

Rum Judging - The Ultimate Dream Job

Does sampling 53 rums over 2 days sound like a dream job to you? Join us as we take you through judging rums at the [2007 Ministry of Rum Tasting Competition](#) as part of [Tales of the Cocktail](#).

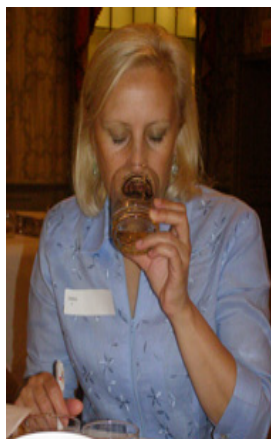


When **Ed Hamilton**, the Ambassador of Rum of the Ministry of Rum, asked us if we would like to be rum judges during the Fifth Annual Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans in July 2007, we immediately said yes! As rum lovers, we knew that the 2007 Ministry of Rum Tasting Competition would provide us with the unique opportunity to taste quality rums from around the world, so how could we say no to that?

Of course, there is much more to judging rum than just sitting around and drinking all day. First of all, there were a total of 4 sessions and 69 rums, broken into morning and afternoon sessions with 16, 11, 20, and 22 different rums per session. Although we missed the first morning session (flavored rums) due to our plane being delayed because of the torrential rains in New York, we did manage to arrive in New Orleans in time for the second session in the afternoon.

July 18, 2007, Day 1, Session 2: We arrived at [Arnaud's](#) at 3:00 pm, where there were 8 tables with set-ups for 3 judges at each of the tables for the 24 rum judges, a mix of 20 males and 4 females, whose credentials included bartenders, master distillers, spirits importers, and spirits writers. Ed explained that the rums for Session 2 were 11 Martinique Rhum Agricoles, (made from sugar cane juice, and processed and bottled in Martinique), something that we felt we knew a thing or two about having visited and written about Martinique and its many distilleries and rhum agricoles as well as having written about other rums. (Read: [Martinique Rhum Agricole - The Art and Science](#), and rum articles in the [Liquor Cabinet](#) section.)

The judging process would take place over the next 2 hours, taking a break after 45 minutes. We would judge the rums in a blind tasting based on 4 attributes: Aroma (should carry all the way through), Initial Taste (depth of character, well-constructed spirits should have more than one attribute), Body (should be consistent), and Finish (short, long, how well you like it) (AIBF). We would rate each attribute from 1-25, and assign a final score of 1-100 points, as well as note which rum would rate a Gold, Silver, or Bronze distinction. At the end of the judging process, Ed would total the scores for each rum from all of the judges divide that number by the number of judges, and then assign a Gold, Silver, or Bronze rating for each of the rums based on the scores.



Debra and Edward hard at work

Let the judging begin! The room was as quiet as a library as we removed the papers covering our first samples, 3 white rums. We would first taste the rums neat, and then taste them with a little water. Keeping the process AIBF in mind, we swirled our first rum, nosed it, sipped it, and then spit in our personal buckets to discard it. Now we had to rate the rum, so this dream job is a little more involved than it seems. We continued with each of the white rums, followed by 3 pailles (or gold) rums, took a break for our nose and palates, and then went back to work to complete the judging of the 5 aged rums.



When Ed rolled out the cart with the bottles labeled and numbered according to the judging sheet, many people were surprised to learn how they had rated their favorites. As for us, we were happy that we had officially made it through Day 1 of judging, and that all of the judges were still coherent, upright, and able to make their own way out of Arnaud's without assistance.

July 19, 2007, Day 2, Session 3: We arrived at Arnaud's for the morning session at 11:00 am and felt rather decadent to be drinking so early in the day, but hey, this is New Orleans, and we were not really drinking,

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we were judging. Today we would judge 20 premium rums from around the world, many of which are not yet available in the United States. This time there were 21 judges, a mix of 19 males and 2 females.



Ed explained the judging process again, and suggested that with 20 rums to judge, we first nose all of the rums before tasting. With 20 rums, this was a very slow process, yet we once again managed to complete our assigned (and delicious) task. Once again, when Ed rolled out the cart with the bottles, there were some interesting surprises.

Day 2, Session 4: Rum judging is harder than it sounds, and by the last session of the competition, we had dwindled to 17 judges, a mix of 14 males and 3 females. Our task for this session would be to judge 22 rums, a mix of 6 white rums, a mix of gold and aged rums, and lastly a white rum that is 169 ° that had to be brought out by itself because its nose was so powerful.

Once again, we nosed each of the rums, tasted, and completed the judging process for the first rums. When Ed brought out the final rum the aroma actually preceded the arrival of the rum samples. We carefully nosed this rum from a safe distance, as nosing 169 ° too closely will almost anesthetize your nose, followed by tasting this unusual rum. Forget about discarding the rum after the initial intake, as the rum evaporated almost instantly on the tips of our tongues. It felt like if we had put our tongues in a glass of water that the water would have sizzled!

