

## SNOOTH'S SPIRIT OF THE WEEK IS...

April 25, 2017 By **Gabe Sasso**

### **Diplomático Rum Tradition Range:**

Venezuela's Diplomático recently launched a couple of new Rums. Planas and Mantuano join the long established Reserva Exclusiva to form the Tradition Range. Last year I visited them in Venezuela. On that trip I toured their distillery and sugar cane fields. I learned that their operation is run sustainably. I met a multitude of people associated with their brand from their CEO to Master Blender Tito Cordero. His dedication to crafting the best Rums possible was clear in his every word. So after I tasted through these two new releases I reached out to Tito with a couple of questions about them. Our dialogue about the new Rums and Diplomático are below as well as my tasting notes on the releases.



### **Diplomático Mantuano (\$24)**

Mantuano is a blend of Dark Rums aged up to 8 years. It's intended for use in cocktails and as an entry level sipper. Date and spice notes light up the nose here. The palate, which has a nice weight, features dried dark fruits, toasted nuts, and a host of spices. The lingering finish has depth and complexity that belies its price point. This Rum is drier than a lot in this price range and certainly drier than their flagship Reserva Exclusiva. Some Rum lovers will prefer it for that reason alone. The bottom line is that Diplomático's Mantuano represents an excellent value whether you choose to sip it or blend it.

### **Diplomático Planas (\$29)**

Planas is composed of Rums aged up to 6 years. Then its charcoal filtered to remove the color and balance the flavors. Normally I'd never think of a White Rum as a sipper, but Planas is different. It has remarkable depth and concentration of flavors. Tropical fruit aromas are joined by bits off white pepper and vanilla on the nose here. The palate has weight, depth and focus that are all exceptional for White Rum. There are bits of toasted hazelnut and spice here alongside a host of tropical fruits. The finish is long and noteworthy. If you're looking to elevate your rum based cocktails, look no further than Planas which is a truly exceptional and head-turning offering from Diplomático.

## Q & A with Diplomático Master Blender Toto Cordero:

**Gabe:** Please tell me about the overall thought process behind the launch of these new Rums?

**Tito:** Ten years ago, rum was still not taken seriously in the spirits industry, it was considered as a fun, laid-back and not very sophisticated spirit. Today mentalities have evolved and dark spirits lovers have learned to appreciate quality rums like Diplomático, who are recognized among the pioneers of the premium-and-above rum category.

Diplomático has been growing very fast over the past years, since it first started to be exported. Ten years ago it was exclusively sold in its local market, Venezuela, and today is considered as one of the best sipping rums in the world, distributed in over 60 countries. Nevertheless, Diplomático remains a family-owned and 100% Venezuelan business, which allows the brand to be more flexible and adapt to changing environments, and to the evolution of the premium rum segment.

With the evolution of the rum category and the fast growth of our own brand, we had to rethink our development strategy and what we are looking to achieve on the long term. Our vision is to become the reference in the premium and above rum segment around the world, and to do so we focus on our rum-making tradition and know-how. Therefore, we decided to stop the distribution of two of our rums, Reserva and Blanco, and replace them by two new rums with the aim of reinforcing Diplomático's premium positioning in terms of quality, but also in terms of image, allowing the brand to be easily identified through each SKU.

With Mantuano and Planas joining our flagship rum, Reserva Exclusiva, our new Tradition range is richer and offers different consumption modes for different consumption occasions:

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

Planas is our premium white sipping rum, aged for up to six years and charcoal filtered to obtain its crystal-clear color. Planas is best enjoyed neat or on the rocks, and is a rum that surprises people with its tropical aromas and its incredibly smooth taste.

Of course, Reserva Exclusiva remains our super-premium dark sipping rum, elegant, characterful and complex. Aged for up to twelve years, this rum is better enjoyed neat or on the rocks. It can also be the main ingredient in sophisticated classic cocktails such as Old Fashioned or Sazerac.

**Gabe:** What are a few rums you enjoy drinking besides your own and what do you like about them?

**Tito:** I tend to prefer rums with body and a great balance, those where you can easily perceive oak, vanilla and fruity notes. I'm more inclined to dry rums that manage to keep a certain smoothness and balanced taste. Some Caribbean rums from Panama and Jamaica, have these particularities and are a good option when looking for sipping rums. Diplomático rums and Venezuelan rums in general, are known for their great body and structure.

**Gabe:** For me, The Planas is particularly impressive. Most white rums are not enjoyable sipped neat and lack much structure or character. Tell me about the process in creating a White Rum that is such a good cocktail component and well worth sipping neat at the same time

**Tito:** Diplomático Planas is indeed a rum designed for connoisseurs and rum lovers that are looking for a different and unexpected rum experience. It is well structured, with fruity aromas and a creamy mouth-feel. You can identify notes of wood, vanilla, coffee and chocolate, quite surprising for white sipping rum.

In general, the white rum market is made of products that were created following their local rum legislation, which does not impose a minimum ageing time, so you can call rum a distillate that has only been aged in casks for periods of time going from 6 months to one year maximum. This short ageing process does not allow the development of the rum body or the complexity that only can be obtained with years of aging. The objective of aging rum for many years is to make the spirit reach its optimum maturity and allow the transformation of diverse chemical components that will only occur with time and patience, in addition to ideal climate conditions as humidity and tropical temperatures.

At Diplomático, our objective is to be a market leader and to innovate continuously in order to offer high quality products for rum lovers and connoisseurs. For that reason, Planas is aged for up to six years and is made of rums distilled in different types of distillation systems, thanks to which we are able to obtain such a rich range of aromas and tastes to be enjoyed by our consumers. Its crystal clear color is obtained thanks to a complex natural charcoal filtration process, prior to bottling, a process that allows us to remove the natural color obtained during the years of aging, and at the same time preserves most of the aromas and flavors developed throughout the aging process. Therefore Planas can be enjoyed neat or used as the main ingredient in delicate cocktails.

**Gabe:** How does the process for producing Mantuano your new Dark Rum differ from that of Reserva Exclusiva?

**Tito:** Overall the elaboration process for both of these rums is the same. The difference lies in the type of rums that are selected to be part of each blend. For Reserva Exclusiva, we use mostly heavy rums aged for up to twelve years that were distilled in copper Pot Stills, the proportion of heavy rums represents about 80%. The other 20% are light and intermediate rums, distilled in continuous columns and a batch kettle system. For Mantuano we select rums that are aged for up to eight years, predominantly light and intermediate rums distilled in columns and batch kettle (60%). For Mantuano we also use heavy rums, distilled in copper pot stills, in a smaller proportion (40%). These blends are designed to find the perfect balance and the ideal aromatic profile for each rum according to the consumption mode. Reserva Exclusiva is our dark sipping rum, to be enjoyed neat or on the rocks, thanks to its complexity and sweet profile. Mantuano is our dark mixing rum, to be enjoyed in cocktails but can also be sipped for those who are looking for dry rum

In short, to recap with Mantuano and Planas joining our flagship rum, Reserva Exclusiva, our new Tradition range is richer and offers different consumption modes for different consumption occasions.