

VOL. 1

CASK FINISHES

THE
COURT OF COMMONS

CASK FINISHES





Every Great Story Begins *with*
a Time and a Place...

For Mount Gay, that time and a place is Barbados, 1703, where the deed to a hilltop plot of land was granted to a rum distillery named in honor of Sir John Gay, a man who made it his imperative to improve upon the character and quality of rum.



A Legacy of *Handcraft*
Honoured for Over Three Centuries

Today our Master Blender Allen Smith builds on the traditions of Sir John Gay by carefully blending matured rums for distinct profiles. He begins by selecting the finest naturally-sourced ingredients. Coral filtered water which flows deep beneath the island of Barbados is blended with molasses culled from Caribbean sugar cane and set to ferment under tropical skies. We distill our spirits twice in double copper pot stills, then blend these with copper column distillates to bring about the signature Mount Gay flavour notes of sweet vanilla, toasted almond, ripe banana, and caramel.

After distillation, our rums are matured in toasted whiskey oak barrels, aged for an indeterminate and variable length of time, due to the highly unpredictable nature of tropical ageing. Therefore, our rums can be judged only by their maturity, rather than a set number of years. As Allen likes to say, "It's ready when it's ready, not before."



A Fine Finish

Finishing is the final step of—and the latest addition to—our craft process that Master Blender Allen Smith employs to influence the character of Mount Gay rums. While developing the Black Barrel blend, Allen and his team of apprentices evolved the process to introduce this series of limited edition Origin Series blends.

The first major point of difference between ageing and finishing is that *distillates are aged, and blends are finished*. Ageing affects the maturation of rum by rounding out the fiery qualities of a distilled spirit and finesses the signature Mount Gay aromatics from copper pot distillation to bring certain notes to the fore.

After years of carefully monitored ageing, mature rums are blended and put into contact with a seasoned finishing cask for a short maturation cycle that will significantly influence the rum's final outcome. Finishing allows matured blends to marry a little longer, imparting unique characteristics from the types of finishing casks used, such as the type of oak or level of charring, and even the type of spirit it previously contained.

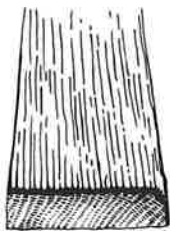
As we have said, tropical ageing is unpredictable; the fluctuations in heat and humidity over several seasons expand and contract the wooden casks, making the influence of the oak contact vary widely. This holds true for finishing but with a compounded effect because the rum within the cask is now an aged blend.

During the finishing process, the rum breathes, expanding and contracting throughout the day by the influence of barometric pressure. The liquid floods into the wood fibers of the cask to absorb the strong aromatic tannins deep within the oak. Then, as the spirit cools in the evening, it withdraws from the wood, and its overall sharpness is mellowed through continued contact with the shallower *red layer*. This red layer is the result of toasting the barrel's interior, thus caramelizing the wood sugars, which leads to a thin, flavourful seam of tempered wood.



Origin Series
Volume 1: *Finishes*

The finishes employed in this, our first Origin Series, are unique because they are the result of Allen Smith's experience enriched through years of ageing, blending, and finishing rums. Allen Smith has applied his knowledge to these selected blends so that they embody two distinct flavour profiles that represent the signature Mount Gay character in surprising new ways.



VIRGIN CASK

Oak casks are ripe with tannins, oils in the wood that give a wood-species its particular scent. When a cask has not been previously used to age a spirit it is considered "virgin." A virgin cask which has not been seasoned with another spirit is abundant with tannins. Giving the barrel only a light toasting allows these tannins to interact with the rum in an unimpeded way, as the red layer is thinner and offers less obstruction to contact. The result is a sharp, spiced, or floral aromatic quality.



CHARRED CASK

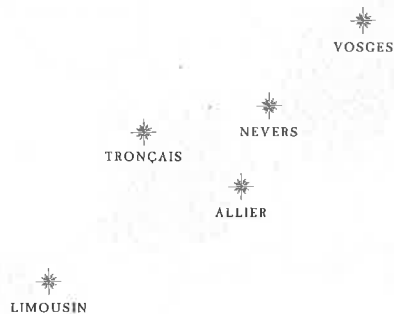
A charred cask will have sweeter caramel notes, whereas a deeply charred cask will see its sweeter notes give way to a smokier aromatic character. Our charred finishing casks for this blend, as with all Mount Gay's ageing barrels, have been previously seasoned by ageing whiskey. This depletes some tannins and helps produce a rounder character. Additionally, this charring mellows the sharper notes in a rum, as the toasted sugars in the red layer round out the flavour.



The *Influence* of Oak

Even prior to toasting the barrels or ageing other spirits within them, there is a characteristic influence imparted from the wood itself that varies from region to region. French oak barrels produce a spirit that is subtle and spicy, offering a smooth, silky texture. American oak barrels tend to impart a much stronger flavour to the spirit, often described as cream soda, vanilla, or coconut, and impart a creamy texture.

