



# 101

**TROPICAL**  
**DRINKS**

**KIM HAASARUD**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDRA GRABLEWSKI

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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he tropical cocktail conjures exotic visions of swaying palm trees, white sandy beaches, gentle ocean breezes, and libations served from hollowed-out pineapples. Add to that the tastes of coconut, guava, ginger, and copious amounts of rum and you begin to get the picture. But lest we forget, tropical is a kindred spirit to tiki. And when we mention tiki, we have to pay homage to our founding fathers: Vic Bergeron of the legendary Trader Vic's and Don the Beachcomber.

Back in the 1940s, Americans were smitten with the lure of the South Pacific—it was exotic, it was adventurous, it was fun. C'mon, who wouldn't find shrunken heads, pirates, Hollywood icons frolicking in the sand, and fire-lit punchbowls exciting? It was just after the Depression and while most Americans couldn't afford to travel, they could indulge their thirst for adventure in some tiki cocktails. Back then, tiki cocktails were treasured proprietary drinks, with barmen guarding their recipes by writing them in code. They used many different rums, and concocted their own homemade syrups and liqueurs. Unfortunately, tiki cocktails suffered much like many of their classic cocktail brethren; fresh juices were replaced by bottled mixes, and classic rums were replaced by cheap impersonators. But now thanks to the tireless efforts of tiki historians and experts like Jeff “Beachbum” Berry, many of these original recipes have been rediscovered, and as a result the tiki movement is alive and well once again. Witness the opening in the past few years of great new tiki bars around the country, establishments like Smuggler's Cove in San Francisco; Forbidden Island in Alameda, California; and Painkiller NY and Lani Kai in New York City— just a few that would make Vic and Don proud.

In this book, I've included many classic tropical and tiki cocktails (thank you, Jeff Berry) as well as some reimagined ones. I've also taken liberty with some classic cocktails like the Cosmopolitan and Margarita and given them a contemporary tropical spin. Tropical and tiki drinks can run the gamut from super easy to make with a quick shake of a few ingredients to more involved productions requiring the layering of different rums, swizzling, blending in a blender, making your own syrups, using bitters, infusing, and so on. In this introduction I've listed many different rums and their island characteristics, as well as liqueurs, other spirits, purees, bitters, juices, and more. But the whole point of a tiki drink is for it to be a little exotic with a whole lot of flavor—no stress.

So grab a good bottle of rum, flip through this book, and pick a drink that tickles your fancy and ignites your sense of adventure. Oh, and don't forget to raise a glass to the spirits of Vic and Don.

—Kim Haasarud





# THE RUMS

**U**nlike any other spirit category, rums “play in the sandbox” really well. Meaning you can layer and mix them for added depth and flavor. While rums originated in the South Pacific (hence the reason they are so readily used in tropical and tiki drinks), they can be made anywhere in the world; the only restriction is that sugar cane is involved. The majority of rums are made from molasses, a by-product of making sugar. Others, however, are made straight from sugar cane juice. Below, I’ve listed rums by style and region to give you a better and bigger picture of how rums are made, classified, and characterized.

## STYLES

**WHITE/SILVER RUM.** Usually clear. Most white and silver rums are aged, but are further distilled and filtered to remove the color. Great mixability.

**GOLD/AMBER RUM.** Light gold or amber. Usually aged for a few years. No regulation on how long it must be aged.

**DARK RUM.** Full bodied and darker in color. Quite a few are produced from pot stills and aged in oak. No regulation on how long it must be aged.

**AGRICOLE RHUM.** Appellation Controlee from Martinique, in the French West Indies. Made from distilled sugar cane juice. Light with a nice vegetal quality to it; buttery.

**SPICED RUMS.** A white, gold, or dark rum infused with spices and fruits.

**FLAVORED RUMS.** Rums (usually white rums) infused with flavors ranging from vanilla to coconut to mango.

**ANEJO AND AGE-DATED RUMS.** Blended aged rums. Age-dated rums, such as Bacardi 8, usually reflect the youngest aged rum in the blend.

## RUM REGIONS

**BARBADOS.** Produces light and sweetish rums. One of the first regions that really started to put out a soft, smooth rum. Back in the eighteenth century, rum was well known as a fiery, almost unpalatable spirit. Barbados put rum on the map as a fine spirit. (George Washington actually requested a Barbados rum for his

inauguration—that was the good stuff.) Current examples include Mount Gay and Foursquare.

**CUBA.** Light-bodied and crisp. One of the first regions yielding a very soft and smooth rum. Many rum connoisseurs associate Cuban rums (the predecessor to Puerto Rican rums) with being much like the rum version of a vodka: fairly neutral and smooth. Examples include Havana Club and Bacardi, established in Cuba, since moved to Puerto Rico.

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.** Full-bodied, aged rums from column stills. Examples include Ron Matusalem and Brugal.

**GUYANA.** Rich, heavy, Demerara rums aged for long periods of time (25 years), often blended with lighter rums. Examples include El Dorado.

