

THE BEST HIGH-ROLLER RUM

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(illustration: Elizabeth Reyes)

You know who knows best which bottles to buy? The people who pour and sell drinks—that's who. We asked dozens of top bartending and spirits industry professionals to tell us which bottles they love and why.

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Heads up: The numerical order below is not organized by importance or quality; it's an alphabetical list, not a ranking. Prices are averages and can vary from state to state.



1: ANGOSTURA 1824 **(\$65)**

“This exceedingly delicious 12-year-old rum from the good folks at [Angostura](#) is rich, opulent and light enough for mixing if you tire of drinking it straight.”—Neal Bodenheimer, owner and bartender at New Orleans' [Cane & Table](#) and [Cure](#)



2: APPLETON ESTATE 21 YEAR **(\$130)**

"It's an amazing sipping rum that won't break the bank, with milk chocolate, orange peel, lots of vanilla, brown sugar and marzipan, as well as cinnamon, allspice and some dried oak rounding out the finish."—Brian Means, bartender at San Francisco's Mina Group



3: BLACK TOT (\$960)

"It's the last remaining stock of the original Royal Naval Rum Tot. You can drink a piece of history if you're willing to pay the price."—Bodenheimer



4: CLÉMENT X.O (\$70)

"This rhum agricole is elegant and complex, and you'll want to take your time getting to know it."—Kellie Thorn, bar manager at Atlanta's Empire State South



5: DON Q GRAN AÑEJO (\$60)

"On the nose, it's oak and brown sugar. On the palate, there's molasses and banana."—Darnell Holguin, bar director at New York City's Fifty



6: DIPLOMÁTICO AMBASSADOR (\$219)

"Diplomatico is one of the best producers—always rich and delicious—but this one is finished in used whiskey and sherry casks and has a super rich and fruity finish."—Aaron Paul, bar director at San Francisco's Alta



7: EL DORADO 21 YEAR (\$105)

“Sweet, nutty, spicy and complex, it’s makes one of the best Rum Old Fashioneds I’ve ever had.”—Camille Cavan, bar manager at Portland, Ore.'s Quaintrelle



8: FACUNDO EXQUISITO (\$134)

“The name says it all; this rum is truly exquisite. It’s such a beautifully complex rum, with notes of mocha, tobacco and honey.”—Holguin



9: FOURSQUARE RUM DISTILLERY 11 YEAR SINGLE BLENDED 2004 (\$73)

“This is an exceptionally well-made and matured rum. It’s produced without the addition of any sugar or coloring after distillation. This premium example of Barbados rum is a delight to enjoy neat.”—Kevin Beary, beverage director at Chicago's Three Dots and a Dash



10: FOURSQUARE CRITERION (\$120)

“Richard Seale from Foursquare Distillery in Barbados makes some of the best rum in the world, and this limited-edition is no exception. This full-flavored sipper gets its unique flavor from a blend of 10-year-old rums aged in ex-bourbon casks and ex-Madeira casks.”—Paul McGee, owner and bartender at Chicago's Lost Lake



11: HAMILTON SAINT LUCIA POT STILL (\$70)

“It’s the kind of high-octane stuff I always want to drink. This dark, funky, tropical juice wants to be in spirit-forward cocktails.”—Matthew Voss, head bartender at Minneapolis’ [Marvel Bar](#)



12: J.M V.S.O.P (\$52)

“This is one of my favorite long-aged rum agricoles. It’s more than worthy to be enjoyed neat.”—Beary



13: MOUNT GAY 1703 (\$115)

“A deliciously smooth rum, Mount Gay 1703 is a blend of 10- to 30-year-old rums that give it flavors of spice and dried tropical fruits.”—Holguin



14: NAVAZOS PALAZZI CASK STRENGTH (\$125)

“This five-year-old molasses rum from the Antilles is rested in oloroso butts for 10 years—a beautiful lineage of walnut, quince and caramelized mushrooms.”—Karen Fu, former bar director at New York City’s [Donna](#)



15: NEISSON L'ESPRIT (\$55)

“This high-proof (140 proof) rum evokes a sense of place more than a specific profile for me. It’s grassiness reminds me of a challenging walk in the Badlands in fall, right before a drink of water. It’s hard to describe and not for the faint of heart but a study in the limits of sugar cane distillation.”—Peder Schweigert, general manager at Minneapolis’ [Marvel Bar](#)



16: NEISSON XO (\$157)

“It’s the best.”—David Y. Dong, bartender at New York City’s [North End Grill](#)



17: PLANTATION GUYANA 2005 (\$54)

“This rum is a great introduction to demerara rum. At 45 percent ABV, it’s a powerful pot-still rum distilled from fermented cane syrup. It is funky and rich and would be a great rum for a seasoned whiskey drinker to experiment with bolder rum styles.”—Beary

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