

THE RULER OF RUM WITH DON Q

BY JESSE HOM-DAWSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF DON Q

Don Q the company bears a lot of similarities to Don Q the rum: aged, elegant and classic. Started 150 years ago, Don Q has always been at the forefront of the rum category, and their impressive portfolio will grow even more this year with the launch of their 2005 Signature Release Single Barrel Rum (SRP \$39.99), of which only 4,000 cases will be available. Aged for over ten years, the 80-proof light rum was bottled from a selection of Puerto Rican rum laid down in 2005. It's a departure from their blended rums, according to John Eason, COO/EVP of Serrallés USA: "A few years ago, we took a hard look at our portfolio. We realized that we needed more unique expressions in order to help elevate the brand to its rightful place within the spirits industry. We intend to be at the forefront with more barrel-aged expressions, different from anything we've ever done. Bourbon and whiskey fans will really enjoy this."

While the Single Barrel Rum might be the shiny new toy in Don Q's collection, their classics are just as fun to play with. There's Don Q Coco, a versatile expression that bartenders reach for whenever mixing up a tropical Tiki drink or Mojito-style cocktail. Per Eason, "Being realistic, and knowing that many bartenders prefer using natural juices over flavored spirits in their cocktails, our Don Q Coco is a good alternative for them. We only use natural flavors and don't use any artificial syrups, which allows the natural coconut flavor to shine through."

For something with a little more depth, there's Don Q Gran Añejo. A blend of rums aged nine to twelve years, with the addition of solera-aged rums in oak Sherry casks makes the Gran Añejo the "crown jewel" of Don Q's portfolio. "Some of that solera is up to 50 years old," enthuses Eason. "The Gran Añejo is one of the highest-rated rums in the industry."

Tiki Time with Heights Tavern

Speaking of tiki drinks, there's Don Q 151, the potent powerhouse that, despite its high proof, manages to give a cocktail depth rather than overpower its other flavors. Eric Binder, owner of Heights Tavern in New York City's Washington Heights, uses it along with the Añejo for his Zombie Killer. A mash-up of the classic tiki drinks the Zombie and the Painkiller, Binder and fellow Heights Tavern bartender Luke Lambert found that Don Q Añejo's smoothness perfectly balanced out the high alcohol content of the 151 for a tasty and high-proof cocktail. "The actual drink isn't exactly a mashup of the two by the time we were done experimenting," Binder admits. "But the Añejo goes really well with the fruit flavors, and the drink was missing something until we added the white peach purée, which added the perfect balance to the cocktail." It's been a top-seller at Heights Tavern since Binder added it to the menu a month ago; sounds like a killer cocktail to us!



Eric Binder and Luke Lampert of Heights Tavern in New York City with their Zombie Killer cocktail.

ZOMBIE KILLER

- 1½ oz. Don Q Añejo Rum
- ½ oz. Don Q 151 Rum
- ½ oz. fresh lime juice
- ½ oz. white peach purée
- ½ oz. Coco Lopez
- Dash cinnamon and nutmeg



Don Q Coco
(SRP \$12.99)
The natural coconut notes are laced with a fine thread of powdered cocoa on the nose, which leads to a graceful textural glide on the palate. The Don Q rum is not masked, but gilded by coconut and mocha.
—Meridith May



Don Q 151° Rum
(SRP \$25.99)
Caramel and cocoa waft from the glass, a faded burnt orange peel in the background. Hints of rancio, cedar closet and orange liqueur come forward. Despite the high proof, this is the elegant Don Q we know and admire.
—M. M.



Don Q Gran Añejo Rum
(SRP \$59.99)
Warm cinnamon and mandarin notes lead from dry to sweet, while clove, cherry, coffee, vanilla and roasted hazelnuts coat the palate; so rich and vigorous: two ice cubes and you're sailing.
—M. M.



Don Q Añejo
(SRP \$19.99)
Cinnamon toast, new leather and warm apple pie are instantly conjured—a perfume of sweetness and savory. This lovely 80-proof Puerto Rican rum shows well-integrated cedar and white pepper notes. The gentleness of the spirit's warmth of tobacco and melted brown sugar create a startlingly good finish. —M. M.

For a review of the new Don Q 2005 Single Barrel, see *Publisher's Picks* on page 91.