



LOCAL TALENT All Dolled Up

TORTOLAN DOLL MAKER TRINITA HODGE CREDITS her youngest for starting her on her craft when, 30 years ago, the little girl asked for a doll that looked like her. “Back in the ’70s, black dolls were white, just painted chocolate,” Hodge recalls. The resourceful mother came up with a floppy-legged doll that reflected her child’s Indian and African heritage. Her daughter took it to school and came back with an order. Hodge, honored at this year’s Caribbean Artisans Festival in Tortola as a master craftsman, has expanded her repertoire to include mermaids, life-sized baby boy and girl dolls and 2-foot-tall soft sculptures. She makes patterns for their fiber-filled bodies, but for faces, her goal is realism rather than perfection. “Sometimes we think a person is ugly,” she says, “but what God sees is beautiful. I’m looking for inside beauty.” Mermaid dolls range from \$18 to \$25, and baby dolls begin at \$25. They’re available at the Folk Museum in Road Town, Tortola, and at Native Arts and Crafts Cooperative in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. 284-441-7536 — Joan Tapper



RUM FOR YOUR LIFE Caribbeans Dominate a Spirited Competition

For two days in March, 10 judges swirled, sniffed and tasted their way through The Polished Palate’s Third International Rum Festival, grading the appearance, aroma, palate and finish of 150 blends. In blind tastings, Caribbean rums naturally dominated the results, and here judge Ian Williams, author of *Rum: A Social & Sociable History* and blogger-in-chief of rumpundit.net, tells us why.

CATEGORY	WINNING LABELS*	ORIGIN	RUM PUNDIT SAYS
White Rum	Mount Gay Eclipse Silver	Barbados	Like all Bajan rums, aged before filtering, hence its smooth maturity.
Dark Rum	Temptryst Reserve	Texas, USA	A surprising five-star spirit from the Lone Star state.
Rum Aged Up to 8 Years	Ron Barcelo Imperial	Dominican Republic	Rich, smooth and elegant; a worthy representative of fine Dominican spirits.
Rum Aged 9 to 15 Years	Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva Pyrat XO Reserve	Venezuela Anguilla	The Venezuelan’s spicy overtone sharpens its sweetness. Pyrat is rich and sweet, much improved with ice and a slice of lime or lemon.
Rum Aged 15+ Years	Ron Zacapa 23 Ron Millionario Solera Reserva Especial	Guatemala Peru	These two share a sweetness that does not cloy, and complexity from years of maturation.
Rum Liqueurs & Creams	Santa Teresa Araku Santa Teresa Rhum Orange Liqueur	Venezuela	Santa Teresa ties with itself in this category. Both superb for mixing or savoring solo.
Overproof Rum	Pusser’s Standard	Tortola	This is the Royal Navy’s own rum. A splash of water, and you can see why Britannia ruled the waves.
Spiced Rum	Montecristo Spiced	Guatemala	Montecristo makes great aged rum; subtle spice makes this one suitable for sipping or mixing.
Aged Rhum	J.M. V.S.O.P. Madras Deboussier Hors d’Age	Martinique Guadeloupe	Rhum agricoles are made from sugar-cane juice, giving them a distinctive, lighter touch than those made with molasses.
Flavored Rhum	Madras Orange Shrub	Guadeloupe	Shrub is the original Creole, centuries-old variation of rum, sugar and citrus.
Rhum Liqueur	Madras Prune Liqueur	Guadeloupe	The judges dreaded this one when it was announced, but found it fresh-tasting, with a hint of tea.

* TWO LABELS INDICATE A TIE FOR TOP HONORS