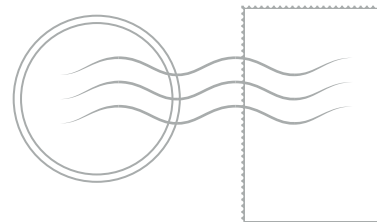


POSTCARD

St Kitts



The Kittitian RumMaster programme gets top marks from **Jonathan Ray**

I've never been prouder. Indeed, my certificate quite brings a tear to my eye. If only my parents were here to see it: their son, a Master of Rumology.

In fairness, the St Kitts RumMaster programme is hardly the most gruelling. It's informative though and, divided into theoretical and practical sessions, hugely entertaining.

We begin at Wingfield Estate where, amid the ruins of the 350-year-old Old Road Distillery, reclaimed from the rainforest, local boy Jack Widdowson has founded the Old Road Rum Company, where they age and blend spirit imported from "the most awarded rum distillery in the world".

We gather at Alfie's Bar and, although barely 10am, get our eye in with an invigorating Old Road Sunrise cocktail before a brief, if rather unsteady, tour of the ruined distillery. Then it's off to the bottling room with distillery manager Bon Jovi, who explains the chemistry of rum, its different styles and its processes of production.

After another toothsome cocktail, the Old Road Classic, we nose and taste a large glass of Old Road Rum 12 Year Old, write our tasting notes and fill in a flavour map. It's fun and far from arduous, and we all pass equal top of the class.

Then it's onto the minibus for a quick trip south to Spice Mill, where Roger Brisbane of Hibiscus Spirits welcomes us to "the smallest distillery on the planet". Here, in his apothecary-like laboratory, Roger instructs us in the joys of blending and we each make our own Hibiscus Spiced Rum using base rum and a blend of heady spices and flavours in varying proportions.

"Hmm, I like it," says Roger of my concoction. "But I'm not sure I'd bottle it." Wounded, I add a bit more orange and vanilla, throttle back the pepper and ginger and get a hearty thumbs up.

We label and bottle our bespoke blends and conclude our studies by making our own stunningly tasty rumtinis. Again, we all pass equal top of the class before, in time-honoured student fashion, celebrating with ice-cold beers on the beach and planning our rum-soaked futures. **TW**



BOOK IT

Gold Medal offers seven nights' room-only at St Kitts Marriott Resort from £1,629 per person, based on two adults sharing a King Garden View Room. Includes BA flights from Gatwick, departing on October 7, plus transfers. goldmedal.co.uk
The Kittitian RumMaster programme costs \$150 (£118). stkittstourism.kn/stay-dine/joys-of-rum



TOP: Yachts moored in St Kitts

ABOVE: Rum tasting on the Kittitian RumMaster programme

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Mikhail Grachikov