Master Blender Allen Smith takes all of these influences into account during the finishing process. He monitors the small-batch casks daily, to ensure that the balance between a sharp tannin influence and that of the mellowing caramelized wood fructose in the charred wood fibers focuses the blend toward the intended flavour profile.



FRENCH BARREL OAK FORESTS



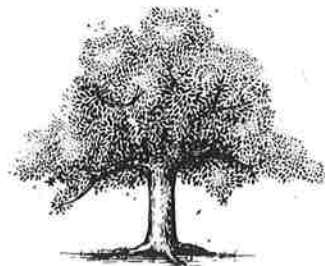
European Quercus Robur

French oak is *robust* and *floral*, and traditionally comes from *one of five* forests in France set aside by Napoleon to grow wood for *ship building*. It is often used to age sherry, cognac, and wine.

★
APPALACHIAN OAK

★
APPALACHIAN OAK

AMERICAN BOURBON BARREL OAK FORESTS



North American Quercus Alba

American oak is *mellow* and *mildly* fragrant, and sourced traditionally from the *Appalachian Mountain* range. Casks made from it are typically used in the ageing of *Bourbon* or other whiskeys.



A Primer on Tasting

Each handcrafted-finish lends the rums to be compared in order to appreciate their difference before moving forward with mixing. A tasting can offer a proper understanding of flavour, aroma, body, and finish, but may require some practice.

- POUR -

Begin with a pour of each blend, neat, in a tulip glass to focus the aromas toward the nose. Alternately, small glass tumblers will do.

- BREATHE -

After pouring, allow the rums to breathe for a few moments. Swirl each around in its glass and observe the "legs," the streams of beaded liquid that run down the sides of the glass. Long, unbroken legs are indications of a full body.

- NOSE -

Smell the aromas of each by placing your nose inside the glass, with your mouth slightly open to increase your sensitivity. Observe the first impression and then the notes that linger thereafter. Experience the aromas evolve as the spirit opens up.

- TASTE -

Rinse your palate with a sip of water between each rum. The beginner will develop a better understanding of each spirit's character through comparison. Taste each multiple times, once lightly with only the tip of the tongue, then a mouthful, swirled over your tongue to experience the complexity. Enjoy.

- GUIDE -

Compare your observations with the tasting notes listed on each bottle. Can you discern the notes in the flavour profile? Don't fret if you're not a super-taster on your first try. Practice isolating the notes in your mind by focusing on a particular aroma and visualizing it in an abstract way. Soon the notes will present themselves to you. Share your findings with friends, and share in the enjoyment of rum.



On Mixing Well

Before mixing aged rums you should always “open up” the spirit with a splash of water, rocks, or swirling neat in a glass. Even if you don’t do a full tasting, an understanding of the rum’s character will better inform your selection of mixers. Here is some advice to get you started.

Charred Cask is a darker, mellower rum, with a finish that presents a dominant caramel note. This sweet, mellow profile distinguishes it for service in a maritime favorite: Rum and citrus fruit. Just an orange garnish, dropped in without the squeeze, adds a contrast that spikes the flavour. For a touch of island influence, add a splash of coconut water.

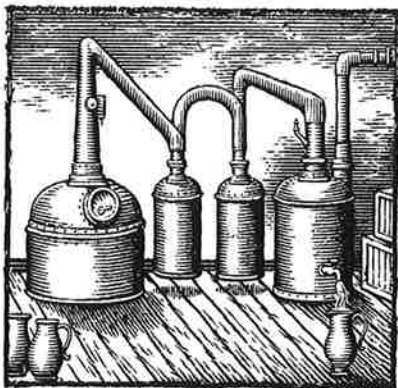
Don't let the deep richness of such a beverage make you believe that it must be enjoyed at a mahogany navigator's desk with maps strewn about: This drink is a welcome respite from the sun, and one that inspires exploration.



Despite its name, Virgin Cask is no novice. This is a rum with experience and an outspoken character. The French oak has imparted a strong floral spice that invokes an Acadian inflection from any mixture added to the drink. Simple syrup, ice, and a twist of lemon add a delicacy to the sharper aromatics giving the drink a bright, fruity nose with a sweet yet decidedly libertine finish.

These are but suggestions, as your own palate will guide your preference for suitable enjoyment. However, if you seek to develop your palate further, peruse the previous chapter's primer on tasting and expand your experience.





Volume One of Mount Gay Distilleries' *Origin Series* is an exploration on the *influence finishing imparts* to our aged, *copper-pot-distilled* rums.

We hope the series to be an enlightening invitation for you to take part in the legacy and craft of *the world's oldest rum*.

— 1892 —
MOUNTAIN
DISTILLERIES