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Foreword by Jim Murray

A Look at the Distilling of Tequila & Rum at Porfidio

With the kind permission of Porfidio Distillery



Destileria Porfidio

Destileria Porfidio is the home of the finest pure cane rum in Latin America, if not the world.

Until recently, Porfidio was renowned the world over as the producer of the number-one brand of pure agave tequila, a range of spirits of exceptional quality. However, in April 2003 Ponciano Porfidio released his 1998 vintage Porfidio Rum, a top quality pure cane rum, on to the world market.

This exciting addition to its traditional portfolio of spirits, which is already acclaimed internationally by liquor connoisseurs, is the result of years of research into production and distillation processes of high-quality rum.

A unique experience

Tourists are welcome to visit the distillery to watch rum production in action between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Saturday from December 1 to May 31 which is the harvesting period of the sugar cane. At other times of the year (June to November) the distillery shuts down its rum production and shifts the focus to the production of their equally fine Porfidio agave spirits.

Once you have marvelled at the care that is taken in the production of each drop of Porfidio Rum, you will be anxious to sample its unique flavour. You are invited to complete your tour with a special tasting of their new pure cane rum; for a nominal fee per person; you will be offered three distinctive samples to taste. The duration of the guided tour, including the tasting experience, is approximately one hour. Destileria Porfidio is easy to find on the Coastal Highway just five minutes north of the airport at Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Destileria Porfidio will never compromise on the quality of the ingredients it demands for its pure cane Porfidio Rum. Virtually all ordinary rum available in the United States is made from molasses, a cheap by-product of sugar refining. Molasses consists of indirect cane sugars which can not be converted into granulated sugar for the market, but can be used for industrial alcohol production. Premium single cane rum, by stark contrast, is made from freshly pressed sugar cane juice, undiluted and 100% pure.



Speed is of the essence

For top-quality rum, the sugar cane must be cut and processed within two days to ensure the best flavour. Fortunately for them, sugar cane flourishes in the sun-drenched soils of the coastal state of Nayarit, just one hour's drive from their facility at Puerto Vallarta.

The cane is cut and loaded immediately on to trucks bound for Destileria Porfidio, leaving no time for the cane to degrade in the hot sunshine. Harvesting is done entirely by hand using the traditional machete, a long curved knife whose blade is honed to lethal sharpness. By avoiding the use of mechanical harvesters the expert pickers are able to select only the healthy and mature sugar cane plants for harvest. Mechanised harvesting results in a mixture of mature and immature, healthy and infected, good and bad sugar cane that produces, ultimately, a rum of very average quality.

Sugar cane can only be harvested from December to June and there is only one harvest per year. Because they insist on freshly cut cane, the production process of Porfidio Rum can only be observed from December to May. By contrast, molasses-based rum can be produced throughout the year, since the raw molasses can be stored in tanks or sacks, like potatoes, for several months.

Sugar cane for Porfidio Rum is harvested without burning, a technique employed by some manufacturers which speeds up the harvesting process on the field to the detriment of the finished product.

Under Pressure

Once the three-metre high sugar cane plants have been hand-cut, again using a machete, into 50cm sections, these small pieces are ground down into a cane fibre mash which is pressed hydraulically to extract the cane juices.

Pressing is a time-consuming process. Of each kilo of freshly harvested sugar cane, 70% is fibre and just 30% is juice. However nothing is wasted — the leftover sugar cane fibre keeps the neighbour's cows happy on a tasty, highly nutritious, natural fibre diet!



As with ultra-premium olive oil, only the first pressing of the cane fibre is used for

the production of Porfidio single cane rum. In addition, unlike many of the competitors, they do not dilute their freshly squeezed juice during the pressing, as this would greatly reduce the quality of the sugar cane juice.

The juice derived from mature sugar cane plants contains natural sugar cane sugar, otherwise used for the production of granulated sugar, which is the basis for the subsequent fermentation process.

The cane juice is creamy in colour, similar in appearance to pressed white wine grapes, and is consumed in Mexico as a highly nutritious substitute for orange juice for breakfast. You will be invited to taste some freshly squeezed, chilled cane juice during the tour. Your children will love it!



During fermentation the natural cane sugar contained within the juices is transformed into alcohol by tiny micro-organisms.

These 'good' bacteria convert the sugar into wine. If 'bad' bacteria is allowed to get into the fermentation tanks it will turn the cane juices into vinegar.

