



Inuhele'26

(NEARLY) EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT RUM IN A MAI TAI IS WRONG

**Kevin Crossman
Slides at UltimateMaiTai.com**

Kevin Crossman

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IT Manager by Day, Mai Tai Enthusiast at Night

Visited 140 different tiki since 2016

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Kevin Crossman

Original Search for the Ultimate Mai Tai website
launched in 1998

Submitted reviews, essays, recipes

It was really hard to find a great Mai Tai



WHY THE MAI TAI?

What is it and why should we care?





**“The Mai Tai
is the perfect
foil for a
huge variety
of rums”**

Martin Cate &
Rebecca Cate,
Smuggler's Cove

Rum Production

Distillate source: Molasses or Sugar Cane Juice

Fermentation methods and length

Still type: Pot or Column

Cask types: Ex-Bourbon, American Oak, French Oak

Aging location and time: Tropical and Continental Aging

Single still/barrel or a blend of distillates

Additives, sugar, or color

Rum Type	Distillation	Source	Aging
Jamaica	Pot Still (or blend)	Molasses	Ex-Bourbon
Puerto Rico	Column Still	Molasses	Ex-Bourbon + filtered
Guyana	Pot/Column blend	Molasses	Ex-Bourbon + color
Martinique Agricole	Column Still	Cane Juice	French Oak
Hawaiian Agricole	Pot Still	Cane Juice	Unaged
Cachaça	Pot or Column Still	Cane Juice	Brazilian wood / Unaged

RUM STYLES

A

17-Year Old Wray &
Nephew Jamaica Rum

B

15-Year Old Wray &
Nephew Jamaica Rum

C

15 or 8-Year Old Jamaica
Rum + Martinique Rhum

D

Bacardi + Myers's

Which
Rum(s)
Made the
Mai Tai
Famous?

IN THE BEGINNING

The 1944 Mai Tai



THE SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE MAI TAI
Traveling the Bay Area and beyond to find the best Mai Tai in the world! Tiki, cocktails, and adventures by Kevin Crossman

Home Mai Tais ▾ Features ▾ Tiki Travels ▾ Tiki Bar Ratings About

TRADER VIC'S HISTORY OF THE MAI TAI

Let's Set the Record Straight on the Mai Tai

by Victor J. Bergeron "Trader Vic"
San Francisco, 1970

Earlier this year, a long time friend from Tahiti, Carrie Guild (now Mrs. Howard Wright), sent me a column from a Honolulu newspaper which once again has raised the argument over where the Mai Tai was born and who originated it.

I originated the Mai Tai and have put together a bit of the background on the evolution of this drink, which has earned worldwide identification and acceptance.

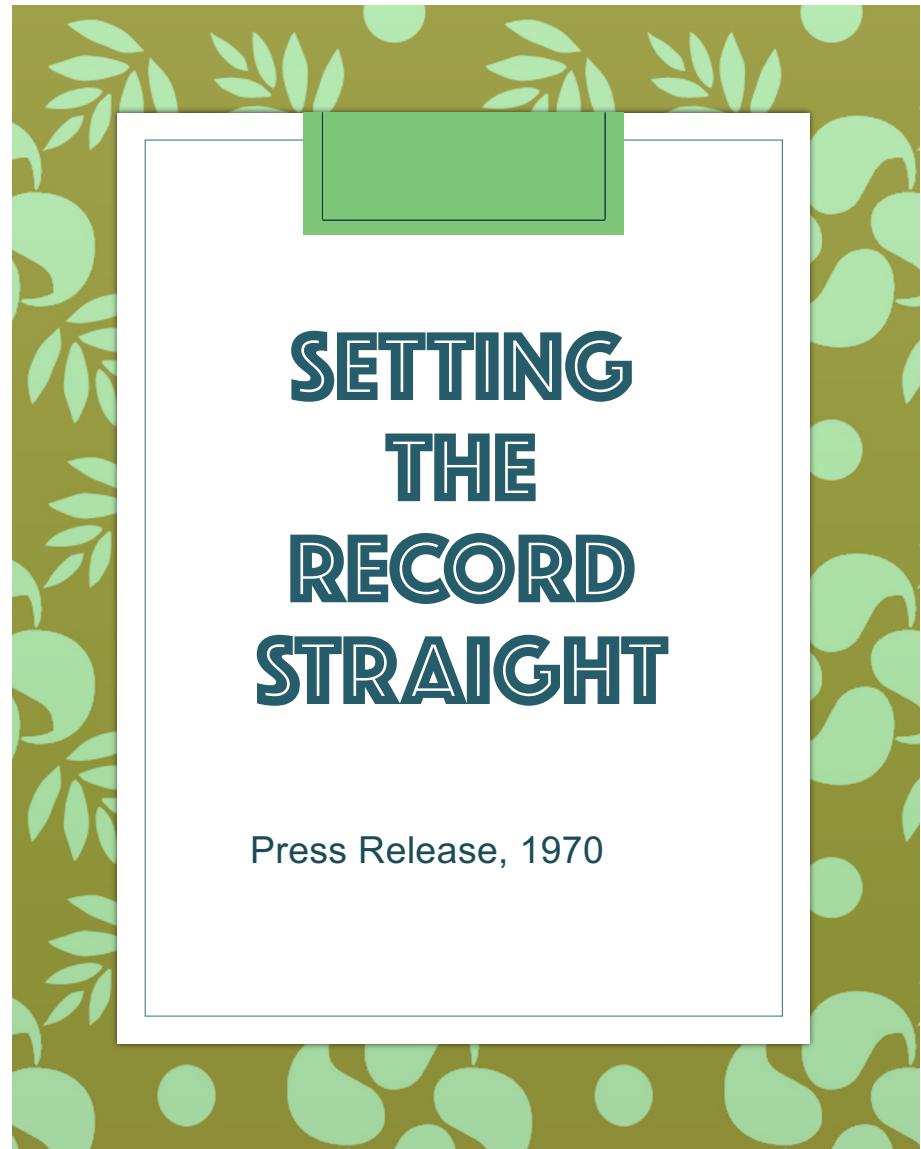
There has been a lot of conversation over the beginning of this drink. Many have claimed credit, including Harry Owens. The people who now own Trader Vic's in Honolulu (which at this time has no connection with the Trader Vic operations on the mainland) claimed it was originated in Tahiti This aggravates my ulcer completely. The drink was never introduced by me in Tahiti except informally through our good friends, Eastham and Carrie Guild.