**HAITI.** Full-bodied rums. Aged in oak casks three or more years. Examples include Rhum Barbancourt.

**JAMAICA.** Rich and aromatic. Some can be funky, wild, and rich and others soft and smooth. Examples include Myers, Appleton Estate, and Wray & Nephew.

**MARTINIQUE.** Contains the largest number of rum distilleries in the eastern Caribbean. Mostly agricole rhums. Often aged in French brandy casks three or more years. One significant factor about rums from this island is that they were awarded the prestigious French label *appellation d'origine controlee*, previously reserved only for wines and cheeses. Rums from this region can only be called *rhums*. Because the majority of these rhums are agricole, they are light, somewhat vegetal, and even buttery. Examples include Neisson Rhum Agricole.

**PUERTO RICO.** One of the biggest producers of rum. The white rums are known to be very smooth and even a somewhat neutral spirit. Very mixable. Examples include Bacardi, Ron de Barrilito, and Don Q.

**TRINIDAD.** Primarily light rums. Examples include 10 Cane and Angostura.

**VIRGIN ISLANDS.** Light mixing rums and flavored rums. Examples include Cruzan and a new tenant, Captain Morgan.

**BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS.** There is only one rum distillery left on these islands, one of the oldest in the world. Back in the seventeenth century, the British Royal Navy would make their own blend and ration it out to the Royal Navy officers.

Examples include Pusser's.

**GUATEMALA.** Medium-bodied, aged rum. Examples include Ron Zacapa.

**NICARAGUA.** Medium-bodied. Examples include Flor de Cana.

**VENEZUELA.** Known for being rich. Some on the sweeter side. Examples include Ron Añejo Pampero and Santa Teresa.

**BRAZIL.** Mostly cachacas. Unaged. Examples include Leblon, Sagatiba, Boca Loca, and Cabana Cachaca.

**UNITED STATES.** Up and coming. Smaller, artisanal distilleries. Examples include Clearheart.

**AUSTRALIA.** Examples include Bundaberg.

## OTHER “TROPICAL” INGREDIENTS AND SPIRITS

**ALLSPICE DRAM.** Aka Pimento Dram, flavored with allspice berries. This liqueur was only recently made available again in the United States, in 2008, under the name St. Elizabeth Allspice Dram. Very spicy; use in moderation.

**LICOR 43.** A bright yellow liqueur made from 43 aromatic herbs and spices including vanilla and citrus. The predominant flavor is vanilla.

**MARASCHINO LIQUEUR (I.E., LUXARDO).** Many assume that this liqueur will be sweet and taste like cherries. But it is actually made from the stems and pits of cherries, yielding a very earthy, wild, and funky flavor. It’s quite delicious in cocktails, but use in moderation.

**VELVET FALERNUM.** A lime, clove, almond, and ginger liqueur. Used often in many tropical and tiki drinks.

**ORANGE CURAÇAO VERSUS TRIPLE SEC.** Both are orange liqueurs and can be interchanged. Orange Curaçao, however, is usually darker in color and has richer, more brandy-like flavors, whereas a triple sec is clear and has a more straightforward orange flavor.

## BITTERS

Bitters are a must-have in many tropical drinks. They add a nice depth of flavor that mingles with all the ingredients. Bitters are alcohol-based (some are made from rum, brandy, or even Everclear, a grain alcohol) and heavily infused with aromatics, herbs, and botanicals. Just a dash or two is all you need. Nowadays there are over a hundred different bitters available, ranging from a classic bitters to orange to lavender to rhubarb to celery! You may be able to find some of the classic bitters such as Angostura or Fee Bros. at your local liquor or grocery store, but if you want to be more adventurous, check the following websites for a wide range of choices.

[www.cocktailkingdom.com](http://www.cocktailkingdom.com)

<http://the-bitter-truth.com>



## JUICES, PUREES, AND CREAMS

Many of the recipes included in this book call for tropical juices, purees, and nectars. Some of these can be found in the juice section of the grocery store or in the refrigerated section. If you are a fan of ultra-fresh juices, I recommend investing in a juice extractor to get the most flavor. A juice extractor will allow you to make your own juices, such as pineapple juice, ginger juice (to make your own ginger beer and ginger ale), watermelon juice, and grape juice.

There are also some great puree companies that harvest fruits at their ripest and flash freeze them, making for some pretty great purees. Perfect Puree of Napa Valley is a great one from California (order online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)). Boiron is also a good puree company from France.

Some recipes also call for a coconut cream. Coco Lopez (found at most grocery stores) is your best bet.

# SYRUPS

Following are some syrup recipes used throughout the book. As long as you keep them refrigerated, they should last for a couple of weeks. Some great syrup companies make some fine syrups if you wish to buy them instead. Monin sells an extensive array of syrups that can be purchased online at [www.monin.com](http://www.monin.com).

**DEMERARA SYRUP.** A 2:1 ratio of Demerara sugar to water. Demerara sugar is named after the colony of Demerara (Guyana) in South America where the sugar originally came from. The crystals are large, light brown, and can be hard to dissolve. I recommend heating this over a saucepan until the sugar dissolves, or simply blending up in a blender on low speed for about 20 seconds. Bottle and refrigerate.

