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Monaco’s historic Mesccia rum revived in Haiti through international collaboration and artisanal methods

New version of the centuries-old spirit blends Haitian sugar cane with Monegasque tradition, aiming for global craft spirits recognition

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In recent months, a centuries-old tradition from the Principality of Monaco has found new life in an unexpected place: Haiti. The revival centers on Mother Mesccia, a rum that traces its roots back to the 17th century, when Monaco’s port was a hub for Mediterranean trade. At that time, Genoese ships brought Caribbean rum to Monte Carlo, exchanging it for local citrus fruits. This exchange led to the creation of Mesccia, a blend of rum with European spirits like Vermouth and Marsala. The drink became part of Monegasque culture but eventually faded from memory.

The effort to bring back Mesccia began with a group of Monegasque entrepreneurs and the support of the Principality itself. They partnered with Velier, a historic Genoese distributor known for its expertise in rum. Luca Gargano, Velier’s owner, played a key role in shaping the project. He recognized that simply recreating the old recipe would not be enough for today’s market. Instead, he proposed a new approach that honors tradition while embracing modern standards for quality and authenticity.

The process starts in Haiti, where sugar cane of the Crystalline variety is grown without chemicals in Saint-Michel-de-l'Attalaye. The cane is harvested by hand and transported by mule before being pressed in small mills. Fermentation occurs naturally, without added yeasts, and the first distillation takes place in a water bath using traditional equipment at Sajous distillery. This produces a semi-finished rum that is then shipped to Monaco.

Once in Monaco, the rum undergoes a second distillation at La Distillerie de Monaco, located in the Condamine district. Master Distiller Philip Culazzo oversees this stage using a Khote still. This two-step process preserves the unique qualities of Haitian sugar cane while giving the final product a distinct Monegasque character.

After distillation, the rum is aged in casks that previously held Vermouth and Marsala. This step pays tribute to the original Mesccia recipe and adds complexity to the flavor profile. The result is Mother Mesccia, a white rum bottled at 46 percent alcohol by volume. It is described as intense and fruity, with notes of sugar cane, fresh fruit, citrus, and subtle vegetal undertones.

Mother Mesccia is now available as a white spirit suitable for sipping or mixing. The team behind its revival sees this as just the beginning. They are considering future experiments with other types of Caribbean sugar cane and different woods for aging. Their goal is to continue exploring and expanding on this rediscovered piece of Monaco’s heritage.

The project highlights how historical traditions can be adapted for contemporary tastes through international collaboration and respect for artisanal methods. By combining Haitian agricultural excellence with Monegasque history and innovation, Mother Mesccia stands as both a tribute to the past and a step forward for craft spirits in Europe and beyond.