There are two methods of fermentation:

- through the use of nutrients in an open-air environment in which case the fermentation process requires only 24 hours;
- in a temperature and humidity controlled, impeccably clean environment in which case the fermentation process requires four days.

The first low-cost, low-quality method is used by the vast majority of rum factories in Latin America and the West Indies. Destileria Porfidio is the only known factory in Latin America that implements quality fermentation in a rigorously controlled and therefore ideal environment.



Pure Genius

The unique taste of Porfidio Rum is achieved by distilling the fermented sugar cane wine in a traditional hand-operated alambique of the sort used in Europe for fine brandy. This process concentrates the alcoholic content of the wine.

First the alambique heats the wine to a temperature of 98 degrees celsius to separate the solids and the water from the alcoholic vapours, which then work their way through the distillation equipment. Water evaporates at 100 degrees Celsius. As the alcoholic vapours work their way through the distillation equipment, the alcoholic content — or alcoholic concentration - of the vapour is increased.

The fermented sugar cane wine has an alcoholic content of only 8% alcohol by volume. By the penultimate stage of the distillation process, the alcoholic content has reached 45% alcohol by volume.

Chill out

In the final stage, the cooling process, the alcoholic vapours are chilled to condense them from their vapour state into their liquid state. During a tour, you are invited to taste some Porfidio Triple-Distilled Plata Rum in all its crystal-clear purity directly from the alambique.

Some brands are adjusted to 35% or 40% alcohol by volume through the addition of a considerable quantity of water. The diluted spirit will thus be cheaper on the shelf but the flavour substantially diminished. Porfidio Plata Rum, on the other hand, is bottled directly at distillation strength to provide you with a pure spirit with maximum flavour.

There are certain categories of spirits which improve with age, such as whisky, brandy and tequila, and others which do not, like fine German or Alsace fruit brandies, kirsch and refined single-variety grappas.



Room to breathe

Destileria Porfidio released its first Porfidio Rum, the 1998 vintage, on to the market in April 2003. During those five years the fine spirit had been carefully tended as it went through the natural ageing process.

Porfidio Rum, unlike Porfidio pure agave spirits, is not aged in wooden casks but in ceramic flagons. They believe that their rum's refined bouquet is too fresh and delicate to be overlaid with a wood aroma. They therefore leave ageing in wood to less sophisticated rums, whose unpleasant molasses aftertaste may benefit from the addition of a pleasant woody aroma. Ageing in ceramic containers does not imbue the spirit with any type of colour either, unlike ageing in wooden barrels.

Ageing is a fundamental part of the oxygenation process and they have therefore chosen the traditional Germanic industry practice of ageing their rum for five years in ceramic containers that allow the sugar cane distillate to breathe. At 100-litres apiece these flagons are relatively small which means the liquid has a higher exposure to the air over time than would be possible in huge 10,000 litre barrels.



Cheap not cheerful

Destileria Porfidio has its own state-of-the-art laboratory on site which can analyse alcoholic beverages and determine the 'superior' alcohols and methanol content of each sample submitted prior to bottling.

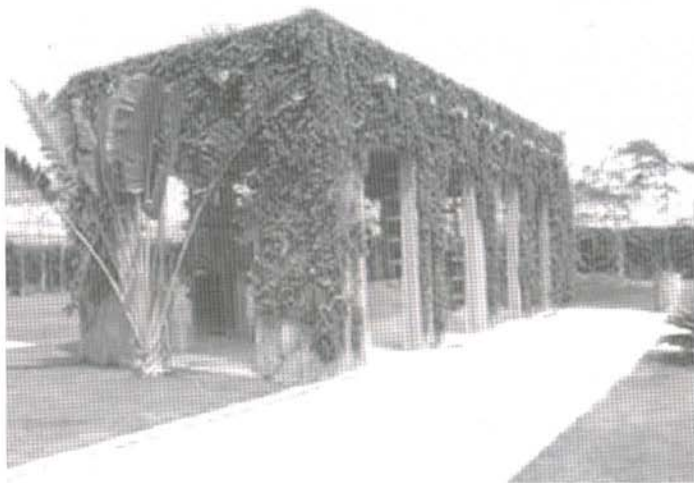
During distillation the alcoholic volume of the spirit becomes concentrated. However the process also serves to separate the 'head & tails' from the 'heart' of the distilled liquid: 'head & tails' refers to the first and last alambique; 'heart' refers to the the middle part.