In 1944, after success with several exotic rum drinks, I felt a new drink was needed. I thought about all the really successful drinks; martinis, manhattans, daiquiris All basically simple drinks.

I was at the service bar in my Oakland restaurant. I took down a bottle of 17-year old rum. It was J. Wray & Nephew from Jamaica; surprisingly golden in color, medium bodied, but with the rich pungent flavor particular to the Jamaican blends.

The flavor of this great rum wasn't meant to be overpowered with heavy additions of fruit juices and flavorings. I took a fresh lime, added some orange curacao from Holland, a dash of Rock Candy Syrup, and a dollop of French Orgeat, for its subtle almond flavor. A generous amount of shaved ice and vigorous shaking by hand produced the marriage I was after.

Half the lime shell went in for color ... I stuck in a branch of fresh mint and gave two of them to Ham and Carrie Guild, friends from Tahiti, who were there that night.





1944 Mai Tai

**The Original Formula
by Trader Vic
Bergeron, 1944**

2 ounces of 17-year-old J. Wray & Nephew Rum over shaved ice

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Holland DeKuyper Orange Curacao

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce French Garnier Orgeat Syrup

$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce Rock Candy Syrup

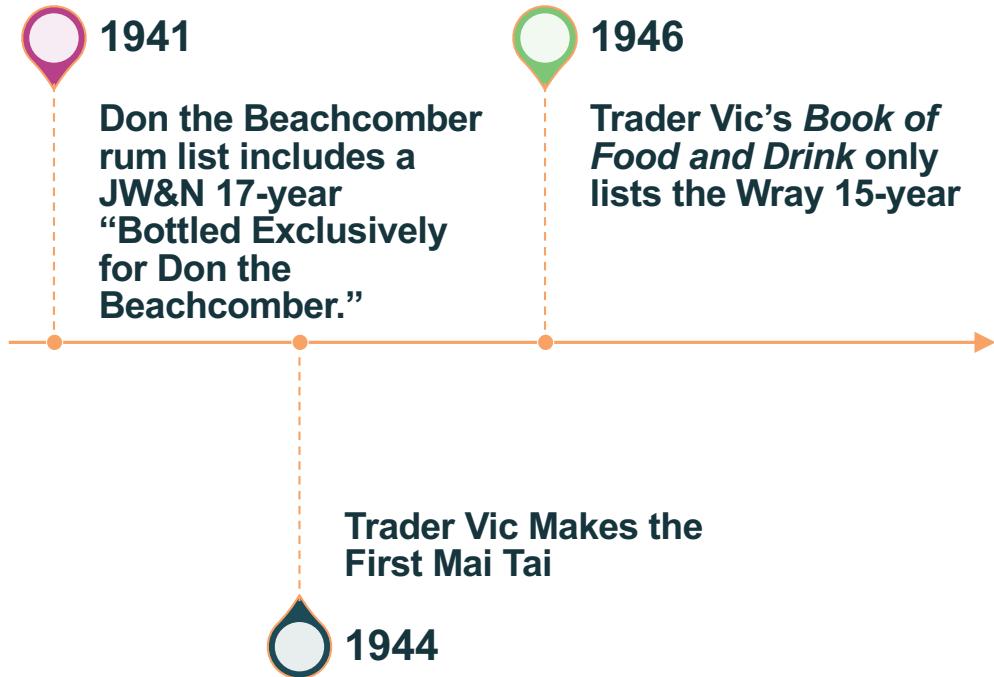
Add juice from one fresh Lime.



“Surprisingly golden in color, medium bodied, but with the rich pungent flavor particular to the Jamaican blends”

Photo from *Smuggler's Cove* by Martin Cate with Rebecca Cate. Used with permission.

