



Rum

Rum is still figuring out its premium journey, but the category has to play to its strengths for long-term success.

According to Nick Gillett, managing director of Mangrove Global: "Rum is arguably the most compelling and diverse category right now." He adds, however, that this boom in creativity also "comes with its own problems".

Premiumisation remains the "defining trend" for the category, says Jassil Villanueva, maestra ronera for Edrington-owned Brugal rum, with drinkers leaning towards sipping rums and exploring releases that highlight innovation and technique. She adds that rum also brings "something fresh to the luxury space through its versatility and sociability".

Nathalie Parte, Havana Club global marketing director, shares Villanueva's belief that highlighting rum's versatility is key for category growth, and that accounts for both "refreshing cocktail serves" and "high-end sipping experiences".

Villanueva cites IWSR data that shows super-premium-plus rums grew by 5.5% in value globally in 2024, compared to 2023. She explains that "more drinkers are exploring rum as a refined, sippable spirit, as well as a versatile spirit for classic cocktails", and this means "new momentum to aged and cask-forward expressions".

As consumers take notice of the place, the people, and the processes about rum, this has seen a resurgence of Latin classic dark rums, Parte notes, which she claims is "the fastest-growing subsegment globally".

Duppy Share CEO Jack Orr-Ewing believes rum brands can pull in new fans through

ready-to-drink (RTD) products, explaining "consumers – especially younger drinkers – are entering the category through this format", which offers an "accessible, effective trial mechanic before they trade up to a bottle". Duppy Share itself has launched canned cocktails with soft drink brands Old Jamaica and Ting in the past year.

Overall, Orr-Ewing says the category is "polarising into a 'barbell' structure with value and premium products growing, and the middle ground softening".

Despite premiumisation being a central topic, Pedro Mendonça, global senior vice-president at Bacardí, says it's "not the only story". As others have said, rum's versatility

allows it to meet various types of consumers and at different occasions.

"Demand is growing across classic serves, long mixed drinks, flavour-led cocktails, and premium sipping rums," he says. "That balance is part of what keeps rum so relevant to today's drinkers." Mendonça calls recruitment the category's biggest challenge, beyond the obvious issues that have arisen from macroeconomic pressures in the US.

"The world of socialising is evolving rapidly, and rum needs to keep pace with new behaviours, new geographies, new cultural moments, to continue connecting with the next generation of drinkers," he says. "That means being present in the new occasions where these consumers are socialising, ensuring rum is not pigeonholed into one single type of experience or occasion".

Outside of rum's main markets, Mendonça suggests Asia holds "significant long-term potential", singling out India and China, and demand for spiced and flavoured rums in the region. Parte says Havana Club is also seeing "strong growth potential" for its super-premium-and-above offering in markets such as Mexico, China, and global travel retail.

With Euromonitor International data forecasting global nine-litre cases to jump from 154.4 million to 157.3m in 2026, this is a category poised for long-term growth. It just has a "bit of maturing to do", as Gillett puts it.

Brands to watch in 2026

MERSER RUM

Hayman Distillers-owned Merser Rum will have a place it can call home by 2026 with the opening of Merser House in London. The brand home will offer visitors the chance to try different styles and even blend their own rum. This means on-the-ground accessibility in one of the world's biggest spirits markets, bringing its rum to life "in a way that has not been possible before", co-owner James Hayman said in July.

CACIQUE

Venezuelan rum Cacique was one of the year's first sales by Diageo, but new owner La Martiniquaise-Bardinet may be able to give the brand the second life it needs. The French spirits group has a strong track record in rum, and will look to increase the brand's market share in a place it's already popular, Spain, and beyond.

HAVANA CLUB

The Cuban brand has a new CEO after Christian Barré retired in August, with Michael Merolli stepping in after an impressive stint leading Pernod Ricard's House of Tequila. It will be interesting to see what direction Merolli takes the brand in 2026, but expect it to continue to be at the forefront of culture as always, with an added focus on the luxury sector.