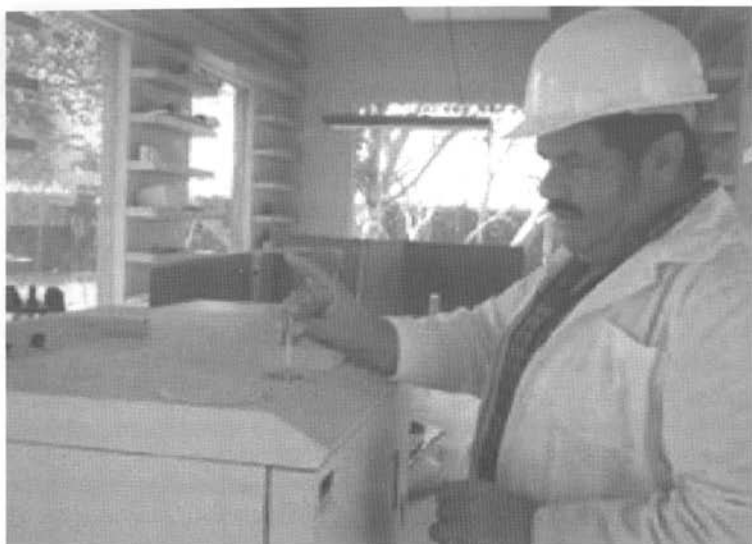
Woe betide those who indulge in inferior brands of rum! In a high-quality product extreme care is taken to remove and discard the 'head & tails' which contain high concentrations of 'superior' alcohol and methanol, the perfect ingredients for the infamous hangover. Inexpensive rum, in which the 'head & tails' are blended with the pure 'heart', is likely to inflict unpleasant side effects.

All alcoholic products consumed in excessive quantities will cause hangovers. Many cheap rums, however, cause hangovers even in small quantities.

150 litres of sugar cane wine will produce 20 litres of distilled 'heart' and 10 litres of 'head and tails'. Of course, by blending the 'head and tails' with the 'heart', the cost of the product decreases proportionately by 30% to the detriment of the long suffering consumer.

Destileria Porfidio uses its gas chromatographer to calculate the 'hangover effect' scientifically. Only the 'heart' of the distilled liquid is used; the 'head & tails' are poured away to leave a crystal clear, refined spirit for you to enjoy.





Clearly charming

Each drop of Porfidio triple Distilled Plata Rum is carefully bottled, labelled and finished by hand on the premises. They produce no more than 10,000 litres each year so Destileria Porfidio is able to give each bottle its personal attention.

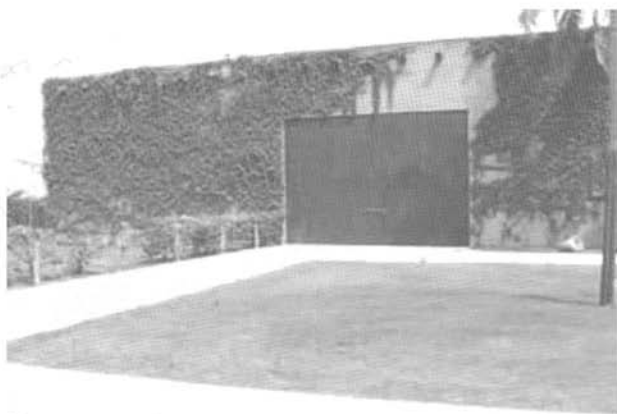
Local craftsmen enclose a three-dimensional glass palm-tree, the distinctive symbol of their rum brand, inside each hand-blown bottle to produce a finished product of undeniable character and charm.





Ready and waiting

All their national and international markets are supplied from their base at Puerto Vallarta and the warehousing unit is the centre of the Destileria Porfidio tour. Bottles boxed and labelled stand ready for export to discerning consumers all over the world.



Taste the difference

At the end of the tour of Destileria Porfidio, you will be invited, for a nominal fee, to taste three of the products: a sample of Porfidio Rum and two samples of Porfidio Agave spirits. These tastings are conducted by experienced sommeliers who will advise you and answer your questions.

On special request and by appointment, they also conduct comparative tastings of various rum brands for convention groups or any group over 50 persons.



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