WRAY & NEPHEW 17

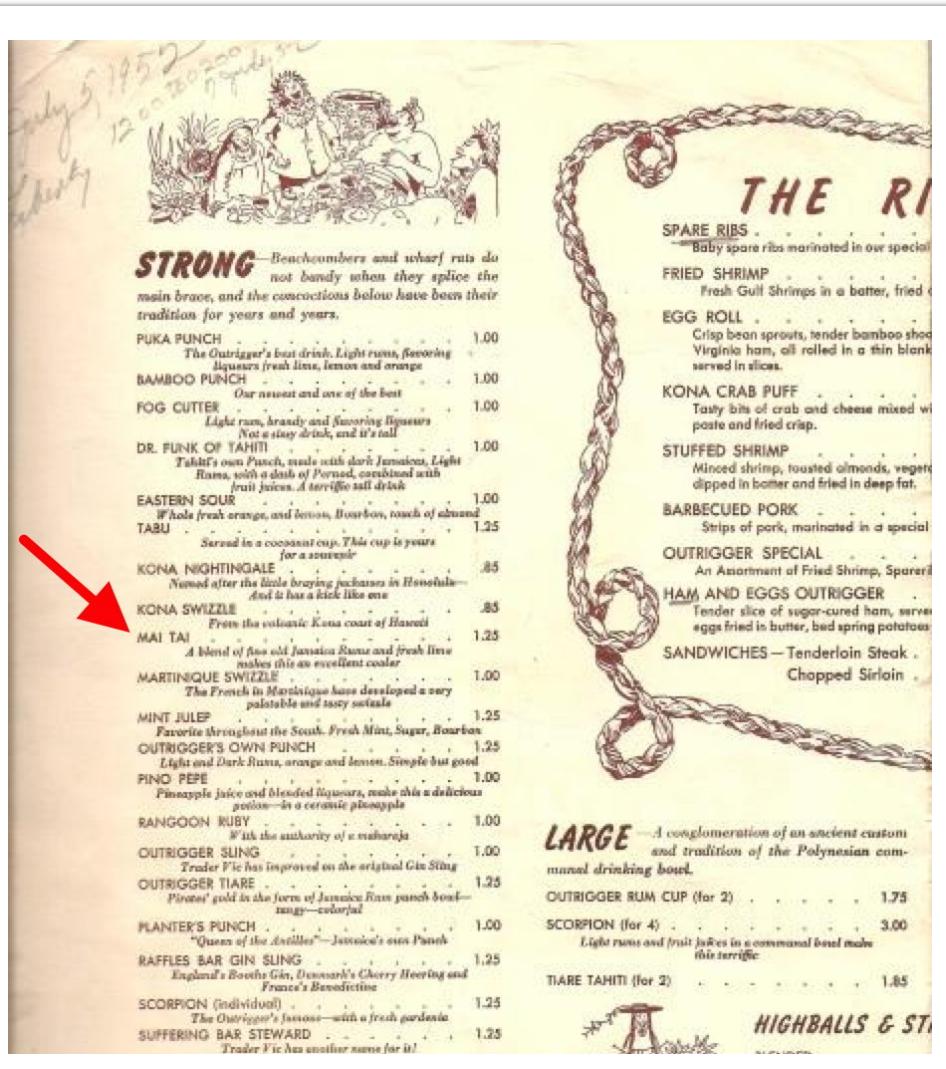


The Brief Run of the Original 17

From Trader Vic:

“The success of the Mai Tai and its acceptance soon caused the 17-year-old rum to become unavailable, so it was substituted with the same fine rum with 15 years aging which maintained the outstanding quality.”

Only one year later Trader Vic's started using Wray & Nephew 15-year-old



MAI TAI 1.25
A blend of fine old Jamaican Rum and fresh lime makes this an excellent cooler

“A blend of fine old Jamaican Rums and fresh Lime”

The Outrigger, Seattle (1952)



Stretching the Supply

“Red Heart and Coruba were selected to be used in equal quantities along with the original 15-year-old to stretch the supply and maintain the character of the Mai Tai.”

First Adjusted Mai Tai Formula

Early 1950s

1 oz 15-year old J. Wray Nephew Jamaican Rum

1 oz Coruba – or Red Heart Jamaican Rum

½ oz Trader Vic Formula Orgeat

½ oz Holland DeKuyper Orange Curacao

¼ oz Rock Candy Syrup

Juice from one fresh lime

Mix and serve as in the original formula.

Nutty and Snappy

“This rum, though excellent, didn’t exactly match the end flavor of the original 17-year-old product. This desired nutty, and snappy flavor was added by the use of a Martinique rum.”



Second Adjusted Mai Tai Formula

Mid 1950s

1 oz Trader Vic's Jamaican Rum (15 or 8 yr)

1 oz Martinique Rhum (St. James or Trader Vic's)

1 oz pre-mixed Curacao, Orgeat and Rock Candy Syrup

Juice from one fresh lime

Mix and serve as in the original formula.

TRADER VIC'S MAI TAI RUM

70% Jamaican
20% Martinique
10% Virgin
Island

86 proof, not too
shabby



Each of these exotic drinks took 3 different rums...until

Trader Vic Invented Rum Blends

Great tropical cocktails can't be made with just one rum. It takes a skillful selection of several rums — blended in proportions — that achieve a special marriage of flavors. But most people don't know a Jamaica rum from a Martinique — no less the fine points of mixing them.

Trader Vic knows. So he invented Trader Vic's Rum Blends. Mai Tai Rum and Navy Grog & Punch Rum. 3 great rums in each easy bottle — perfectly balanced for use in dozens of classic tropical drinks (like those served at Trader Vic's famous restaurants).

So, if you want the most ambrosial refreshment this side of a Polynesian lagoon... first get a glass with lots of ice; then just pour from a Trader Vic's Rum Blend and pour from a Trader Vic's exotic fruit mix. Stir. Sip. Smile. Oh, you'll smile all right. (Now you're an expert.)

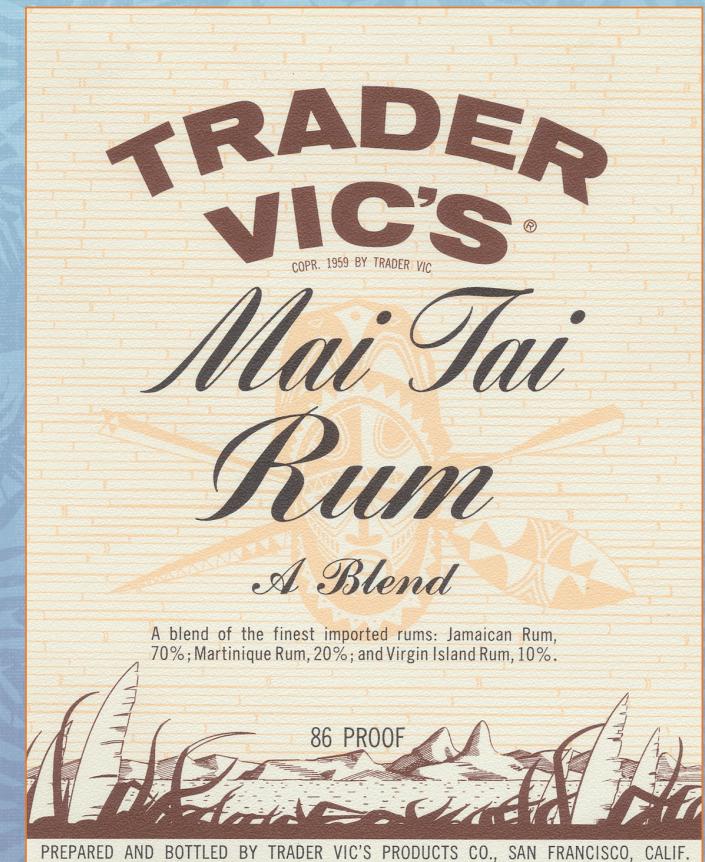


Photo courtesy of Trader Vic's Hospitality

THE MAI TAI GOES HAWAIIAN

A Split in the Evolutionary Line



Trader Vic brings the
Mai Tai to Hawaii in
1953

The Royal Hawaiian Hotel
Moana Hotel

The Mai Tai was his
favorite!

