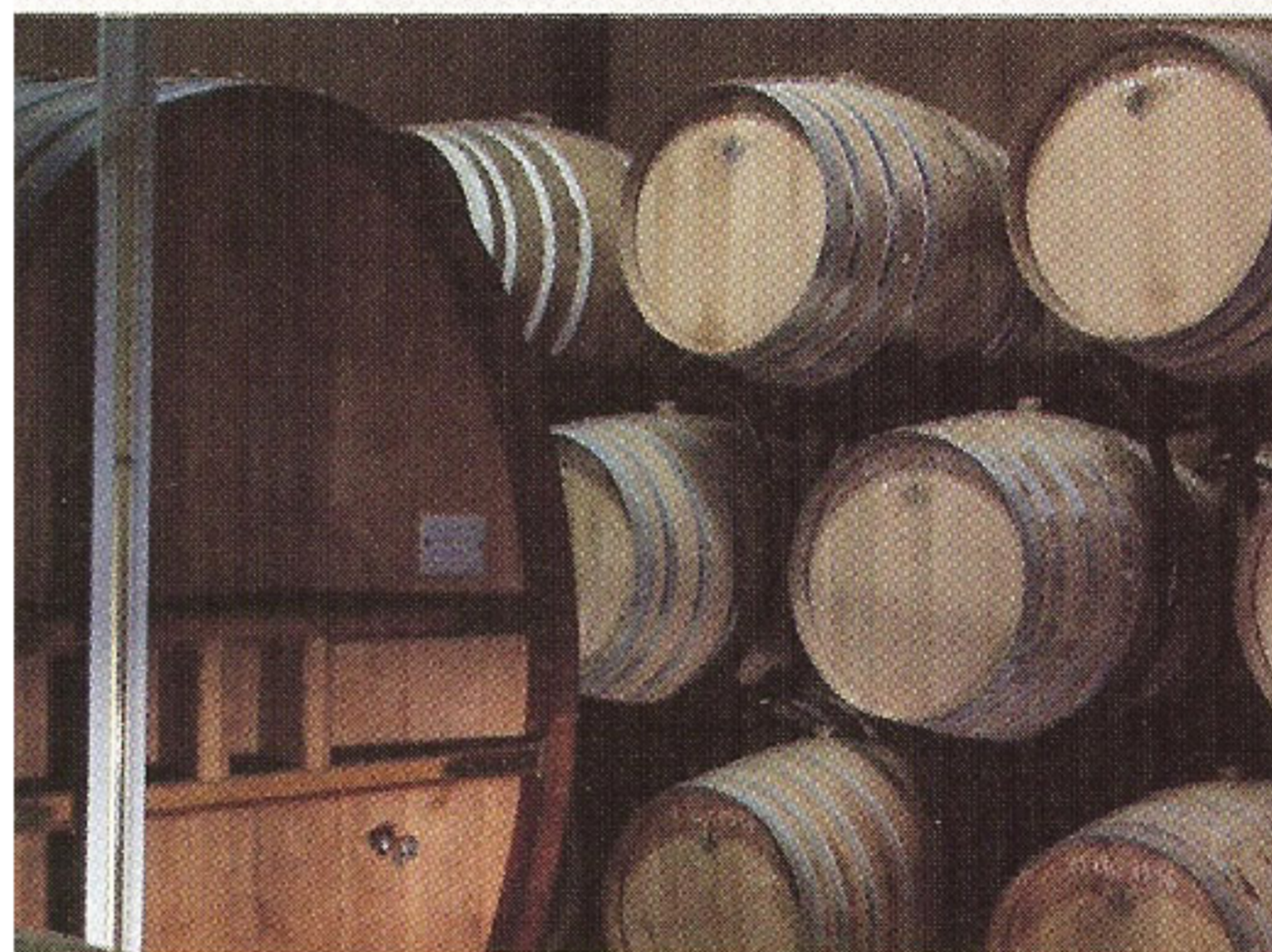


# Rum Daze:

## Ed Hamilton and Caribbean Spirits

Ed Hamilton is one of the world's leading authorities on rum, having written *The Complete Guide to Rum*, as well as being the brains behind the Ministry of Rum website ([ministryofrum.com](http://ministryofrum.com)), a clearinghouse for information about his favorite spirit. (The book, first published in 1995, is currently unavailable, but Hamilton is in negotiation for a replacement.)

Getting into rum was a natural thing for Hamilton when he lived in the Caribbean. "Hanging out on a sailboat in the islands you're surrounded by rum," he remarks. As he began visiting distilleries, the ones that captivated him were the small, family-run operations making rhum agricole – artisanal rum made



from raw sugarcane syrup rather than from molasses.

He began bringing bottles of rhum agricole back to the States, where he treated his friends to his favorite rum drink, the Ti' Punch, a concoction of rhum agricole, sugarcane syrup and lime. "My friends drank up all my rum," he states, "so I decided to start importing it." Founding import company Caribbean Spirits, Hamilton hooked up with the last

two family-owned distilleries on Martinique – Neisson and Habitation La Favorite. Hamilton now sells their excellent spirits in ten states and counting.

"There's still a tremendous amount of education to be done on rhum agricole," says Hamilton, as he clears up some misconceptions. Unlike the Brazilian sugarcane product called cachaça, he explains, rhum agricole is made only from certain authorized species of sugarcane. Quality control is higher, and rhum agricole from the French islands actually carries an AOC, just as French wines do.

Hamilton notes that the Ti' Punch is gaining popularity, taking the wind out of the Mojito's sails in many bars, including those of The Slanted Door, Enrico's, Elixir, and Absinthe in San Francisco. Hamilton is now importing sugarcane syrup as well, and loves doing frequent rum education seminars for consumers. "Standing around in bars drinking rum is the path of least resistance for me," he laughs.

— Anthony Dias Blue

### Ti'Punch

From the French petit punch, this "little punch" should be made with white rhum agricole and sugarcane syrup.

- 1 oz. sugarcane syrup
- squeeze of lime
- 2 oz. white rhum agricole
- ice cubes

Pour the cane syrup to an Old Fashioned glass and squeeze the lime into it. Stir until mixed. Add the rhum agricole and ice cubes. Stir again.