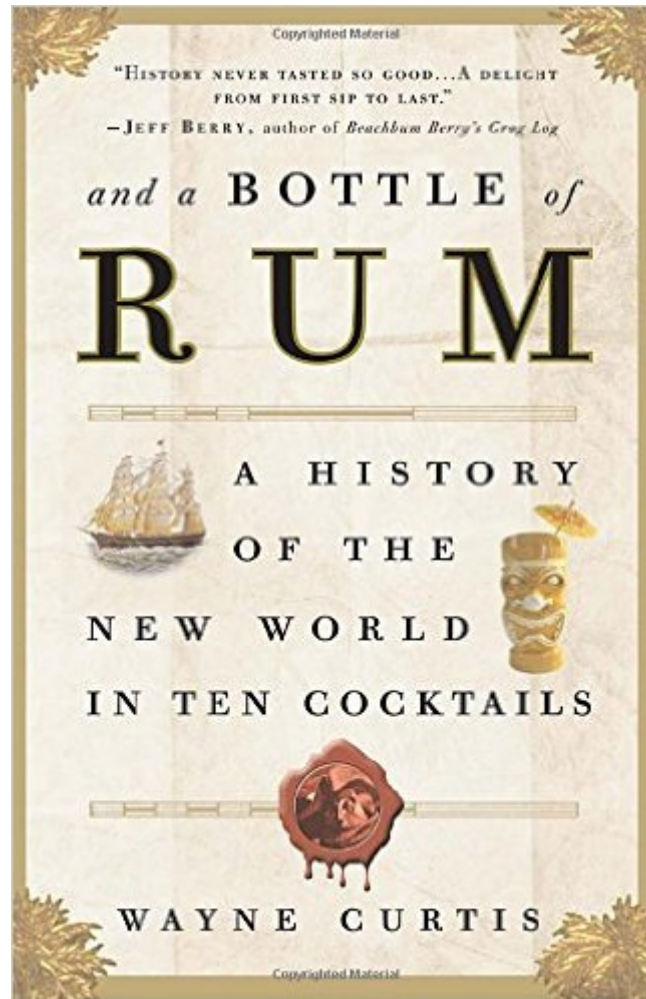


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And A Bottle Of Rum: A History Of The New World In Ten Cocktails



Synopsis

One spirit, Ten cocktails, and Four Centuries of American HistoryAnd a Bottle of Rum tells the raucously entertaining story of America as seen through the bottom of a drinking glass. With a chapter for each of ten cocktailsâfrom the grog sailors drank on the high seas in the 1700s to the mojitos of modern club hoppersâWayne Curtis reveals that the homely spirit once distilled from the industrial waste of the exploding sugar trade has managed to infiltrate every stratum of New World society. Curtis takes us from the taverns of the American colonies, where rum delivered both a cheap wallop and cash for the Revolution, to the plundering pirate ships off the coast of Central America, to the watering holes of pre-Castro Cuba, and to the kitsch-laden tiki bars of 1950s America. Here are sugar barons and their armies conquering the Caribbean, Paul Revere stopping for a nip during his famous ride, Prohibitionists marching against âdemon rum,â Hemingway fattening his liver with Havana daiquiris, and todayâs bartenders reviving old favorites like Planterâs Punch. In an age of microbrewed beer and single-malt whiskeys, rumâonce the swill of the common manâhas found its way into the tasting rooms of the most discriminating drinkers. Awash with local color and wry humor, And a Bottle of Rum is an affectionate toast to this most American of liquors, a chameleon spirit that has been constantly reinvented over the centuries by tavern keepers, bootleggers, lounge lizards, and marketing gurus. Complete with cocktail recipes for would-be epicurean time-travelers, this is history at its most intoxicating.From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I am not so much a sucker for history books as I am a sucker for very focused, almost gimmicky, history books. Andrew Carr's *Drink: A Social History of America* is a similarly gimmicky history book that I (pun coming) ate and drank up furiously, and Wayne Curtis has provided an equally capturing read with *And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in Ten Cocktails*. This book comes from the level perspective of a connoisseur of rum, one who enjoys the depth of the drink, which includes the history of it and the stories behind it. Besides the unsolvable questions of who ever first invented something like the mai tai or who even first made the first batch of the molasses-based spirit, Wayne Curtis delves through a liquor that has been both a savior and a demon for America. And that is the main point of this book that I truly treasure--for nowadays, rum is considered a very tropical drink, something more at home in a pina colada or a tiki bar than something attached to the dirty farmland of the New World, but Curtis reattaches rum to its colonial identity and heritage, along with solid associations with pirates and seafarers. Rather than being a light, sit-back-on-the-beach drink, Curtis attaches rum back to flogging and piracy and the Revolutionary War. And he does this in each chapter through identifying a particular way of serving rum (the mojito, the flip, or just plain grog) to examine how that drink played its role in history.

And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in Ten Cocktails is really all about rum. Should be obvious from the title, but some of these narrow-focus histories are all about social context and compelling commentary. *And a Bottle of Rum* has these things, but when all is said and done, reading this book is more like drinking a fine rum than reading an ordinary history. Curtis writes with the practiced ease of someone who's thoroughly familiar with his subject, and who doesn't have anything to prove, although at one point it seemed clear to me that he was aiming to undo some of the exaggeration Ian Williams presented in his earlier book. But there is no pervasive attitude of having to prove that rum was one thing or another; Curtis tells it like it is. For such a short book, the reader never feels like he's missing something; if I only had this book about rum, I think that'd be enough. The title is misleading; Curtis doesn't stop at ten simple cocktails - he gives you the whole run that rum has made from its haziest origins to present upscale rum bars. The author appends a modest list of easy-to-find and enjoyable rums; the list is not comprehensive, but would serve as a good jumping point for those wishing to try different styles. He also includes some of his favorite recipes besides the ten featured in the core chapters. Technically, if you don't consider punch or grog to be a cocktail, it's only six, since Chapter 6 is about Prohibition and features a recipe for the nonalcoholic Prune Water, and the first chapter is simply entitled Kill-Devil. This is not a nitpick; no chapter is out of place here.

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