Honolulu Star-Bulletin,
February 4, 1953

THE OL' TRADER is back in Ha-vhy-ee for his 25th expedition in nearly as many years . . . King of exotic concoctions, Vic Bergeron is the man behind the menehunes on the Royal's newly revised drink list . . . Trader Vic has never been a trader and he hasn't wandered much farther into Polynesia than Waikiki, but he's built Island paradises in San Francisco and Seattle and may be moving into Denver . . . An ex-partner runs the local Trader's, while Vic heads Trader Vic Enterprises and is consultant for several nighteries . . . His favorite drink is the Mai Tai, a heady concoction with a rum base. There's also the Kava Bowl, an exotic extravaganza served in a king-size container with vandas floating on the surface . . . The bowl was supported by four menehunes . . . what's needed is someone handy to support the drinker. After two, you probably wear the bowl on your head . . . Vic says his job gives him heartburn about once a week.



Trader Vic

Mrs. Edwin B. Hausfeld
4727 Glenway Ave.
Cincinnati 38, Ohio

Dear Hausfeld:

Your letter addressed to Jack Fischbeck of the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu for reply. I am only too happy to send you the recipe for the Mai Tai as served here and at the Royal Hawaiian. Both Mr. Fischbeck and I are pleased that you have enjoyed this libation.

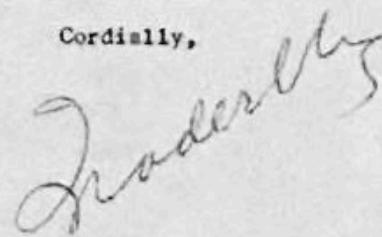
MAI TAI

Mix in 16 oz. tumbler with shaved ice:

Juice of one lime - drop half shell in glass
Dash of Rock Candy Syrup
Dash of Curacao
Dash of Orgeat Syrup
1½ oz. Trader Vic's Puerto Rico Rum
3/4 oz. Meyer's Planters Punch Rum

Stir and decorate with fresh mint.

Cordially,



VJB:s

1956 Mai Tai

Juice of One Lime - drop half lime shell in glass

Dash of Rock Candy Syrup

Dash of Curacao

Dash of Orgeat

1½ oz Trader Vic's Puerto Rican Rum

¾ oz Myers's Planters Punch Rum

Stir and decorate with fresh mint

Note: A "Dash" when referring to these ingredients is equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, according to the 1972 *Trader Vic's Bartender's Guide Revised*.

And A Hawaiian Drink

And just to give you a taste of Hawaii, here's the recipe for Mai Tai, a rum drink given Mrs. Seidman by the bartender at the Royal Hawaiian . . . in fact he drew her a picture of it.

One ounce lemon juice.

One-half fresh lime.

One-third ounce rock candy syrup (a teaspoon of saccharin will do).

One-third ounce Orgeat syrup (obtainable at most liquor stores).

One-third ounce orange curacao.

One ounce Puerto Rican rum, light.

One ounce Jamaican rum, dark.

Decorate the glass with a stalk of sugar cane, a sprig or two of mint and a pineapple

Rum And Orchids

By STAN DELAPLANE

"GIVE US A recipe for mai tai you mention in your Hawaii columns . . ."

The Royal Hawaiian gives me this: "Jigger light rum, jigger dark Jamaica rum, juice of one lime (and drop half shell in the glass). Dash of Orgeat syrup, dash of rock candy syrup, dash of orange Curacao. Garnish with sprig of mint, sugar cane stick, pineapple stick and fill with shaved ice."

The Halekulani omits the rock candy syrup and floats the dark rum on top.

Tiki Bob Bryant at the Tahitian Lanai uses light Puerto Rican rum and Lemon Heart Demerra rum on top. All use a king-size, old-fashioned glass and float a vanda orchid on top.

The mai tai (it means "the best" in Tahitian) was invented by Trader Vic in his Oakland, Calif., restaurant. It is a top favorite in the Islands.

In case you have wondered exactly what goes into some of those concoctions with the incredible names, the Moana graciously has come up with the answer.

Here's a collection of recipes that will make a great Christmas gift for the man who has everything, including the nerve to try these at home.

Mai Tai

1½ ounces light rum

1½ ounces dark rum

Juice of 1 lime
(leave ½ shell in
glass)

Dash Orgeat syrup

Dash Rock Candy
syrup

Dash Orange

Curacao

Garnish with a sprig of mint, sugar cane stick, and pineapple stick. Fill with shaved ice.

Ronrico Mai-Tai

1 jigger Ronrico White
1 jigger Myers's Jamaica Rum
Juice of One Lime
1 dash Orgeat
1 dash Simple Syrup
1 dash Orange Curacao



Let one of those great Polynesian restaurants make it for you; they're experts. Let them make marvelously complicated Ronrico Scorpions, Babalus, Tonga Punches, Navy Grog too. You, at home, can take Ronrico Rum and lead a simple life. Try this devastatingly dry rum with orange juice. (The Spanish Screwdriver.) With tomato juice. (The Bloody Maria . . . "Maria is Mary set to music.")

With tonic. With cider. With cola. With tea. (How good is Ronrico Rum? Take tea and see.) And of course, in dry Daiquiris. (Even people who profess not to like liquor like the taste of Ronrico: dry, light, clear and fragrant.) Got the idea? Got the Rum?

