

# Spirits high for Barbados rum industry

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The future for Barbados' rum is bright despite declining demand for cheaper brands of the spirit worldwide.

The rosy picture has been painted by chairman of the Barbados Rum Distillers Committee and managing director of Mount Gay Distilleries, Raphael Grisoni.

"There is a demand going for high quality rums and I think Barbados is probably one of the most well-positioned for that," he said.

Speaking to the **Sunday Sun** on the performance of the rum industry, he revealed that sales of cheaper rum brands were declining worldwide, yet, he said, the appetite for the high quality premium brands such as those manufactured by Barbados' four producers was growing and "commanding high prices" on the world market.

"They (local producers) could have gone down the road on high volume production, but I think all the players are smart enough to see that there are opportunities in developing high value rum, which means more aged rums," Grisoni said.

Statistics published in the

**International Wine and Spirits Report** show a decline in the demand for cheap rums for the last seven years, with sales dropping from one billion cases five years ago, to 500 000 in recent times. But Grisoni observed Barbados had "a good role to play" in "piggybacking" on the demand for high end brands.

The Barbados Rum Distillers Committee comprises rum producers from Mount Gay Distilleries, Foursquare Distillery, West Indies Rum Refinery and St Nicholas Abbey, each of which Grisoni said had its own identity and had established a reputation internationally for prize-winning brands.

## Advantageous position

In the case of Mount Gay, majority ownership by the internationally-known spirits company Remy-Cointreau placed the centuries-old Barbadian rum in an advantageous position of worldwide exposure in the high end markets where Remy Cointreau products enjoy a high level of visibility and vast distribution.

"We are leveraging the portfolio of

## Grisoni: Rum Academy needed

With its worldwide reputation as a historic producer of fine rum, Barbados should create an academy of rum.

The suggestion was made by Raphael Grisoni, managing director of the island's oldest distillery, Mount Gay Distilleries as he celebrated the appointment of that company's first female master blender in its three centuries of operations.

Thirty-four-year-old Trudiann Branker takes over the position of master blender after a succession of men in that job from the time Mount Gay began making rum.

Speaking in a setting deep in the heart of the cane fields surrounding the St Lucy Mount Gay Distillery plant, Grisoni declared his company's interest in opening dialogue on the idea of an educational institution dedicated to the history and business



Managing director of Mount Gay Distilleries Limited Raphael Grisoni speaking about the local rum industry Friday.

of rum production, with Government bodies and other distilleries. He suggested such an educational programme should be geared towards enabling people to improve their knowledge of the rum-making craft and to gaining Barbados the recognition it deserved worldwide as the originator of rum-making.

"It is our duty as creator of the rum to lead in educating all the art and craft of our industry to sustain and preserve our heritage," Grisoni told an audience that included Minister of Agriculture Indar Weir and Member of Parliament for St Lucy, Peter Phillips.



First female master blender at Mount Gay Distilleries Trudiann Branker (second left) being toasted Thursday by (from left) Mount Gay Distilleries managing director Raphael Grisoni, Minister of Agriculture Indar Weir and Member of Parliament for St Lucy, Minister Peter Phillips. (Pictures by Reco Moore.)

Remy Cointreau," Grisoni said.

But the rums of Foursquare Rum Distillery are also enjoying a winning profile among rum connoisseurs around the world. Foursquare won the **International Wines And Spirits Competition (IWSP) For 2018 Rum Producer Of The Year**, the second time the company copped the award in the last three years.

Foursquare took four of the eight gold medals awarded from over 230 entries, in what is considered the most prestigious competition of its kind in the world, with awards regarded as some of the highest in the industry.

One of the distillery's vintages "Foursquare 2005" won the award for **Supreme Champion Spirit**, the first time the award was given to a rum in the 23-year history of the competition.

Managing director of Foursquare Distillery Richard Seale said it was

another good year for the business.

Meanwhile, St Nicholas Abbey, described as "an artisan boutique producer" also had a good 2018 as indicated by owner Larry Warren who said his focus was on "striving to create premium rum, based on an authentic traditional way of making rum using the sugars from our fields".

"We try not to sell a lot of rum so that we can maintain a very hands-on handcrafted product," Warren said. He suggested syrup produced in Barbados should be used more extensively in the rum industry.

Meanwhile, Grisoni cited access to adequate supplies of locally-produced molasses to satisfy the demand of the industry, as a challenge.

"If the home industry is developing, we are going to need more molasses" Grisoni said.

## Poultry group supports proposed egg price hike

The proposed price hike on eggs by Chickmont Foods – Barbados' largest egg and chicken producer – has the full support of president of the Barbados Egg and Poultry Association, Stephen Layne.

His comments came after general manager of Chickmont's Foods' eggs division, Trevor Gunby, said the price of eggs would most likely increase as a result of a hike in commercial water rates.

In the Budget on March 20, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Mia Amor Mottley announced that effective May 1, the commercial rate would move from a fixed \$4.66 per cubic metre for all water levels up to 40 cubic metres, and then \$7.78 for usage in excess of 40 cubic metres, with a monthly cap of 12 000 cubic metres, after which the rate would revert to \$4.66.

"Chickmont is a member of the Barbados Egg and Poultry Association . . . On this matter, we would have to be in full agreement with them. Chickmont is the most efficient poultry operation in terms of their ability to produce products at a very

cost effective manner. If they are finding it difficult to maintain the present cost because of the increases, we have no problem supporting them," Layne told **Starcom Network News**.

Layne said the plant, which produces 60 000 eggs each day, was not behaving like a loose cannon on the matter as they had put it before the directors of the group.

"We have had some discussion and correspondence with agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture to express our concerns, and it is not a matter that the industry takes lightly in terms of increasing prices at this time," Layne said, adding that the entire sector was considering the price increase despite trying to keep eggs affordable.

"If I say Chickmont is the most efficient operator and they have to consider it, the others, in fact, are hurting a lot more. Eggs in Barbados are very reasonably priced already. Farmers don't make a lot of money on it, but they play their role in terms of trying to keep it out there as a source of good quality high protein at affordable prices. (RA)