



As Brazil Gets Hotter, So Does Its National Drink

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Mardi Gras or Carnival?

Although most Americans tend to celebrate Mardi Gras, there is a growing group of people who are stepping to a samba beat and enjoying the Brazilian celebration of Carnival.



No doubt, with upcoming events like the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, more and more people will become aware of Brazilian culture. That's a trend that hasn't been lost on the makers of cachaça (pronounced "ka-SHA-sa,"), the key ingredient in Brazil's classic cocktail, the caipirinha (pronounced "kai-pur-EEN-ya").

Several cachaça brands have been working hard to promote the category, educating consumers about the spirit, and doing outreach with bartenders and restaurateurs to teach them how to incorporate it in cocktails and on menus.

The effort appears to be paying off. One brand, **Leblon Cachaça**, was recently designated as a "rising star growth brand" by Beverage Information Group. The award is given to brands that are less than five years old and have shown dramatic growth.

Sales of Leblon have been growing at a double-digit pace, which is even more impressive when one considers that Americans slowed their liquor consumption last year. Leblon is using Carnival, which ends tonight, as a way of encouraging bars and restaurants build events around cachaça-based drinks. The company's promotion focuses on "Caipi Hours," which feature specially priced caipirinhas cocktails made from cachaça and freshly muddled limes and sugar.

Rival **Cabana Cachaça** also is sponsoring some promotions tied to the Carnival period, but instead of focusing on caipirinhas, the company has worked with bartenders in several different cities to create cachaça-based drinks that are representative of the region.

Cabana Cachaça's strategy has focused, in part, on the popularity of the local foods movement, emphasizing that cachaça is a very versatile spirit that can be mixed with just about anything including fruit juices and tonic. The brand also emphasizes that it is a single-estate cachaça that is doubled-distilled and aged for nine months.

Although cachaça remains unknown to many U.S. consumers, it is the third-most consumed spirit in the world.

In the U.S., there has been a lot of confusion about the product. No doubt some of this can be tied to the fact that under U.S. law, the spirit must be labeled Brazilian rum. While both cachaça and rum are derived from sugar cane, cachaça takes the actual cane sugar juice and ferments and distills it, while rum is derived from molasses.

“It’s more akin to tequila in terms of its nose and profile,” said Steve Luttmann, president and founder of Leblon. So think of it this way, you make a caipirinha like a mojito, but it tastes a bit like a margarita. And like tequila, some of the more refined cachaça brands, which are often made in smaller batches, can also be consumed neat.

The industry has been hoping to settle some of the confusion surrounding cachaça by lobbying the U.S. to allow the product to be labeled cachaça.

According to Luttmann, the U.S. government is edging closer to making the designation. However, Matti Anttila, founder and president of Cabana Cachaça, said the decision could still be held up because the U.S. is hoping to win a separate designation for Tennessee whisky from the Brazilians.

But even if the product fails to win the rights to its own category, it is likely that the momentum will continue to build behind the brands, especially as the World Cup and the Olympics begin.



These events, along with continued economic development in Brazil, have created a lot of excitement around the country and its culture.

“Brazil’s prospects have never been as great as they are today,” Anttila said. However, he is hoping to do his part to help the country to continue on its path. For example, the company taken this moment, as its brand enjoys increased sales growth, to contribute \$1 for each bottle sold to a foundation that helps fund education projects for children living in favelas, which are Brazil’s impoverished shanty towns.

A sample of Cabana's city-focused caipirinhas:

The Burnt Orange Caipirinha or The University of Texas

Austin, Texas

Created by: Bill Norris

2 oz Cabana Cachaça

1 clementine, quartered

¼ oz Texas Wildflower honey syrup

3-4 dashes Angostura Bitters

DIRECTIONS: Muddle clementine, honey and bitters in a mixing glass. Add Cabana and shake hard with ice. Double-strain into small, chilled, cocktail glass and garnish with a clementine wheel.

To make Texas Wildflower honey syrup, mix 2 parts honey with 1 part boiling water. Stir to combine.

Sons of Liberty Caipirinha

Boston

Created by: Corey Bunnewith

3 oz Cabana Cachaça

½ lime, quartered

1 tsp cranberry jam

2 tsp Muscavado sugar

1 dash Fee Bros Old Fashioned bitters

DIRECTIONS: In a shaker muddle lime quarters. Add all ingredients and shake with ice. Pour into a rocks glass and microplane a roasted coffee bean over the top for garnish.

Cherry Infusion

To highlight, the spirit's versatility Leblon offers up several recipes, including several infusions. For example, if you take one bottle of Leblon and mix with a half pound of cherries and 1/2 cup of powdered sugar, and cover and seal in a jar. Two to three hours later, strain the cherries and refrigerate the liquid. Serve chilled or on the rocks.