RONRICO PUERTO RICAN RUM, 80 PROOF, WHITE OR GOLD LABEL.
MYERS'S JAMAICA RUM, 97 PROOF. GENERAL WINE AND SPIRITS CO., NEW YORK 22

RONRICO FROM PUERTO RICO: THE DRY RUM

1 ONE JIGGER RONRICO WHITE LABEL RUM 2 ONE JIGGER MYERS JAMAICA RUM 3 JUICE OF ONE LIME 4 ONE DASH ORGEAT 5 ONE DASH SIMPLE SUGAR SYRUP
6 ONE DASH ORANGE CURACAO 7 GARNISH WITH SPRIG OF MINT 8 SUGAR CANESTICK 9 PINEAPPLE STICK 10 MARASCHINO CHERRY 11 SHAVED ICE 12 ORCHID

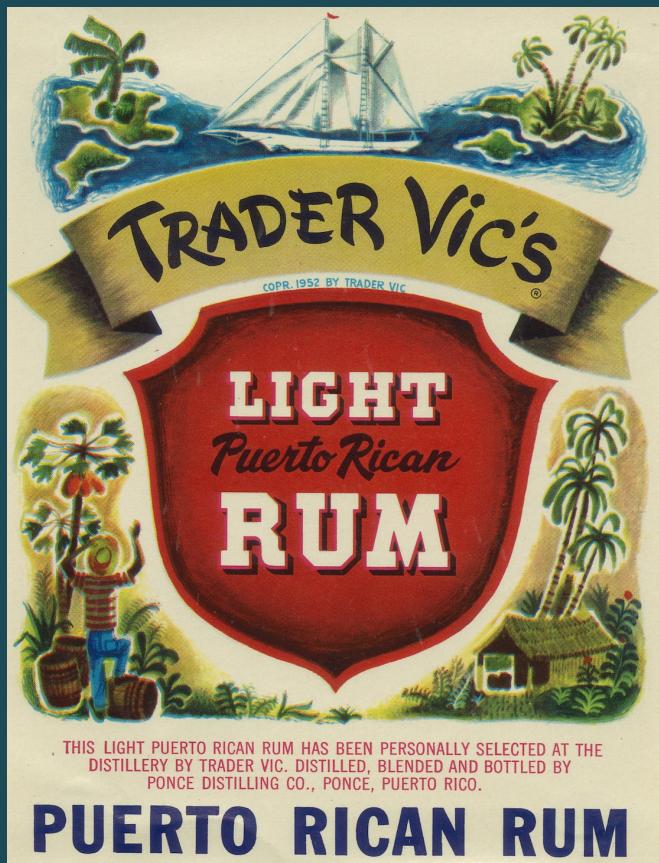
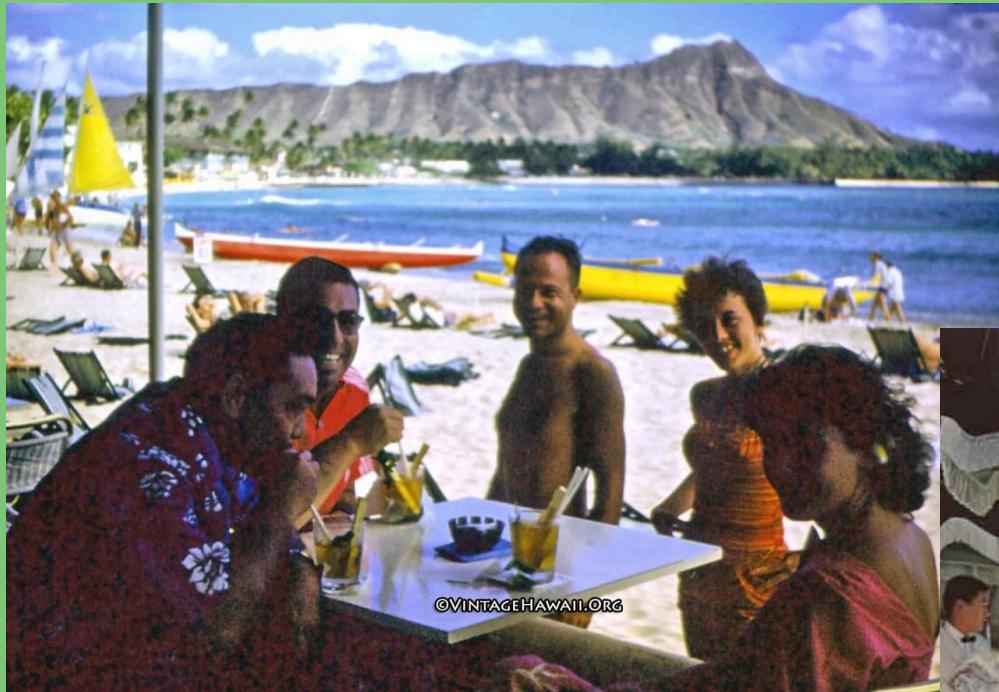


