

Spirit Of The Week: Copalli Cacao Rum - Maxim

Savor one of Central America's finest boutique farm-to-bottle rum distilleries.

Feb 13, 2023



Copalli Cacao Rum, a handmade rum Agricole using 100% organic sugar cane and cacao nibs sustainably grown on their farm (Copalli)

Deep in the sweltering jungles of southern [Belize](#) a metal-walled distillery rises from the dark soil, seemingly out of place among the lush vegetation, azure skies and ubiquitous playful calls of toucans, herons and black-crowned tityras hiding in the trees nearby.

On the grounds surrounding the Copal Tree Distillery, fields of red and black sugar cane spread out to the jungle walls in dense layers. While visiting during harvest we witnessed dozens of workers chop and stack the plants, attacking the 113 acres of cane one field at a time.

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This is the 100% organic cane Master Distiller Ed Tiedge will crush and juice within hours after harvesting to craft his superb Copalli Rum—a rum Agricole-style spirit handmade from the natural sugar sustainably grown here. At the Copal Tree Farm they also grow their own vanilla, bananas, fields of produce and even cacao—the very same nibs that Tiedge will use to infuse his white rum.



The spellbinding Copalli Tree Lodge, a gem of luxury nestled among 22,000 acres of remote Belizean jungle (Copalli)

“Part of the appeal of taking this project on is that I got to be the guy that crafted it,” Tiedge tells us of his motivation to move here from New York to help launch the Copalli Rum label. For it was the Master

Distiller's responsibility to not only produce the rum, but also to help craft its very flavor profile.

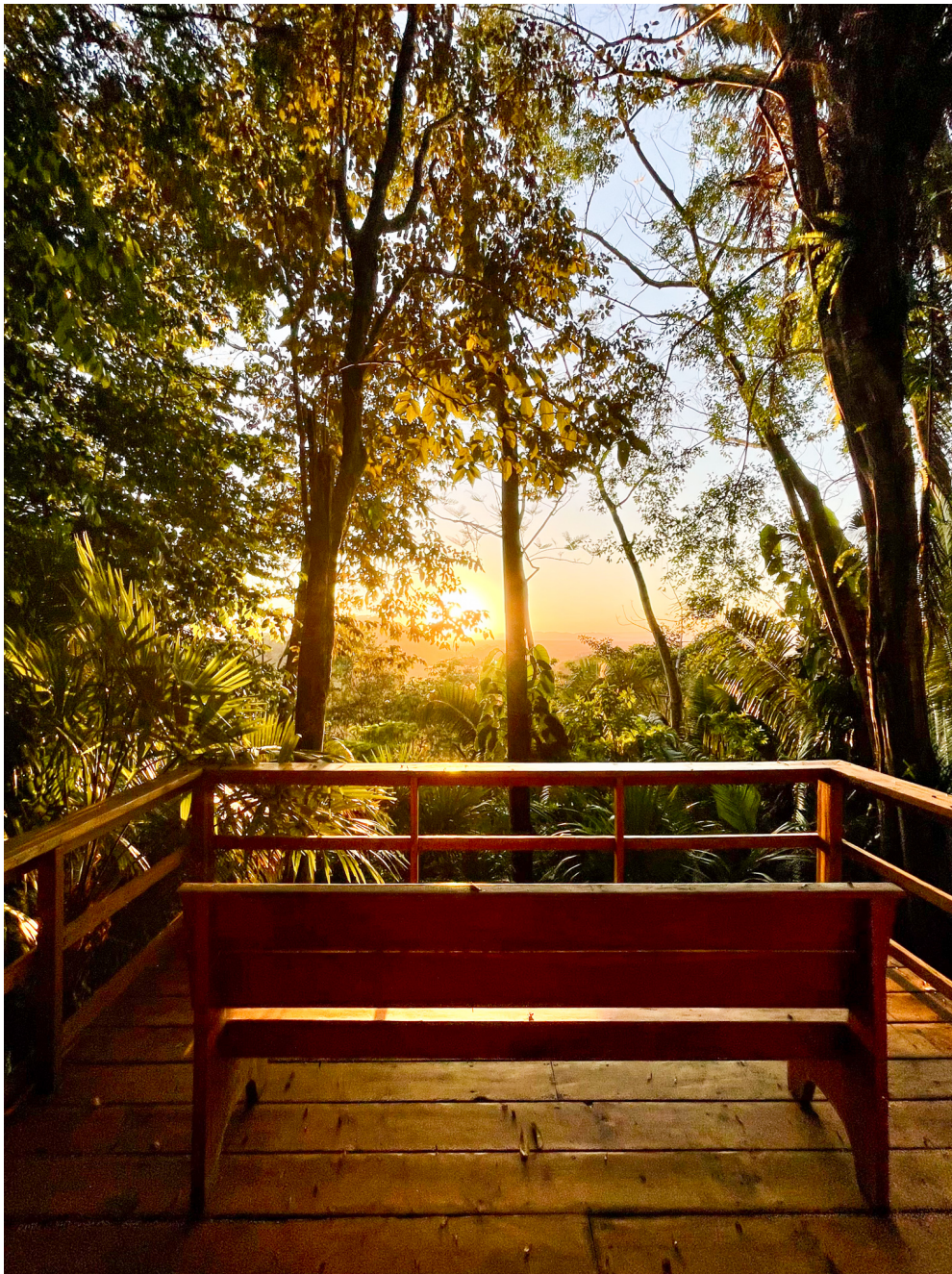
"This was as creative a position as a production position," he reveals.



