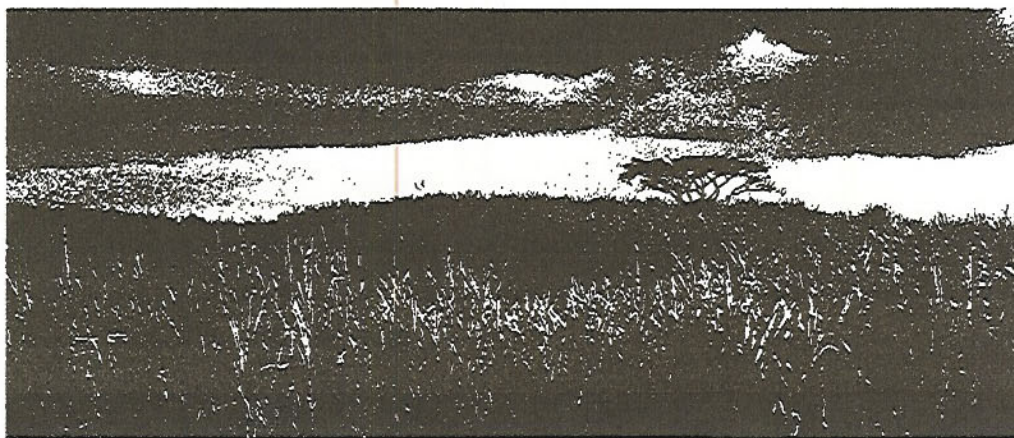


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## Rhum's the word for 2006, 2007...

**V**olume 15, Issue 3 is the 67th edition of *F. Paul Pacult's Spirit Journal*. It may become the edition that will be remembered as a herald for the emergence of non-Puerto Rican white rums, especially those from the French-controlled islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Since the Second World War, Bacardi Silver, the mass-produced oak-aged clear rum from first Cuba then Puerto Rico, has dominated the world marketplace. It now annually accounts for approximately 20 million cases of sales globally and is quite rightly considered one of a handful of golden distilled spirits brands in the world.

Bacardi Silver is a good, reliable, and highly adaptable, if ethereal rum that has become a bar staple. It has been a key part in millions upon millions of cocktails over the last six decades. Bacardi Silver and its Puerto Rican rum counterparts, in particular, Don Q and Ron Rico, are

produced from molasses and have served their thirsty audiences with honor for two generations. They are the "vodkas of rum" and will likely continue to do well for many years to come.

But times and tastes are gradually and steadily changing (read: growing more sophisticated and, therefore, more demanding) across the world as curious consumers search for distilled spirits experiences that provide deeper impressions in aroma and flavor. In the hunt for greater depth of flavor, savvy consumers — and enlightened bartenders — are now or soon will be discovering the profound delights of other styles of clear, so-called "white" rums that offer significantly broader spectrums of bouquet and taste.

The French Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique are primary sources for these heartier rums. The main difference between the French rums (French

for rum) and the lighter Puerto Rican rums lies in the base materials. The majority of the rums of Martinique especially (roughly 85 percent) are made from pure, fresh sugar cane juice rather than molasses. These idiosyncratic rums are called Rhum Agricoles. Because sugar cane juice is one step closer to pure sugar cane than molasses, rhum agricoles are typically much more intense, individualistic, and flavorful than many of those spawned from molasses. Rhum agricoles can be thought of as the single

malts of the rum category.

As these rums become more available through wider distribution in North America, I believe their popularity will grow rapidly. While they will never realistically overtake their Puerto Rican rivals in volume, rhum agricoles will nevertheless expand consumer awareness about the greater rum category. Because of their assertive characteristics, sugar cane juice rums can be enjoyed either on the rocks with a twist of lime or as a base for cocktails. So bullish am I about

rhum agricoles that I am predicting that over the next two to three years they will be the next big consumer trend in spirits. In this issue's *NEW WHITE SPIRITS REVIEWS* section, I review nine rums that are sugar cane juice based. Eight hail from Martinique; one comes from Trinidad. More will be coming. All are a stimulating change to how most North Americans think of rum. You can take it to the bank: Rhum's the Word.

*F. Paul Pacult, editor*