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Spirit World

Looking for rum in all the wrong places? Try Joe Squared.

By Christine Stutz

Nationwide, rum is the second most popular spirit sold, after vodka. But at Baltimore's Joe Squared restaurant, it's clearly number one. Joe Edwardsen, chef/owner of **Joe Squared** (133 W. North Ave., 410-545-0444) in Station North, carries more than 45 kinds of rum in his small pizzeria.

"I like rum," Edwardsen explains simply. He serves specialty rum drinks like mojitos at the bar, but he also offers rum tastings to educate his customers. He starts with lesser aged, lighter rums and works up to more mature, golden rums, like the eight-year-old Haitian Barbancourt or the Trinidadian Angostura 1824, aged in charred oak barrels. The Angostura, Edwardsen says, is a blend of rums aged between 15 and 20 years and is one of the finest rums in the world. "It's almost like a scotch," Edwardsen says, because of the long aging process.

Partially fueled by growing interest in Latin American culture and cuisine, rum consumption has steadily increased over this decade, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. Last year, 23 million cases of rum were sold in the United States. Distilled from sugar cane, rum is a natural ingredient in desserts, and Joe Squared regularly carries a rum nut cake made by Miss Elaine, a local Jamaican-born baker.



DARKO ZAGAR

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