vinetur

Aged Rum Holds Up Better Than White Rum in the U.S.

Total rum sales fell to 18.2 million cases last year from about 23 million in 2021, prompting suppliers to push pricier bottles.

Tuesday, September 22, 2026



Aged rum is gaining ground in a weak U.S. rum market, as suppliers and distributors point to stronger demand for darker, more premium expressions even while the broader category continues to shrink.

Total U.S. rum volume fell to 18.2 million cases last year from about 23 million cases in 2021, according to Impact Databank, a sharp decline that reflects pressure across spirits after the pandemic-era surge. Industry executives say much of the drop has come from white rum, especially in off-premise channels, while aged rum has held up better.

Southern Glazer’s senior vice president of commercial intelligence, Zach Poelma, said aged rum volume declined 6.1% over the past year, compared with a 7% drop for unaged rum. In a softer consumer environment, he said, aged rum continues to offer a premium experience at a lower price than many aged whiskies, helping explain its relative resilience.

That dynamic is becoming more important for producers trying to find growth in a difficult market. Beverage companies, distributors, and retailers are looking closely at where consumers are still willing to spend, and the shift toward darker, higher-priced rum could affect assortment planning, shelf placement, bar menus, and pricing strategy across the broader alcohol business.

Gabriella Ripepi, chief marketing officer at Destilería Serrallés, said the category’s top-line decline masks a change in shopping behavior. Consumers are moving toward dark rums, she said, a positive sign for a segment that tends to be more premium. Don Q, the Serrallés brand, sells about 240,000 cases in the U.S.

The move also fits a wider pattern in spirits, where many consumers are buying less overall but seeking better quality when they do purchase. That trend has reshaped whiskey, tequila, and other segments over the past decade. Rum has been slower to premiumize, but marketers now say aged expressions are starting to benefit from the same behavior.

Southern Glazer’s said it is seeing solid results across a broad set of aged rum brands in its portfolio, including Ron Barceló, Appleton Estate, Santa Teresa, Diplomático, Planteray, Kuleana, Denizen, Bumbu, Brugal, Cruzan, and Mount Gay. The range suggests the opportunity is not limited to one price tier or one country of origin, but extends across established Caribbean brands as well as newer entrants.

Maison Ferrand USA, which owns Planteray, is keeping its focus on higher-end positioning. Planteray, the No. 1 super-premium rum in the U.S., sells about 180,000 cases, according to the report. Guillaume Lamy, managing director for Maison Ferrand USA, said the company is not chasing lower price points even as some consumers trade down elsewhere. Instead, he said, the brand is emphasizing quality while keeping prices accessible enough to justify trading up.

Brown-Forman is pursuing a similar strategy with Diplomático, the No. 4 super-premium rum brand in the U.S. in the $25-and-up segment, at roughly 55,000 cases. Camille Zahniser, vice president and group director for emerging brands at Brown-Forman, said the company is trying to bring in drinkers from bourbon, Scotch, and other aged spirits by presenting super-premium rum as equally complex and suitable for sipping.

The same competitive set is central to Campari America's strategy for Appleton Estate. Allison Varone, the company's head of marketing, said there is room to recruit dark-spirits drinkers, including whiskey and Cognac consumers, by highlighting age-statement rums such as Appleton's 8-year-old, 12-year-old, and 15-year-old expressions. Appleton, including Wray & Nephew and J. Wray, reached 245,000 cases in the U.S. last year, according to Impact Databank, and posted a 30% increase in control states in the first half of 2026.

Pricing remains a key part of the pitch. Appleton's range runs from about $22 for a 750-ml. bottle of Signature Blend to about $140 for its 21-year-old expression. Bacardi is also investing in the space with aged offerings such as Reserva Ocho, priced around $32, and Gran Reserva Diez, around $40. Lisa Pfenning, Bacardi's vice president for North America, said the company is focusing less on pure volume and more on premiumization, cultural relevance, and consumer engagement.

At the higher end, suppliers say momentum is strongest above mainstream price points. Palm Republic, which launched in 2024, sells an aged rum for about $50 per 750-ml. bottle, blending rums from Panama, Jamaica, and the U.S. Virgin Islands aged up to 8 years in Sherry casks. Cofounder Brad Parkes said the most active commercial growth is happening above the $30 retail threshold, where ultra-premium and luxury rum tiers are showing gains in both value and volume despite broader category

headwinds.

Other leading U.S. rums priced above $25 include Pernod Ricard’s Bumbu at about 130,000 cases, Diageo’s Zacapa at around 60,000 cases, and Bacardi’s Santa Teresa at 32,000 cases. Those brands sit in a part of the market that producers increasingly see as a path to offset volume losses in standard rum.

The numbers suggest that rum’s challenge in the U.S. is not simply declining demand, but a changing mix of demand. White rum remains under pressure, especially in retail channels, while aged rum is trying to claim more space in bars and on store shelves by competing with other dark spirits rather than with value-priced clear rum. For companies across wine and spirits, that shift may shape portfolio decisions and retail negotiations in the months ahead, particularly in international markets where premium pricing and product mix are becoming more important than total case volume alone.