays, rum from all over the world is almost exclusively aged in former bourbon/whiskey American oak casks, because they are largely available and they are inexpensive. Oak does not grow in the Caribbean and is obviously not native to the Caribbean. Limitation that barrels/vats are to be made from oak only, does not make historical sense and limits rum-making to its recent practices. Before the great standardization of the 20th century, rum

¹ As per the Barbados Blue Book 1913-1915. "General export from the colony of Barbados in the year, 1914", 133-134.

² Alfred Gilbey, British Spirit Merchant, **1908**. Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Whiskey and other potable spirits.

³ **1908**. Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Whiskey and other potable spirits, vol. II. Page 35/ British National Archives / The British Newspaper Archive

⁴ **1908**. Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Whiskey and other potable spirits, vol. II. Page 45.

barrels were made with oak and different hardwood such as chestnut, mulberry, acacia, etc. Importantly, these barrels were repaired on island by local coopers, often with regional wood⁵. West Indies Rum Distillery used to have a fully operational cooperage unit. We have found regional 19th century documents showing that these barrels were repaired with specific Caribbean woods and Central American woods.⁶

We need to be able to revive this unique heritage, which offers fascinating taste profiles to be re-discovered. We are currently using seven types of sustainable wood for our rums and are studying further with local and international historians and established barrel-makers. Limiting Barbados to American oak barrels or to oak barrels would be a great mistake that would obliterate historic practices.

We defend the use of every type of food-grade wood to be used for Barbados rum ageing.

Caramel and sugar

The topic of sugar addition is much discussed and has been a focal point of other producers' GI campaigns. History shows that Barbados rums have been made for centuries both with and without the inclusion of sugar and caramel. We know from research that historically, purchased E150a caramel was not used in rum. Rather, the caramel was made with burnt sugar, which left a small amount of residual sugar when added to the rum⁷.

Sugar has been historically added to the rum by the form of burnt sugar, molasses or even Falernum. Dosage has always been authorized by the Europeans regulations on spirits of 1989 and 2008. The new regulation of 2019 stated a limit of 20 g/L of sugar.

We at West Indies Rum Distillery and Plantation support the production of each of these styles of rum, whether using E150a caramel or burnt sugar. We also urge rum producers to have firm transparency in whichever they choose to use.

We stand for both techniques, be it sugar or caramel, as long as it is derived from the sugar cane. We insist that any such inclusions should be stated on the label.

Water in rum fermentation

Archives show that there are historical references to rum being fermented using a hint of sea water⁸. This is a tradition that we value, continue to apply, and want to perpetuate. Salt does not pass through the distillation process. Rather, it creates a specific environment for the fermentation. Again, it is part of rum making history and it is a good tool for rum-makers.

Also, Barbados is a small island with limited resources, so using multiple water types supports sustainability. The aquifers are not endless, and much water is needed for fermentation and

⁵ **1983**. The journal of the Barbados museum and historical society, vol. 37, no. 1.

⁶ Harris, W. **1909**. The timbers of Jamaica

⁷ J. Stikeman & Dr. Kelly. **1832**. The ship-master's assistant, and owner's manual. Page 504. / W. Chambers & R. Chambers. **1868**. Encyclopaedia, vol. VIII. / **1908**. Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Whiskey and other potable spirits, vol. I. Page 69. / Carter, R. H. A. (Admiral). **1939**. Book of Reference 93 Manual of Victualling, vol. I, chap. IX. Page 95 / Deerr, N. (sugar historian & technologist). **1921**. Cane sugar; A textbook on the agriculture of the sugar cane, the manufacture of cane sugar, and the analysis of sugar-house products, 2nd edition. Page 575.

⁸ Edwards, B. (historian & politician). **1801**. The history, civil and commercial, of the British colonies in the West Indies, vol. 2. Page 282

reduction processes. We do not want to restrict water use to only that of the aquifer at the risk of overstraining resources. This is currently a problem in Jakarta where extracting water from aquifers leads to soil erosion that sinks into the sea⁹. Rainwater can also be a good option as this would help to protect underground water reserves. We must diversify the types of water used for rum-making, out of respect of the island and its history.

Rather than limiting water use to water from the aquifer, we think that all kinds of Barbados water should be used for fermentation (aquifer/spring, rain, sea water).

Yeast bacteria used during the fermentation process

Historically, several types of yeast were cultivated and used to make rum¹⁰. The ability to import saccharomyces yeast from Europe or America is a recent phenomenon in the history of rum production. We used wild yeast or locally cultivated yeast in rum production¹¹. Not only does this honor traditional rum-making processes, which vastly pre-date the discovery of yeast as a living organism, but it also brings to life the local flavor of Barbados.

This is why we are in favor of using all yeasts, including indigenous Barbados yeasts and bacteria to preserve the richness of Barbados rum. We are against GMO. We are also in favor of allowing the addition of yeasts and bacteria that are byproducts from any material commonly used in fermentation (dunder, cane juice, bagasse, water...).

Stills in rum production

Here again, the definition of the distillation process in the GI must reflect tradition and must be clearly defined. It means that it should include, not only column and pot stills, but also the chamber still, which is part of the history of Barbados. West Indies Rum Distillery is actually the only place in the world, that we know of, where an original 19th century chamber is still in operation. To exclude the chamber still is to exclude a piece of history of rum production in Barbados.

This is why we stand for the use of pot stills, column stills, and chamber stills in the production of rum.

WHO WE ARE

In the late 19th century (1893), the old venerable West Indies Rum Distillery was established by George Stades and his brother, creating a very impactful distillery in the history of Barbados rum. The rum they made became a reference at the end of the 19th century (the mention "STADES" being a guarantee of quality and origin). They also distilled for other Barbados rum brands such as Doorly's (until 1996), Cockspur, and others. Nowadays, the distillery is the leading actor of the Barbados rum production (82% of the rum produced in

⁹ The Economist, August 17th 2019, A World without beaches.

¹⁰ Greg, P. H. **1895**. The Jamaica yeasts. Bulletin of the botanical department, Jamaica. Page 157.

Arroyo, R. **1945**. The production of heavy bodied rum. Sugar, vol. 40: 34-39.

¹¹ Fahrasmane, L. & Ganou-Parfait B. **1998**. Microbial flora of rum fermentation media. Journal of Applied Microbiology, vol. 84: 921-928.

Barbados) and provides 150 jobs total (including indirect contribution). Plantation is the leading brand.

Currently, at West Indies Rum Distillery we have a team of technical experts, some who have been working at the distillery for up to 40 years. These people do not want to see the techniques they have been using for decades disappear. Globally, we have a very strong support network of bartenders, influencers, and rum specialists who support our rum-making techniques and position on the Barbados GI.

We will continue to fight to protect the entire heritage of Barbados rum and we encourage you to know all the facts and join us. The future of the diversity of Barbados rum depends on this GI outcome.

If you make it our way, come and visit us in beautiful Barbados. It would be our pleasure to welcome you at our distillery and to show you what we proudly do.

Thanks for your attention. Now back to rum making.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hassell, Managing Director, West Indies Rum Distillery

Alexandre Gabriel, Owner & Master Blender, Maison Ferrand & West Indies Rum Distillery