**FLEUR DE SEL SYRUP.** This syrup actually involves making the Demerara syrup first (above). Combine 2 cups of Demerara syrup to 1 cup of fleur de sel salt. If the Demerara syrup is cold, heat in a saucepan over low heat and add the salt. Stir till dissolved. Bottle and refrigerate.

**GRAPEFRUIT SPICED SYRUP.** A mixture of 1 cup ruby red grapefruit juice (strained), 1 cup Demerara sugar, 2 dashes ground cinnamon, 2 whole cloves, and 1/8 teaspoon vanilla extract. Heat in a saucepan over low heat until sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and let cool. Bottle and refrigerate.

**GRENADE.** While you can find this at most grocery stores, nothing beats making this yourself. Combine a 1:1 ratio of white sugar to pomegranate juice. Heat over low heat in a saucepan to dissolve, or blend in a blender on low speed for 20 seconds. Bottle and refrigerate.

**HONEY SYRUP.** Combine honey and hot water in a 1:1 ratio. Stir until honey dissolves. Bottle and refrigerate.

**LEMONGRASS SYRUP.** Clean 3 stalks of lemongrass and chop. Combine the chopped lemongrass with 2 cups of sugar and 3 cups of water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce to low and let simmer for about 10 minutes. (The mixture should reduce.) Let cool. Strain. Bottle and refrigerate.

**ORGEAT SYRUP.** See [recipe](#).

**PASSION FRUIT SYRUP.** In a saucepan, mix together 1 cup water, 1 cup sugar, and 1/2

cup of passion fruit puree (or a high-quality passion fruit nectar). Stir over low heat until the sugar is dissolved. Bottle and refrigerate.

**PINEAPPLE SYRUP (REQUIRES JUICE EXTRACTOR).** Remove the outer layer of a medium-sized pineapple. Juice the fruit in a juice extractor. Strain. Mix in a 1:1 ratio of pineapple juice to white sugar. Stir well. Bottle and refrigerate.

**SIMPLE SYRUP.** A 1:1 ratio of white sugar and water. For a single recipe, 1 cup of sugar to 1 cup of water should suffice. This can be made by simply mixing the two in a pitcher until the sugar dissolves or by heating in a saucepan. (Heating it will also make it a little thicker.) Bottle and refrigerate.

**(RICH) SIMPLE SYRUP.** Same as above, but use a 2:1 ratio of white sugar and water. Bottle and refrigerate.

**SPICED PLANTAIN SYRUP.** Slice a ripe plantain into ¼-inch slices and place in a saucepan. Add 3 cups water and 2 cups Demerara sugar. Add 2 dashes ground cinnamon, 3 whole cloves, and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract. Heat over low heat until sugar has dissolved and it has started to boil, about 10 minutes. The plantains should be soft and the mixture reduced. Remove from the heat and let cool. Strain. Bottle and refrigerate.

**SPICED SYRUP.** Same as above, but without the plantain. Feel free to add more spices such as a few allspice berries, a star anise, some black peppercorns, and 1 or 2 strips of orange zest.

**SUGAR-FREE SYRUP.** For a lower-calorie drink, use a zero-calorie simple syrup made with Splenda. While you can make this on your own, I would highly recommend buying it from Monin.com. They have several zero-calorie syrups on the market, such as regular, blackberry, and triple sec flavor.



# ORGEAT SYRUP

**O**rgeat is a syrup made from almonds and used in many classic tiki cocktails, the Mai Tai being the most popular. While you can buy an orgeat syrup at your grocery or liquor store or online (almond syrup at Monin.com), I found this great homemade recipe from Daniel Shoemaker of the Teardrop Lounge in Portland, Oregon, via *Imbibe* magazine. Many thanks to them for allowing me to reprint it.

## INGREDIENTS

**2¼ cups raw sliced almonds**

**3½ cups water**

**3½ cups distilled water**

**3½ cups organic cane sugar**

**1 ounce vodka**

**¼ tsp orange blossom water, or to taste**

## TOOLS

**Medium-sized stainless steel or glass mixing bowl**

**Strainer**

**Food processor, blender, or rolling pin**

**Long-handled spoon**

**1-liter glass jar or bottle, with lid**

**Cheesecloth**

Place the sliced almonds in the mixing bowl. Cover with water and let sit for 30 minutes. Strain and discard the water.

In a food processor or blender, lightly pulse the almonds until they are coarsely ground. (You can also do this with a rolling pin.)

Return the ground almonds to the bowl, cover with the distilled water, and soak for 4 to 5 hours, stirring the mixture well with the long-handled spoon every hour or so. Strain liquid into a 1-liter glass jar through a cheesecloth-lined strainer, pressing to extract as much as possible. Discard the almonds.

Add the sugar to the liquid, close the lid tightly, and shake the jar vigorously, repeating several times over 15 minutes, or until the sugar dissolves. Add the vodka and orange blossom water and stir thoroughly. Cover and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

**MAKES 2 TO 3 CUPS OF SYRUP**