Photo courtesy of Trader Vic's Hospitality



GENERIC ORIGINAL HAWAIIAN MAI TAI RECIPE

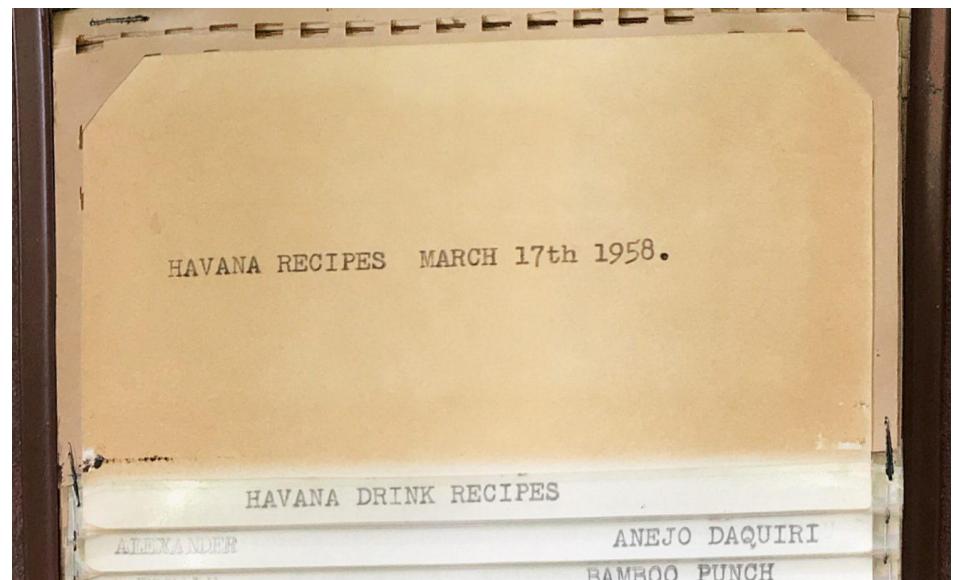
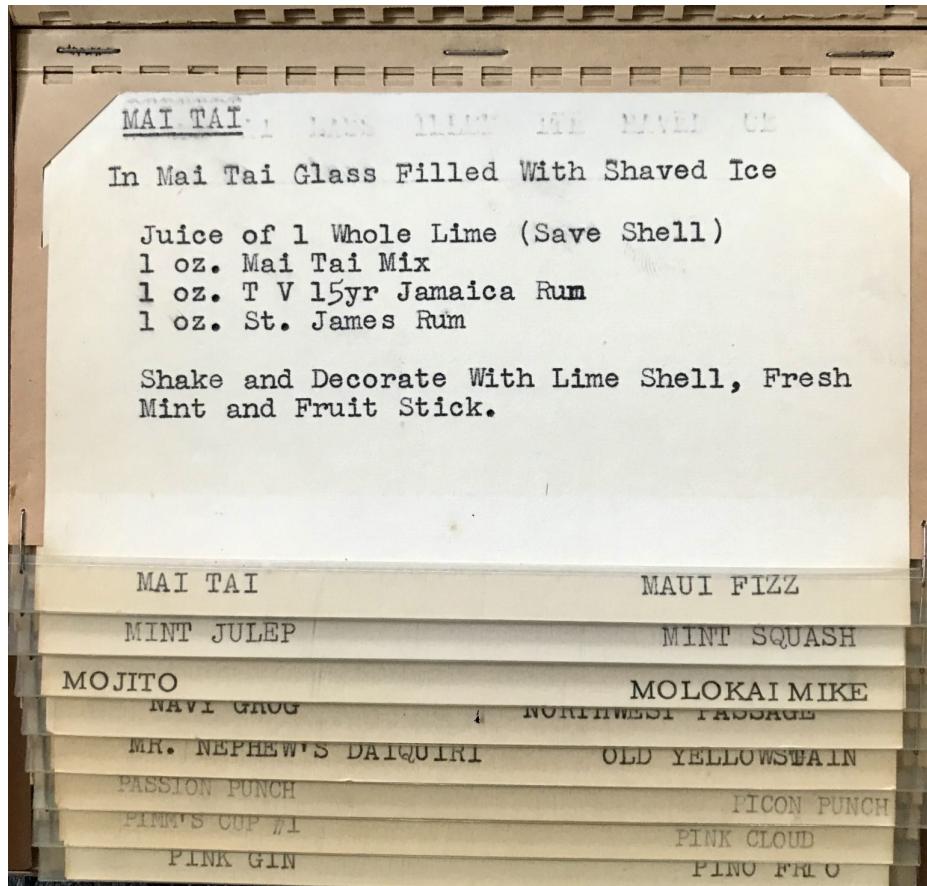
1 oz Lime Juice
1/3 oz Orgeat
1/3 oz Rock Candy Syrup
1/3 oz Orange Curacao
1 1/2 oz Light Puerto Rican Rum
1 1/2 oz Dark Jamaican Rum



Photo credit: Kamaaina56 Flickr Collection

CUBAN EVOLUTION





1958 Havana Trader Vic's Mai Tai



1958 Havana Mai Tai

In Mai Tai glass filled
with shaved ice:

Juice of 1 Whole
Lime (save shell)

1 oz Mai Tai Mix

1 oz Trader Vic's
15yr Jamaica Rum

1 oz St. James Rum

Shake and decorate
with Lime shell, fresh
Mint, and Fruit stick.

Mai Tai Mix = 12 parts
Curacao to 7 parts Orgeat

MAI TAI\$ IN BOOKS

The recipe was never a secret



ESQUIRE PARTY BOOK

On a Polynesian Beach

If you're not too self-consciously authentic about which island the food comes from, a tropical spread is an easy and delicious way of summer-time entertainment. This menu is a composite of Hawaiian, Tahitian, Javanese, Chinese dishes—one of the best from each place we think. Serve it buffet-style if you would, which allows for judicious sampling of the variety of dishes. Make with the lots, seashells, fish-nets, glass floats, flaming torches, low tables if you like, do it straight, by candle-light instead of moon-light. Each dish will serve 8, so if you serve them all your party could double that number.

MENU

Zombies Cocoanut Chips Mai-Tai cocktail

Rumaki Gee Bo Gai Fish Fiji

Bongo Bongo soup

Island chicken Fufu Oriental Green pepper and steak

Fish curry Chutney Rice

Crackers Paké Noodles

Plantain pancake Island skewers

Flaming Mountain

For the cocktail hour:

1/2 lime
1/2 ounce sugar
1/2 ounce unsweetened pineapple juice
1/2 ounce papaya nectar (canned)
1/2 ounce apricot brandy
1/2 ounce Puerto Rican white rum,
36 proof
1/2 ounce Puerto Rican gold rum,
36 proof
1/2 ounce Jamaican heavy-bodied rum,
90 proof
1/2 ounce heavy-bodied 151 proof
rum
1/2 ounce powdered sugar
1/2 lime sprig

Pineapple chunk
Maraschino cherries

Shake the fruit juices, sugar, brandy, and 3 first-named rums with cracked ice in a cocktail shaker. Without straining, pour into a 12 ounce Zombie glass, adding shaved ice nearly to the top. Bedeck with the mint, pineapple, and cherries. Carefully pour on a shallow float of the 151 proof rum. Sprinkle with the sugar and serve with straws.

