



# Storming Ahead

The Beverage Network sat down with Malcolm Gosling, president & CEO of Gosling-Castle Brands, Inc., to discuss his company's rich history and their recent joint venture with U.S. partner, Castle Brands. Gosling's is the maker of Black Seal and the key ingredient to their trademark drink, the Dark 'n Stormy.

## The Beverage Network: How did Gosling's begin?

**Malcolm Gosling:** In 1806 my father's great grandfather had a liquor store in London and he wanted to expand to America to open a store. So, he chartered a ship named the Mercury and loaded it up with 10,000 pounds worth of wines and spirits. Being the brave guy that he was, he remained in London, and put his son James on the ship to make the voyage. After three months, the charter ran out, and they were forced off in Bermuda. Fortuitously, no one was selling alcohol in Bermuda and they decided to open up shop there.

In about 1850 they started experimenting with various different blends and aging techniques for rum and decided to call it Old Rum. They rinsed out old Champagne bottles that Gosling's sold to the British officers' mess and filled them with Old Rum and sealed them with black sealing wax. Decades later, it was referred to as "black seal".

## TBN: How important is your identity as a Bermuda rum in promoting this brand?

**MG:** Black Seal is really synonymous with Bermuda. We sell 23,000 cases a year where there is only a population of 60,000 people. But there are about 400,000 tourists who visit Bermuda each year. The Dark 'n Stormy is Bermuda's national trademark drink and the Black Sizzle is made with the amber rum and the black rum. On top of that, Black Seal is Bermuda's largest export.

## TBN: Why did you make the move to Castle Brands?

**MG:** The executive team at Castle Brands had the same aspirations and a very talented sales force that wanted to tackle Gosling's. Everything just sort of fit and we set up a joint venture. Now we have a company

called Gosling-Castle Partners, Inc. in the U.S. which has the global rights for Gosling's Rum. I'm expecting big things.

## TBN: Who is your target consumer?

**MG:** Generally, we target the 25 to 40 year old demographic, but because of the versatility of Black Seal, we have people of all ages who love the Dark 'n Stormy cocktail as well as people in their 70's who love Black Seal on the rocks. When you go coast to coast there are a lot of places you can't find Black Seal, so our new slogan is: "Unavailable Almost Everywhere, For Seven Stubborn Generations." The feedback has been tremendous.

## TBN: Is there a specific way you are promoting the drinks to the consumer?

**MG:** Our trademark drink is the Dark 'n Stormy. In the past, ginger beer – the other key ingredient in the cocktail – was unavailable, but we've worked it out now where bars and retailers can purchase Barritt's Ginger Beer at a reasonable price. Whenever we're tasting someone on Black Seal, we always try it just straight up, because it's such a wonderful product. It's soft and flavorful and complex and one of two rums that have won platinum medals in the World Spirits Challenge. Today we are at about an average of \$17.99 across the U.S.

## TBN: What do you think the key is to growing the rum category?

**MG:** It's really just trial. The attention in the category is there. At least once a year just about every publication is mentioning rum and the great thing about it is there were so many articles that were mentioning Gosling's as well. It's word-of-mouth and it takes time. It's get-

ting consumers the message through our media programs. Rum is now the number two spirit and is growing.

## TBN: How do you differentiate your various offerings?

**MG:** We have three very different rums, each with distinct and different flavors. Black Seal takes three different distillates aged independently and then blends them together.

Our Old Rum is one of the finest sipping spirits available. We can go head to head with any dark rum.

With the Gold Rum, we are competing in a much bigger category. We take three different distillates and age the blend from 3-6 years. It's not completely aged in all-charred barrels as the Black label is; we're looking for a more elegant and accessible body. It's great mixed with Ginger Ale. We are extremely proud of it and because the amber rum category is so big, this will probably be a larger seller.

We also came out with Gosling's Family Reserve Old Rum.

## TBN: How has your super-premium offering performed?

**MG:** With the Gosling's Family Reserve Old Rum, we're showing that there is an alternative to Cognac. I believe our quality blew everyone away. It's a fantastic product - limited and hand-bottled and labeled, sealed with a cork, dipped and wax and individually numbered. At the San Francisco Spirits Competition held recently, Old Rum was honored with a Double Gold Medal. We are very proud of that.

We're also coming out with a line of gourmet food products with the help of a well-known chef, Edward Bottone, who works with us full-time now. He came up with these original recipes for three different rum cakes as well as Gosling's gourmet sauces and preserves. It's another way to get the Gosling name into a household through a different channel and to illustrate our versatility. ■

