



The Atomic Grog

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USA



"It was no surprise that Plantation took home the most awards for the second year in a row"

MIAMI COCKTAIL WEEK: Welcome to the jungle

The week of rum-soaked festivities commenced on Monday, April 21, with a kick-off party sponsored by [Plantation Rum](#) and featuring a pop-up bar with cocktails from [Caña Rum Bar](#) in Los Angeles. Held at [The Broken Shaker](#) in Miami Beach, the laid-back event gave early arrivals and locals a chance to mingle and sample some inventive concoctions.

The vibe and weather were perfect as attendees soaked up both the atmosphere and complimentary cocktails with equal gusto. Rum fest organizers [Robert A. Burr](#) and [Robin Burr](#), along with son [Robert V. Burr](#), chilled out and entertained guests as if they were hosting an informal backyard party at their home. At the time, I thought the Burrs were enjoying the calm before the storm, but a storm never arrived. The weather was perfect all week (clear and sunny days, mild nights), and the festival seemed to run without a hitch.

The Broken Shaker was the perfect spot to open the first Miami Cocktail Week, not only because of its past association with the festival, but also due to its status as a James Beard Award-nominated bar. I'm sure we'll be seeing lots more of this venue as the Miami Cocktail Week event grows. For many festivalgoers, one of the highlights of the week is the annual sojourn to the legendary [Mai-Kai Polynesian restaurant](#), the 57-year-old historic landmark in Fort Lauderdale that carries the torch for old-school rum and Tiki cocktails. Many are so enamored, in fact, that they return again and again throughout the week, despite the 40-mile trek up from Miami. We ran into a lively crew including rum judges and fellow bloggers from the U.K.'s [Floating Rum Shack](#) on quite a few occasions, ensconced in The Molokai bar with a wide array of tropical drinks and pu-pu platters. It was no surprise that Plantation took home the most awards for the second year in a row, including a sweep of all three medals in the Special Cask category. After winning five in medals 2013, the Cognac Ferrand boutique label snagged eight awards, proving that its varied offerings from throughout the Caribbean are not only still hot, but are getting hotter

A CORNUCOPIA OF RUM: The Grand Tasting Exhibitions

Saturday and Sunday brought the main event of the festival, the public opening of the convention center for rum producers to show off their wares and give enthusiasts a chance to taste a seemingly limitless array of fine spirits. Brands from around the world were on display, showcasing many different styles and products. The Plantation booth was a must stop, for all the reasons cited above. With eight-award winning rums, it was hard to decide which ones to taste. **Plantation 20th Anniversary** (gold medal for Premium Aged Rum) is a solid aged rum, full of banana and fruit flavors. But the one that stood out was **Plantation Guyana 2005**, named Best in Class for Special Cask. Plantation rums swept that category with the collection of cask-aged rums tied to specific years of "vintage." The Guyana 2005, essentially Plantation's version of a Demerara rum, is smooth and smokily pungent like any good Demerara should be. But the sophistication that Plantation brings to the table with its unique dual-aging process gives it extra polish. I would rank this right up with the hard-to-find Lemon Hart 80 and El Dorado 8 (gold medal winner for Aged Rum, 4-8 years) as one of the best all-around mixing rums in the Demerara style. And it's a nice sipping rum too. I did catch what was supposed to be the finale of the competition. The Bacardi U.S. Tiki Team, including mixologists from The Broken Shaker and the Orange Blossom on Miami Beach, appeared on stage to wow the judges with a unique and flavorful Tiki drink. They made a riff on the Yellow Bird called the Cat in the Jungle, featuring Plantation and Appleton rums. The presentation was definitely unique (see photo above) with the drink poured into a vessel that celebrated the feline form.