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MEET MARC FARRELL, WHO'S REIMAGINING CRAFT RUM

Marc Farrell is the latest alcohol entrepreneur who hopes to establish craft rum alongside the top-selling categories of craft whiskey and tequila. Born and raised in Trinidad, Farrell attended MIT at age 16, and later became the youngest VP in Starbucks history. Today, he's behind the new rum brand Ten To One, which offers white and dark expressions (SRPs: $29, and $43, respectively). We recently spoke with Farrell.

BY KYLE SWARTZ

Kyle Swartz: How do you attract whiskey drinkers to rum?

Mark Farrell: That's all about education, and getting liquid to lips. You've got to educate consumers about the similarities between rum and whiskey: the distillation process, barrel aging and blending versus single-origins. You've got to shed light on rum having a taxonomy that's similar to whiskey.

Ten To One is aged in ex-bourbon casks, so drinkers can pick out reminiscent notes in our dark rum. Building on that, you can look at the climate of the Caribbean. Because of the heat, rum ages three times faster than comparable whiskey. Rum takes on barrel notes sooner than consumers would expect. That's why you can take an eight-year-old rum and put it up next to a 15-20-year-old whiskey, and those things compare favorably.

KS: Why is mixology so important for craft rum?

MF: It's really important for any spirit nowadays to be part of the trendy cocktail scene. Part of the problem with rum is that rum suffers from a deficit of perception when it comes to its quality as a cocktail ingredient. We need to overcome that. We need to show consumers that rum has a non-negotiable place in the world's best cocktail bars.

A big part of this is also to introduce rum to consumers in a way that dispels preconceived notions about the spirit. Ten To One has no added sugar, flavoring or coloring. We need consumers to have the correct perception of rum. We have to introduce rum in a way that shows off its integrity.

Marc Farrell

I want to be able to walk into the greatest craft bars in the world and see those world-class mixologists working with Ten To One. But you also have to unlock every-day mixology experiences as well. That's why we recommend consumers mix our rum with club soda, tonic, lime or coconut water. Those baseline cocktails are really critical.

TASTING: THE BALVENIE 'STORIES' LINE

Founded in 1892 by William Grant himself, this classic Scotch brand is best known for its innovative, trend-setting wood finishes. Tapping into its history, The Balvenie recently released its new 'Stories' line. These three very different whiskies represent "tales of character, endeavor and craft." Each label explains in length the stories and personnel behind the different productions.

BY KYLE SWARTZ

If based only on flavor, this line is a success. I had chance to sample all three whiskies in the Stories line at a New York City launch event (at the marvelous Lotte New York Palace). While overall flavors varied greatly, all three Scotches showcased that dry/sweet base known to The Balvenie.

The lineup includes The Sweet Toast of American Oak (SRP: $59.99), a 12-year-old finished in twice-charred white American oak barrels from Kentucky; The Week of Peat ($99), a 14-year-old that references how long each year the distillery produces peated whisky; and A Day of Dark Barley ($800), a 26-year-old that originally released in 2006, before this extra-aged re-release.

FLOR DE CAÑA 25-YEAR-OLD RUM

This Nicaraguan rum has aromas of vanilla, wood and dark cocoa, the company says, while on the palate it's sticky-sweet and cut by fruity, nutty and caramel notes.

SRP: $154.99 per 750-ml. bottle.

GLENFIDDICH WINTER STORM SINGLE MALT

The first-ever whisky finished in ice wine casks. Aged 21 years, with a "unique layer of sweetness and complexity," the company says. The third release in the Glenfiddich Experimental Series.

SRP: $250 per 750-ml. bottle.

CROWN ROYAL XR

The second addition to the Crown Royal Extra Rare Whisky Series. Crafted from final batches produced at founder Samuel Bronfman's original LaSalle Distillery. Since LaSalle closed in 1993, Crown Royal XR will not be available for much longer.

SRP: $129 per 750-ml. bottle.

FOUR ROSES HOLIDAY GIFT PACK

Includes a 750-ml. bottle of Four Roses, along with a red stainless-steel flask. On the nose the bourbon has pear and light fruitiness, floral, gentle spice and honey, the company reports, before a palate of fresh fruit and hints of apple.

SRP: $20.99-$22.99.

THE BALVENIE DOUBLEWOOD 17 YEAR OLD

An elder sibling to the DoubleWood 12 year old, this shares its honeyed, spicy characteristics, but with deeper vanilla notes, hints of green apple and creamy toffee, the company reports. It matured in American oak and European sherry casks.

SRP: $149.99 per 750-ml. bottle.

GLEN MORAY HOLIDAY GIFT SETS

This Scotch brand is offering a series of boxed sets that come with two glasses and one 750-ml. bottle of either Glen Moray Single Malt, Sherry Cask Finish, Chardonnay Cask Finish, 12-year-old Single Malt or Peated Single Malt.

SRP: $24.99-$29.99.

THE GLENLIVET 14 YEAR OLD

Featuring a new label with a modernized look, this is the first in The Glenlivet portfolio in the U.S. that's finished in Cognac casks. It has sweet and fruity aromas.

SRP: $55 per 750-ml. bottle.

CALAMITY GIN VALUE ADDED PACK

This Calamity Gin gift pack pairs a light juniper, "Texas Dry" gin with mixers to enhance the citrus and floral notes of the spirit.

SRP: $24.99.

KNOCKMORE IRISH WHISKEY SHOT GLASS ON-PACK

Includes a shot glass. Knockmore Irish Whiskey is made from blended four-year-old Irish Whiskey with eight- and 10-year-old grain and malt whiskies in first-filled bourbon barrels.

SRP: $28.99.

BIRD DOG WHISKEY HOLIDAY VAPS

This brand has two 2019 gift boxes. One offers a 750-ml. of Bird Dog Blackberry or Peach with two 50-ml. bottles of Black Cherry and Strawberry. Available only in NY and LA, the other contains a 750-ml. of Bird Dog Blackberry or Peach with two stainless-steel shot glasses.

SRP: $19.99.

HIBIKI JAPANESE HARMONY ANNIVERSARY PACK

In celebration of Hibiki's 30th anniversary, the House of Suntory has released a specially designed bottle featuring a kimono-inspired tabane-noshi pattern, created to represent both celebration and shared happiness. 43% ABV.

SRP: $100 per 750-ml. bottle.

HERRADURA ICE TRAY VAP

Comes with one 750-ml. bottle of Tequila Herradura Silver and a custom horseshoe ice mold tray, with a cucumber mint ice cube recipe on the packaging.

SRP: $44.99

JOHNNIE WALKER BLUE LABEL GHOST & RARE GLENURY ROYAL

The final installment in this series draws on rare casks from the Highland "ghost" distillery of Glenury Royal, which closed its doors in 1985. There have only been eight official bottlings of Glenury Royal in the past 23 years.

SRP: $349.99 per 750-ml. bottle.

100 PROOF ELMER T. LEE BOURBON

August 5, 2019, would have been the 100th birthday for whiskey pioneer Elmer T. Lee. In celebrating the father of Blanton's, Buffalo Trace released a 100-proof commemorative bottling of Elmer T. Lee bourbon. **SRP: $100 per 750-ml. bottle.**

CAMUS MIXOLOGY EDITION

These annual releases feature recipes from internationally renowned bartenders that enhance the profile of Camus cognacs. The 2019 edition highlights the Haut Camus cocktail by Patrick Pistoles, and includes ice cube tray and glass.

SRP: $30-$35.