

# He Wants to Put Brazil's Cachaça in Every U.S. Home Bar

Contributed by Davida Tretout  
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"I like to think of "cachaça" as the new 'Girl from Ipanema': smooth, seductive and ready to win American hearts like the rhythms of bossa nova did 40 years before," says Olie Berlic, principal of Excalibur Enterprise, a new importer that introduces North America to the finest "cachaças" of Brazil.

As João Gilberto is the godfather of bossa nova music, Olie Berlic is the capo di tutti capi of "cachaça", delivering to the United States the greatest Brazilian export since the 1960s.

Berlic, who has the passion of an adventurer and the palette and professional experience of a sommelier, acted as a master "cachaça" distiller, and spent three years of intense research that included comparisons of over 800 different "cachaças."

According to The New York Times (Dec. 24, 2004) there are over 5,000 "cachaça" brands in Brazil.

This pure South American spirit is the main ingredient in Brazil's national concoction, the "caipirinha" (crushed lime, sugar, and "cachaça").

This drink has appeared on top cocktail lists from Berlin to Tokyo. While the "caipirinha" craze took hold in Europe about 10 years ago, "cachaça" is just beginning to make its mark among U.S. tastemakers, according to Berlic.

As "cachaça" rapidly duplicates the rise and popularity of premium tequila in the United States, it also brings to mind Brazilian scenery and culture, which has been making a major international impact in recent years, as evident in the silver screen success of *City of God*.

As stylish as Brazilian stunner Gisele Bündchen on the catwalk, and as eclectic as the Brazilian fashion scion Alexandre Herchcovitch, "cachaça" is Carnaval in a glass.

It is as clean and pristine as the architecture designed by Oscar Niemeyer in the nation's capital city Brasília and as functional as a high-end chair designed by the Campana Brothers.

"Cachaça" compliments any occasion with Brazilian spirit and Excalibur Enterprise has its finger on the pulse of the best-of-the-best, ready to hit the spot!

Ushering in outstanding liquor for the adventurous imbiber, Excalibur Enterprise heralds the arrival of the first line of super-premium "cachaças" outside of Brazil.

The portfolio, which includes Berlic's own creation of a handcrafted, superior quality un-aged "cachaça" as well as six artisan, aged "cachaças" from small producers, is comparable in quality to that of the finest tequilas, aged rums, or single malt Scotches.

At the prestigious San Francisco World Spirit Competition 2005, Excalibur Enterprise walked away with three coveted awards: a Silver Medal for Beleza Pura; a Gold Medal for GRM; and the Double Gold/Best "cachaça" Award for the Five-year aged Rochinha - testimony to the superior quality of these "cachaças."

Excalibur Enterprise's boutique "cachaças" are aged, small-batch, artisan "cachaças" from three of the country's most celebrated producers that stack up against the premium spirits currently on the market in terms of flavor, nuance, and character. Beleza Pura, the signature, un-aged, premium "cachaça", invokes the refinement and generosity of spirit that is

Brazil.

The GRM from Minas Gerais - Brazil's best-known "cachaça" region - starts with hand-harvested sugarcane grown without agricultural toxins on GRM's farm.

Finished in small batches and distilled in an alembic (copper still pot), GRM "is vibrant with cinnamon, spice flavors and a hint of coconut, recalling characteristics of aged tequila.

Jetting off to the southern island of Florianópolis the avid "cachaça" gourmand will find Armazém Vieira "cachaça", where over 160 years of tradition are instilled in every batch.

Composed of a triad of "cachaças" - the Onix, Solera (aged 16 years) the Rubi, Solera (aged eight years) and the Esmeralda, Solera (aged four years), this collection shares the qualities of top light rum blended with fine tequila.

Rochinha "cachaça", available in both five and 12 year old varieties, has been distilled in the romantic valleys outside of Rio de Janeiro since 1902. Single barrel "cachaças" of the highest caliber, the Rochinhas are reminiscent of a stellar, single-malt Scotch.

Often compared to rum - which uses molasses, a by-product of sugar refineries - "cachaça" is similar only in that both are made from the heart of the sugar cane plant.

"Cachaça" uses fresh sugar cane juice to ferment and distill the libation. It is this difference that speaks volumes for the subtleties of this inimitable liquor.

A perfect pairing with food from around the world - e.g. Brazilian, American, Latin, Asian, and French - Excalibur Enterprise's "cachaça" is available in noted restaurants such as Brasserie Caviar & Banana, SushiSAMBA, and Gotham Bar and Grill in New York.

Cocktails created with the Beleza Pura Super Premium "cachaça" include the São Paulo Cosmo in which the pure, crisp flavor of "cachaça" blends with the orange zest of Cointreau, the tart tang of fresh lime juice and the invigorating harmony of pomegranate juice.

The Zoom Zoom Brazil - with Red Bull and Beleza Pura - will make any time zip by to the syncopated rhythm of Brazil. The Rio Margarita brings together the heat of two time zones - Rochinha five-year "Single Barrel" dances with Cointreau and lime juice in perfect harmony.

Incredibly versatile, Excalibur Enterprise's "cachaça"s encapsulate the warmth of Brazil, the pizzazz of a sultry samba dance and the elegance of evening soirées on its undulating beaches.

A noted New York sommelier, Berlic was formerly with The New York Times three-star Gotham Bar and Grill, and points out, "'cachaça" is a state of mind - it is for the lover of life." Indeed, Berlic and his charming wife, Marcia - a native of São Paulo - embody that very philosophy.

"Brazilians are very proud of our "cachaça". It's an important part of our culture, like soccer and carnaval," says Marcia.

Berlic's frequent travels to Brazil - which have made him quite knowledgeable in the Portuguese language - were driven by his quest to discover and share Brazil's adventurous spirit.

The "cachaça" market is dominated by commercially produced spirits known as "aguardente" (literally, fiery water) where volume and not quality are the main concerns.

Berlic skipped the major brands and soon he and his wife started visiting small distilleries throughout Brazil to find spirits worthy of the finest palates.

Berlic was entranced by the quality and nuance of the "cachaça" that he encountered. He became sure that there was a place for this spirit on the top shelves in the U.S.

"I want to make "cachaça" a household name - from the Midwest to the Hamptons to Aspen. The best of Brazil stacks up against the finest spirits from around the world," says Berlic.

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"Caipirinha" recipe:

Say: 'KIE-PUR-REEN-YAH'

The traditional "caipirinha" is a Brazilian cocktail made with "cachaça", sugar, and crushed limes, served over ice. It is always muddled (crushed with a masher or the blunt end of a wooden spoon). Make sure to muddle in a shaker or a sturdy, non-breakable glass.

THE BELEZA "CAIPIRINHA"

(BEH-LAY-ZUH KIE-PUR-REEN-YAH)

1 lime (Tahiti type preferred), sliced into 8 pieces  
2 tsp sugar or 2 oz Simple syrup  
2 oz Beleza Pura Super Premium "cachaça"  
1/2 cup of crushed ice

Wash the lime gently under water and dry. Cut the limes, add sugar, muddle gently in a non-breakable glass to crush the fruit but not release too much of the oils from the skin. Add ice and Beleza Pura Super Premium "cachaça", and shake, shake, shake. Serve in a large rocks glass. Make two, and head for the closest beach with someone special.

Excalibur Enterprise  
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