(Copalli)

We're currently sipping on colorful Copalli Bird cocktails—a chocolate spin on the Jungle Bird—along the wooden expanse of the aptly named Rum Bar in the Copal Tree Lodge. Built to offer visitors a luxurious resort otherwise absent in this remote Punta Gorda/Toledo area of Belize, the Copal Tree Lodge boasts 16 opulently appointed suites, a three bedroom villa, the airy Garden Table Restaurant serving organic greens grown in the farm, a Jungle Spa to work out the kinks after a long hike, and two idyllic pools offering a cool respite from the hot jungle's challenges.

Before this all existed—the Copal Tree Lodge, Farm and Distillery—these remote edges of southern Belize were mostly known for fly fishing, scuba diving in the nearby Caribbean, bird-watching and world-class jungle hiking.



(Copalli)

Now, however, it is gaining currency as the home to yet another top-shelf Central American rum, joining the likes of Zacapa, Flor de Caña, Abuelo and others. Surrounded by 22,000 acres of untouched rain forest, it is here in these pristine settings that Master Distiller Tiedge and his team craft a trio of superb rums: White, Barrel Aged (finished in ex-bourbon wood for 6-8 months) and this Spirit of the Week, Copalli Cacao, which uses all natural cacao also grown on the farm's fertile soil.

Here's the thing: don't mistake Copalli Rum for some artificially sweetened, processed frat party fodder—this is 100% natural, handmade stuff, infused for three days with some of the finest nibs.

The end result makes for a delicious sipper, especially on the rocks. But its potential as an unexpected flavor nuance in a cocktail is through the roof, its natural cacao profile ideal for unique potions like the Chocolate Manhattan—a Copalli spin on the bar classic (see recipes below). [\\$35](#)



(Copalli)

Copalli Cacao Cocktail Recipes

Copalli Bird

- 1 oz Copalli Barrel Rested Rum
- 1 oz Copalli Cacao Rum
- 2 oz pineapple juice
- 1 oz lime juice
- ¾ oz simple syrup
- 1 oz Campari

Add ingredients to a shaker with ice. Shake until chilled. Strain and pour over clean ice in a tall glass, garnish with dehydrated pineapple or pineapple wedge.

Copalli Espresso Martini

- 1 ½ oz Copalli Cacao
- ½ oz coffee liqueur
- 1 oz espresso
- ½ oz simple syrup
- Organic cacao powder

Add ice and shake. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass, top with a sprinkle of cacao powder.

Chocolate Manhattan

- 2 oz Copalli Cacao
- 1 oz Carpano Antica Vermouth
- 2 dash angostura bitters

Combine ingredients into a mixing glass, add ice and stir. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with an orange twist.

Lubaantun

- 2 oz Copalli Cacao Rum
- 2 oz Irish cream
- 2 oz chocolate syrup

Add ingredients to a shaker with ice. Shake until chilled. Strain into chilled martini glass with one large cube. Garnish with shaved dark chocolate.

“Copalli Rum is made right here in our community by the people of Toledo district with rich local ingredients,” Waluco Maheia tells me as we sit on the Garden Table Restaurant’s wood terrace, overlooking the verdant canopy of jungle that spreads to the horizon.

“Southern Belize, Toledo, is often considered locally the ‘forgotten District’ so we have a special pride and joy for Copalli rum,” continues the amicable brand ambassador. “It is being represented across the world, shedding light on our community.”

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