Mai Tai Cocktail

In a large Old-fashioned glass half filled with cracked ice, put:

1/2 ounce fresh lime juice
1/2 ounce orgeat
1/2 ounce simple sugar syrup
1/2 ounce orange Curacao
1 1/2 ounces light rum
1 1/2 ounces dark rum
Stir gently, garnish with mint, pineapple stick, Maraschino cherry, and serve with straws. Or simply buy a jar of Trader Vic's MAI-TAI mix and follow directions.

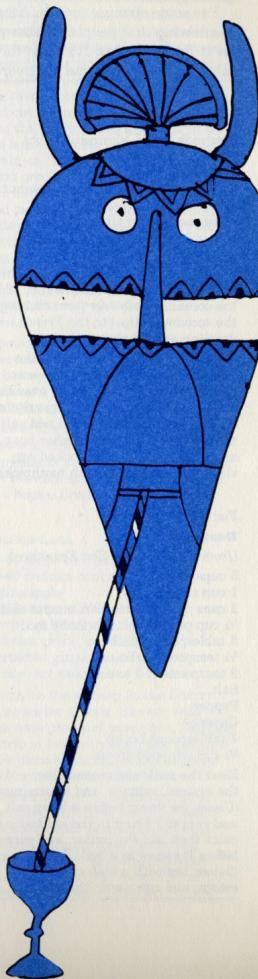
Toasted Cocoanut Chips

Of course, you can buy these; you can also make them. Simply crack, drain, and peel a fresh cocoanut. With a vegetable peeler, strip off as long pieces of the meat as you can. Arrange them on a flat pan and toast in a 300 degree oven until they're dry and slightly brown. Watch carefully after 5 minutes of baking. Rumaki, our adored chicken-liver-water-chestnut-bacon appetizer is reciped already. It's a must for all island affairs, and a droll to cook outdoors, and serve there too. But consider also:

Gee Bow Gai

(from the Midtown Chinese
Rathskeller, New York)

2 pounds raw chicken breast
1 tablespoon dry Sherry
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon Chinese Spice (Heong
Lao Fong)
1 scallion finely chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
Cut chicken into pieces about 2 inches by 1 inch. Marinate for 10 minutes in the other ingredients. Remove and put each piece of chicken on a strip of cellophane about 5 inches square. Fold to make a neat little oblong package with the ends tucked in. Deep fry in hot peanut oil for 2 minutes. Serve in the cellophane.



Esquire Party Book (1965)

1/2 oz Lime Juice

1/2 oz Orgeat

1/2 oz Simple Syrup

1/2 oz Orange Curacao

1 1/2 oz Light Rum

1 1/2 oz Dark Rum

Stir gently, garnish with mint, pineapple stick, maraschino cherry.

"Or simply buy Trader Vic's Mai Tai Mix"

1970s Trader Vic's Recipe

Juice of 1 Lime

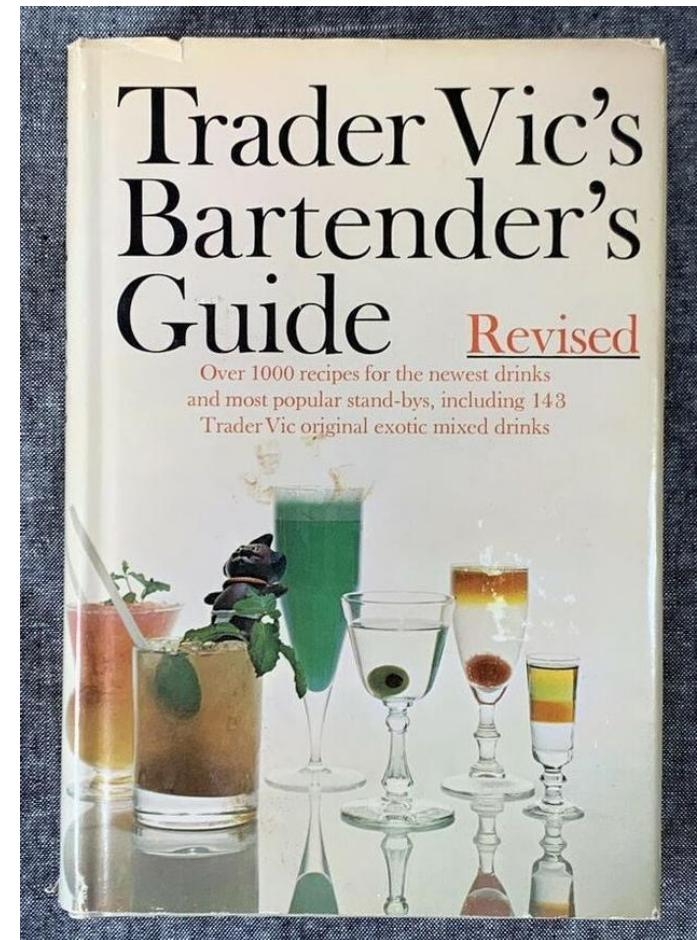
¼ oz Orgeat

¼ oz Rock Candy Syrup

½ oz Orange Curacao

2 oz Trader Vic's Mai Tai Rum

(or 1 oz Dark Jamaica rum / 1 oz Martinique Rhum)





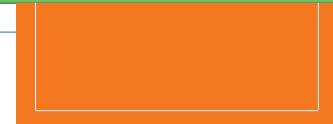
Jamaica Rum and Martinique Rhum Agricole

Common
combination, thanks
in part to references
in books from Jeff
“Beachbum” Berry.

THE OLD WAY MAI TAI

Who knows what this is?





"OLD WAY" MAI TAI FORMULA 1997

1 ounce Fine Jamaican Rum (15 or 8 year old)
1 ounce Martinique Rum (St. James)
1/2 ounce Orange Curacao
1/2 ounce Orgeat Syrup
juice from one fresh lime (about 3/4 ounce)

Mix and serve as in the original formula.



