



The Rum Renaissance

An Interview with Edouard Beasley,
Global Marketing Director, Diplomatico Rum



Diplomatico Rum's pot stills (above) and Reserva Exclusiva (left)

EDITORS' NOTE Edouard Beasley is also the CEO of Intelligent Brand Extension, LLC. He has been a global brand builder for 30 years with multinationals in Europe, the U.S., Latin America, Asia and Australia. He has led the marketing strategy of global brands such as Martell Cognac, Mumm Champagne and Jacob's Creek Wines and was the CMO of Pernod Ricard's Global Wine Division in Australia before moving to New York in 2014. He holds an M.B.A. from Indiana University Kelley School of Business.



Edouard Beasley

COMPANY BRIEF *Diplomatico Rum* (rondiplomatico.com) began in Venezuela in 1959, with the establishment of the distillery where all of its rums are produced. At that time, *Licorerías Unidas S.A (LUSA)* owned the distillery and the main shareholder was Seagram's. In 2002, LUSA was put up for sale. A group of Venezuelan entrepreneurs, most of them with extensive experience in the spirits industry, believed in the potential of the company. That same year, LUSA became 100 percent Venezuelan and privately-owned and adopted its current name: *Destilerías Unidas S.A. (DUSA)*. The company is one of the largest rum producers in Venezuela. Today, *Diplomatico* is distributed in over 70 countries. It holds the "Ron de Venezuela" DOC (Protected Denomination of Origin) and is recognized as one of the finest rums in the world.

Would you discuss the history and heritage of Diplomatico Rum?

Diplomatico rums are produced by *Destilerías Unidas S.A. (DUSA)* in Venezuela, an independent, family-owned, 100 percent Venezuelan company.

The distillery, where all Diplomatico rums are produced, was created in 1959 by local rum producers and Seagram's International which, at the time, was one of the biggest wine and spirits distributors in the world.

Seagram's brought distillation systems previously used for the production of bourbon (a batch kettle) and whisky (copper pot stills) from their distilleries in Canada and Scotland, respectively. They also built diverse continuous columns for the production of Hispanic style rums.

This rich distillation heritage left by Seagram's is at the heart of Diplomatico's elaboration process. It is a legacy embraced by DUSA, which has continued to develop the distillery's rum-making know-how and high-quality standards for the production of fine spirits.

Today, DUSA is one of the largest rum producers in Venezuela and Diplomatico rums have become an international reference in the premium and above rum segment.

Will you provide an overview of Diplomatico Rum's product offerings?

Each expression of Diplomatico rum has a particular taste profile and has been crafted for a specific way of consumption. However, the common characteristic across our range is that all our rums can be enjoyed neat.

Reserva Exclusiva is our flagship, a dark sipping rum that is complex and full of character. Aged for up to twelve years, this rum is best enjoyed neat or on the rocks. It can be the main ingredient in classic cocktails that are traditionally prepared with whisky or bourbon, such as an Old Fashioned or Sazerac.

Mantuano is our dark mixing rum, aged for up to eight years. It is ideal for mixing in cocktails, but will also appeal to those who prefer to drink it neat and are looking for a well-balanced and slightly dry rum.

Planas is our white sipping rum, aged for up to six years. It can be enjoyed neat, on the rocks, or in sophisticated cocktails like a Rum Martini. It is a rum that surprises people because it is powerful, yet incredibly smooth.

Diplomatico features two Prestige expressions: Single Vintage and Ambassador. Crafted from the distillery's most exclusive reserves, and produced in limited quantities, these exquisite rums are finished in Spanish sherry casks and will captivate the most demanding palates.

More recently we released The Distillery Collection in 2017, which features Diplomatico's distinct distillation methods through single distilled rums, each one of them showcasing their very own personality and sensory profile. The two expressions currently available are a Single Batch Kettle rum and a Single Barbet Column rum.

How do you define the Diplomatico Rum advantage and what makes the product unique?

Diplomatico is recognized as one of the finest sipping rums in the world, and I believe the reason for this success lies in its unmistakable taste and beautiful aromas.

This variety of distillates is what characterizes Diplomatico rums and what allows the Maestros Roneros (Master Blenders) to create unique blends.

Tradition is also a key asset. Diplomatico, as a Venezuelan rum brand, benefits from the country's rich tradition in rum production, which started in the

19th century. Venezuela is internationally recognized for rum production and is one of the few countries in the world to have a Controlled Designation of Origin for rum (DOC Ron de Venezuela), and our rums hold this quality and tradition certification.

Who is the Diplomatico Rum customer?

One of the great advantages of Diplomatico rums is that they are appealing to a variety of consumers, and the best example to illustrate this is our flagship rum Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva.

Over the years it has become a reference in the super-premium rum segment and represents over two thirds of our global sales. Thanks to its elegance, complexity and sweet profile, this expression can be enjoyed by rum aficionados and fine spirits connoisseurs; by men and women; neat, on the rocks or in sophisticated cocktails. We do see a common thread; our consumers are looking for quality products, carefully crafted, authentic and socially conscious.

Where do you see the greatest growth opportunities for Diplomatico Rum?

Over the past few years we have been observing a common trend to all spirits categories: premiumization. We see it in whisky, gin, vodka, and more recently in rum; although there is still a big gap compared to those other spirits categories. That's where I see a huge opportunity for a premium-and-above rum brand like Diplomatico.

According to IWSR, the overall domestic rum segment's volumes in 2017 were flat, however the premium-and-above rum segment, where Diplomatico plays, grew by 7.3 percent in 2017, and 25.4 percent over the past 5 years.

The rise and development of the cocktail culture in recent years had a very positive impact on Diplomatico's growth internationally, and premium rum in general. The perception of industry professionals and consumers about rum is definitely evolving, especially in Occidental Europe, where the rum premiumization trend is more mature.

In North America, where this trend is gaining strength, we see a great opportunity to develop our brand among fine spirits lovers who are looking for new tasting experiences and quality distillates. We recently announced Gallo as our new importer in the United States. As one of the largest importers in the world, we see a promising opportunity to expand our footprint and introduce more consumers to the world of Diplomatico with their extensive network.

Our ultimate brand mission is to make people re-evaluate their perception of rum. This is an ongoing objective as we work towards being not just the top rum globally, but also across the aged spirits category as a whole. ●