



The Story of Mount Gay Rum

According to 17th Century legend, sailors traveling across the Atlantic would return to England with barrels of Mount Gay Rum from Barbados as proof of having sailed across this treacherous ocean. Today, sailors and connoisseurs alike regard Mount Gay Rum as proof of their good taste.

Mount Gay Rum – Since 1703

At the northern tip of Barbados, in the parish of St. Lucy, sits the center of the world of rum: Mount Gay Rum Distillery. Known as the “Rum that invented Rum”, the first written evidence of Mount Gay dates back to February 20, 1703, the oldest record of rum distillation in the world.

The Mount Gay Rum property went through various distillery and plantation owners throughout the 1700s and then, in 1747, the property was sold to John Sober, who enlisted Sir John Gay Alleyne, a respected Barbadian, to manage the estate. Alleyne introduced new strains of cane, improved crop yield and enhanced the production process, innovations so significant that on his death in 1801, the Sobers named the estate for him. Alleyne’s efforts would pave the way for Mount Gay’s future success, and established a long tradition of Barbadian expertise, innovation and vitality to the origins of rum.

In 1858, the Thornhill family bought the estate and established export connections with the objective of making Mount Gay the quality benchmark for Barbadian rum. Following the advent of bottling on Barbados, the Thornhills made a watershed contribution. In April of 1910, Haley’s comet was nearing the earth and a total solar eclipse was imminent. Seeking a brand name that would represent Mount Gay’s exceptional quality and inspired by the events of the time, Mount Gay “Eclipse” was born.

In 1918, Aubrey Fitz-Osbert Ward acquired the plantation. A passionate innovator, Ward imported a Coffey still from Great Britain and improved the quality and speed of production. Mount Gay remains the only producer on Barbados to use both the pot still, which produces a rich, complex spirit, and the column still, which yields a light, refined spirit, to distill its rums. In later years, Ward circumvented Barbadian regulations prohibiting producers from bottling their rum, and he formed a separate partnership, Mount Gay Distilleries, Ltd., that would blend and bottle the spirits near the point of embarkation. By 1958, Mount Gay had grown to reach twenty export markets. When in 1966 Barbados gained its independence, Mount Gay was not only recognized as the international reference point for fine rum, but also as a symbol of Barbadian heritage.

In 1989, Rémy-Cointreau acquired Mount Gay Distilleries, Ltd., and introduced a new range of rums to global markets. In April of 2008, Mount Gay Eclipse Silver, a super-premium white rum, was launched, recognized for its superb quality from the outset. It was followed by Mount Gay Extra Old (“XO”) and then in October 2009, Mount Gay launched the 1703 Old Cask Selection. The 1703 Old Cask Selection and Extra Old are refined spirits of the highest quality and refinement blended from decades old reserves brought to sublime maturity in Mount Gay’s cellars.

Barbados – The “Rum Island”

On May 14, 1625, Henry Powell landed the first British ship on Barbados and claimed the island for Britain in the name of King James I. Unlike many Caribbean islands that are volcanic in origin, Barbados is composed of a deep layer of coral, and coral reefs surround most of the island. The coral acts as a water filtration system, giving Barbados one of the purest sources of water in the Caribbean.

Barbados appears to have been put on earth as an oasis for the creation of rum – something that Mount Gay revealed as early as 1703. First introduced in 1637, cane sugar thrives in the exceptional Barbadian climate, basking in sunshine and swayed by cool breezes. By 1720, Barbados, the “Rum Island,” had become the principal producer of cane sugar, taking rum production along in its wake, and heralding over three centuries of island expertise in the cultivation of the finest cane and in turn, the world’s finest rum.



The Art and Craft of Mount Gay Rum

Each harvest, Mount Gay selects the highest grade cane at peak sugar content from the lush fields of Barbados to produce its superb rums. The sugar is extracted from the fresh cane juice to yield a rich, fragrant molasses, which rests in casks until production begins. Mount Gay again filters the water it collects before blending it with the molasses and a strain of yeast proprietary to Mount Gay for generations. Once fermentation is complete, the molasses enters the distillation process. A key to the complexity of Mount Gay rums lies in the use of both single batch and continuous distillation methods. Single batch distillation occurs in a copper pot still and yields a deep, full-bodied spirit. This distillation is carried out twice, to yield a “double distillate.” Continuous distillation takes place in a column still, resulting in a crisp, delicate rum. The combination of these two methods lends Mount Gay Rum impeccable balance.

The art of blending – a signature of fine spirits the world over – determines the final character of Mount Gay Rum. Master blender Allen Smith carries the weight of tradition as his discerning nose seeks out the best barrels for each expression of Mount Gay Rum. The spirits are aged in Kentucky white oak casks lightly charred to impart the precise balance of sweet oak, smoky flavor and rich amber color to the rums. There is no specific time for each barrel, no formula. Through tasting and retasting, Smith pieces together the complex puzzle. Finally his selections are blended and bottled to become the latest batch of Mount Gay Rum.

Mount Gay Rum – From Tradition to Today

The treacherous waters and coral reefs surrounding Barbados gave rise to the story that the only way a seaman could prove he had sailed to the island was to return with a cask of Barbadian rum. Rum is intimately connected to the sea, and none more so than Mount Gay. Mount Gay has long been active in the sailing world, and sponsors over 100 regattas around the world. The Mount Gay “red cap”, given only to those who complete a regatta, is one of the most prized symbols of those who live the competitive sailing life.

The Mount Gay name carries over three centuries of dedicated refinement in distillation and blending, and the constant quest of all who have come before to create the ultimate in quality. Today, Mount Gay Rum offers a complete portfolio of high end marques – each share the Mount Gay trademark elegance and smoothness, while also offering a unique expression and style:

Mount Gay Rum 1703 Old Cask Selection (\$99.99)

Blended from select rums aged from 10 to 30 years, this complex rum is the pinnacle of the Mount Gay Rum collection for its rich bouquet of caramel and oak with ripe banana and soft spices. It makes an unforgettable sipping rum as it lingers on the palate.

Mount Gay Rum Extra Old (\$49.99)

This skillful blend, aged 8 to 15 years, displays rich oak character married with sweet fruit and touches of toast, followed by vanilla, pastry and warm spice that proclaim its maturity and sophistication.

Mount Gay Rum Eclipse (\$17.99)

Born of the solar eclipse of 1910, this amber expression of Mount Gay Rum predates many rum distilleries and remains as enchanting today as a century ago for its complexity and harmony of floral and fruity notes intertwined with subtle smoke.

Mount Gay Rum Eclipse Silver (\$17.99)

The white rum counterpart to Mount Gay Rum Eclipse, this lighter-bodied spirit is smooth, clean and aromatic, with intriguing hints of peppermint and citrus and a soft finish that make it ideal in modern cocktails.

For more information about Mount Gay Rum please email Rebekah Polster, rebekah@gregorywhitepr.com, or Helen Gregory, helen@gregorywhitepr.com. Contact us by phone at (718) 403-9473.