THE ORIGINAL MAI TAI 1944

The rum which motivated the creation of the Mai Tai was a fine, golden, medium-bodied Jamaican from Kingston. Trader Vic added fresh lime juice, flavored and sweetened it with Orange Curacao from Holland and French Orgeat with its subtle flavor of almond.

The drink chilled nicely with a considerable amount of shaved ice so a large 15 ounce glass was selected to compliment the cooling and generous quality of the Mai Tai.

THE ORIGINAL FORMULA

2 ounces 17-year old J. Wray Nephew Jamaican rum
1/2 ounce French Garnier Orgeat
1/2 ounce Holland DeKuyper Orange Curacao
1/4 ounce Trader Vic's Rock Candy Syrup
juice from one fresh lime

Hand shake and garnish with half of the lime shell inside the drink and float a sprig of fresh mint at the edge of the glass.

The success of the Mai Tai and its acceptance soon caused the 17 year old rum to become unavailable, so it was substituted with the same fine rum with 15 years aging which maintained the outstanding quality.

"OLD WAY" MAI TAI FORMULA 1997

1 ounce Fine Jamaican Rum (15 or 8 year old)
1 ounce Martinique Rum (St. James)
1/2 ounce Orange Curacao
1/2 ounce Orgeat Syrup
juice from one fresh lime (about 3/4 ounce)

Mix and serve as in the original formula.

THIS IS THE FORMULA OF THE PRESENT DAY MAI TAI AT TRADER VIC'S RESTAURANTS 1997

2 ounces Fine Jamaican Rum
4 ounces Trader Vic's Mai Tai Mix
juice of one large lime

Mix and serve as in the original formula



Chronicle / Liz Hafalia

Trader Vic's 2004

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz fresh lime
juice
(2 to 3 halved limes)

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz Leroux
Orange Curacao

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz Trader Vic
Formula Orgeat
syrup

1 oz Coruba
Jamaican rum

1 oz Lemon Hart
Demerara Rum

San Francisco Chronicle,
November 11, 2004



Today: Trader Vic's Royal Amber Rum

Royal Amber Rum

Distilled in Puerto Rico

“A blend of Trader Vic’s Gold and Trader Vic’s Dark rums”

“A sweet molasses and dark rum scent greets the nose with molasses, caramel, and ruminate on the palate.”

Long Aged Jamaica Rum
White Puerto Rican Rum
+ Dark Jamaica Rum
Martinique Rhum Industriel
Aged Martinique Agricole
Multi-Island Rum Blend
Demerara Rum
Virgin Islands Rum
Aged/Black Puerto Rican Rum Blend

**What's the
Rum in a
Trader Vic's
Mai Tai?**

YOUR OWN RUM BLEND

“What one rum can’t do...”





Trader Vic's Variants

A Mai Tai by any other name...

Substituting the standard Mai Tai rum yields a different cocktail

Mai Tai	Menehune Juice	Suffering Bastard
2 oz Aged Rum	2 oz Light Puerto Rican Rum	1 oz Light Puerto Rican Rum 2 oz Saint James Rhum

Denizen Merchant's Reserve

Most famous one-bottle Mai Tai rum blend

Developed with Martin Cate to emulate the 2nd Adjusted Formula

Contains aged Jamaican Rum and Rhum Grand Arôme from Martinique

The Mai Tai rum at Smuggler's Cove and many other bars



Make and DRINK

BACKSIDE
OF WATER



Rums of the Mai Tai: Make it Your Own

Mentioned in the Presentation

Aged Jamaican Rum
Dark Jamaican Rum
Light Puerto Rican Rum
Aged Rhum Agricole
Martinique Rhum
Demerara Rum
Blended Rum

Other Rums Used Frequently

Overproof Jamaican Rum
Hawaiian Agricole
Cachaça
Haitian Rum and Clairin
Philippine Rum

Mix, Savor, Repeat



BLUE MAI TAI

1 oz Lime Juice
½ oz Orgeat (Latitude 29)
¼ oz Simple Syrup
½ oz Giffard Curaçao Bleu
½ oz Aged White Rum
1 oz Overproof Jamaica Rum
Shake with crushed ice and garnish with mint.



The Ultimate Mai Tai Rum Blend

Equal Parts (½ ounce each):
Appleton 12 Rare Casks
Jamaica Rum
Smith & Cross Jamaican Rum
Planteray Xaymaca Special Dry
Jamaican Rum
Planteray O.F.T.D. Rum

Try it at Tiki Tom's in Walnut Creek!

CONCLUSION



Drink What You Like

There's no right or wrong answer for the rum in a Mai Tai



QUESTIONS

Slides at UltimateMaiTai.com





The Ultimate Mai Tai Recipe

1 oz Lime Juice

½ oz Orgeat (Latitude 29)

½ oz Orange Curacao (Ferrand or Clement)

¼ oz Demerara Syrup

½ oz Appleton 12 Jamaica Rum

½ oz Smith & Cross Jamaica Rum

½ oz Planteray Xaymaca Jamaica Rum

½ oz Planteray OFTD Rum

Shake with crushed ice



Best Mai Tai Ever... for Me

The Kon-Tiki in Oakland
The last Ultimate Mai Tai by Terry Six

Always use “Please” and “Thank you”

Remember to work with your bartender and tip generously







Top 10 Mai Tais

Beachbum Berry's Latitude 29

The Copper Room (Yucca Valley, CA)

Dr. Funk

Hale Pele

Inside Passage

Maunakea Mai Tai at Skull & Crown Trading Co.

Smuggler's Cove

San Francisco Mai Tai at Trader Vic's Emeryville

Sunken Harbor Club (Brooklyn)

Undertow

RTD Mai Tais

High End
(higher ABV)

Tip Tip Proof
Proof Cocktail
Co.

Small Hand
Cocktails
Kō Hana

Low End
(lower ABV)

Trader Vic's

Koloa

The rest in this
class are terrible



ultimatemaitai.com/about/rtd-mai-tai/