

The Island Rum Company announces Cuba's first rum joint venture in 20 years

Cuban state-owned sugar producer Azcuba and Island Brands SL, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cuban rum specialists The Island Rum Company, signed an 'historic joint venture agreement' on 7 November, creating Ron Vigia SA. Azcuba's first rum joint venture.



Ron Vigia SA is Cuba's first fully integrated rum production venture since Havana Club International formed in the 1990s.

Headquartered in Oslo, The Island Rum Company was founded in 2012 by Tore Villard and Hans Christian Holst, Chairman and CEO of Norwegian wine importers Arctic Beverage Co., and Enrique Arías, a Spanish entrepreneur based in Havana, who is now president of Ron Vigia SA.

Cuba's main producer and supplier of sugar and alcohol, Azcuba operates facilities around the country, but Ron Vigia's production will focus on Ciego de Ávila Province, a region steeped in rum history.



VALID FOR 30 YEARS

The 50-50 joint venture, valid for 30 years, will own very significant maturing stocks of local rum, says The Island Rum Company, which will allow it to distribute its brands around the world.

Ron Vigia SA President Enrique Arías says: "A small independent business with a passion for great rum, The Island Rum Company aims to make wonderful, crafted rums from the stocks it now part-owns available around the world.

"We look forward to investing in real assets in Cuba and expanding our long-term relationship with Azcuba's experienced team."

Ron Vigia spirits, distributed internationally by The Island Rum Company, include: Black Tears by Vigia, the first dry spiced spirit made with Cuban rum, already available in some 20 markets; La Progresiva 13 by Vigia, a dry sipping rum which launched last month; and La Progresiva 500 by Vigia, a rare limited edition crafted to celebrate Havana's 500th anniversary this month.

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The Island Rum Company CEO Adèle Robberstad, says: "The joint venture gives us an opportunity to move forward and share our passion for Cuba in every way—from new spirits to new environmental initiatives. Watch this space."



Left, Cubas Minister of Construction shakes hands with The Island Rum Company Co-Founder, Tore Villard (right).