After completing the final judging for Session 4, Ed explained that the last rum Sunset Very Strong Rum from Saint Vincent is actually an eye-opener for the locals. Having tried it, we can readily agree that this rum would definitely open eyes! As with the other sessions, Ed had more surprises for the judges when we saw the bottles on the cart.



So, after personally judging 53 out of 69 rums over 3 sessions, do we still think rum judging is a dream job? You bet; we cannot wait until we can repeat this most interesting, informative, and of course, tasty, "job," however, the next time we will make sure that we attend every session! Until then, we will keep doing our "research."

Drum roll please, the 2007 Ministry of Rum Tasting Competition in New Orleans results:

10 Cane

Silver Medal

Appleton Estate Extra Jamaica Rum

Silver Medal

Appleton Estate Reserve Jamaica Rum

Silver Medal

Araku Rum and Coffee Liqueur

Gold Medal

Barceló Añejo

Bronze Medal

Barceló Imperial

Gold Medal

Brinley Gold Coconut Rum

Silver Medal

Brinley Gold Coffee Rum

Gold Medal

Brinley Gold Mango Rum

Silver Medal

Brinley Gold Vanilla Rum

Silver Medal

Caldas Cristal

Silver Medal

Castries Rum Cream

Gold Medal

Clement X.O. Rhum

Gold Medal

Cockspur 12

Gold Medal

Diplomatico Reserva

Gold Medal

Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva

Gold Medal

El Dorado 12 Year Old Rum

Gold Medal

El Dorado 5 Year Old Rum

Silver Medal

El Dorado Rum Cream

Gold Medal

English Harbour 5 Year Old

Silver Medal

J.M. Eleve Sous Bois

Gold Medal

J.M. Rhum Agricole Blanc

Silver Medal

J.M. Rhum Agricole Vieux 1997

Silver Medal

J.M. Rhum Agricole Vieux VSOP

Gold Medal

La Favorite Rhum Agricole Blanc

Gold Medal

La Favorite Rhum Agricole Ambre

Bronze Medal

La Favorite Rhum Agricole Vieux

Bronze Medal

Macuro Ron Añejo Ultra Premium

Gold Medal

Mocambo Aged Rum Art Edition 20 Years

Silver Medal

Mocambo Solera Rum 10 Years Aged Musket

Silver Medal

Mount Gay Extra Old Barbados Rum

Gold Rum

Mount Gay Refined Eclipse

Bronze Medal

Neisson Eleve Sous Bois

Silver Medal

Neisson Rhum Reserve Speciale

Gold Medal

Neisson Rhum Agricole Blanc

Gold Medal

New Orleans 10 Year Old Rum

Silver Medal

New Orleans 3 Year Old Rum

Silver Medal

New Orleans White Rum

Gold Medal

New Orleans Cajun Spice

Bronze Medal

Prichard's Crystal Rum

Gold Medal

Prichard's Fine Rum

Silver Medal

Pyrat 1623

Gold Medal

Pyrat XO

Silver Medal

Ron Abuelo Añejo

Silver Medal

Ron Abuelo 7 Años Reserva Superior

Gold Medal

Ron Viejo de Caldas 3 Years

Silver Medal

Ron Viejo de Caldas 8 Years

Bronze Medal

Rubi Rey

Silver Medal

Rum Jumbie Liqueur

Gold Medal

Santa Teresa 1796

Gold Medal

Santa Teresa Grand Reserva

Silver Medal

Santa Teresa Rhum Orange Liqueur

Silver Medal

Sunset Captain Bligh Golden Rum

Bronze Medal

Sunset Light Rum

Silver Medal

Sunset Very Strong Rum

Silver Medal

Temptryst Cherrywood XO Rum

Silver Medal

Temptryst Cherrywood Rum

Gold Medal

Temptryst Classic Oak Rum

Silver Medal

Temptryst Coconut

Bronze Medal

Temptryst Dark Chocolate

Bronze Medal

Temptryst Mango Rum

Bronze Medal

Temptryst Maplewood Rum

Gold Medal

Temptryst Mesquite Rum

Silver Medal

Temptryst Pecan Matured Rum

Silver Medal

Temptryst Tropical Light Rum

Gold Medal

Temptryst Vanilla Bean

Bronze Medal

Tortuga 5 Year Old Rum

Gold Medal

Tortuga Coconut Rum

Bronze Medal

Vizcaya VXOP Cuban Style Rum

Gold Rum

Read other articles on **Tales of the Cocktail** in the **Liquor Cabinet**, **Restaurants**, and **Chefs' Recipes** sections.

For information on the **2008 Ministry of Rum Tasting Competition**, please visit: www.MinistryofRum.com. For information on the 2008 Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans, please visit: www.TalesoftheCocktail.com. For information on New Orleans, please visit: **New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.** at: www.NewOrleansCVB.com.

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