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## It was a dark and stormy night...

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It's a windy and gray morning in late August. The clouds are hanging low in the sky, obscuring the view of the Washington Monument and other DC landmarks, and a cool breeze is blowing through the heavy pink and purple blossoms on the crape myrtle trees. The dogs are stretched out on the floor by

the open back door, their nostrils twitching at the scent of impending rain.

**And somewhere in the world, it's happy hour.**

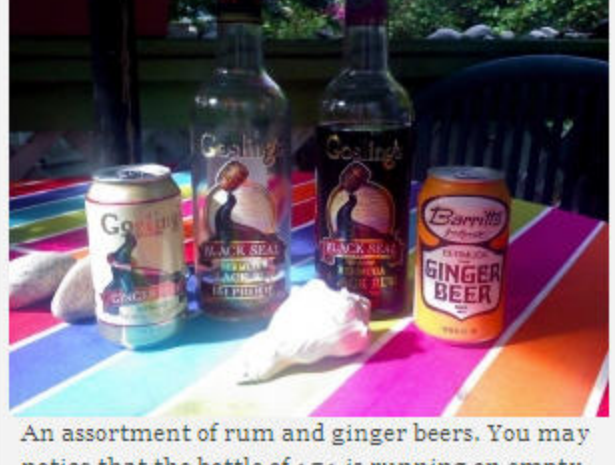
My family recently spent two weeks on the New England coast, where we reveled in the best pizza in the world ([Pepe's](#) in New Haven), munched on the most amazing local corn (a variety known as Butter and Cream), and sucked down the best summertime beer ever made, [Thomas Hooker's](#) Watermelon Ale. It's seasonal and we bought the last seven bottles in town to bring back home, trying to extend the vacation as long as possible.

But it was an entirely different drink that made for some all-too-happy hours at our little beach cottage: the [Dark 'n Stormy](#). This tasty libation, (the national drink of Bermuda, according to the [Gosling's Rum](#) website) is exceedingly popular along the New England coast (where Block Island is known as the Bermuda of

New England) and the local package stores all carry the necessary ingredients: Gosling's Black Seal Rum and Bermuda-style ginger beer. Most people are familiar with the more heavily-spiced Jamaican variety of ginger beer, which fills the nose with its peppery flavor; the Caribbean (or Bermuda) style is slightly sweeter and not quite as spicy.

While in New England, we picked up Gosling's 151 Proof Black Seal Rum and [Barritts Bermuda Ginger Beer](#), which was the preferred brand locally. This drink packs a serious punch and could not be simpler: fill a highball glass with ice, pour in about 4 or 5 ounces of ginger beer and top with a shot (or two, depending on your stamina) of the rum. Some people add a slice of lime, but this is entirely optional. My husband drank the cocktail as it was, sipping some rum off the top before it began to sink into the ginger beer, but my parents and I liked to stir it up with a finger, then slurp the rum off our fingers before proceeding with the rest of the drink. Personally, I am a bit of a lightweight when it comes to alcohol — especially with 151 proof rum — so I found that it was not a great idea for me to drink my Dark 'n Stormy while preparing dinner, otherwise our meal would have featured charred bits of oversalted dish towels.

**On the hunt for ingredients:**



Upon our return to DC, with a scant half-bottle of Black Seal and three cans of Barritts, we rushed to Hayden's, our local liquor store, to replenish our bar. Luckily, they had the rum, but no ginger beer. We checked around for ginger beer, but kept finding the Jamaican style, which I thought would have an overpowering flavor.

When we got home with the rum, we realized that it was 80 proof — perfect for me, actually, but not quite what my husband had in mind. He checked the other local liquor store, [Schneider's of Capitol Hill](#), and heard that the 151 proof Gosling's is not easy to get in our area. I suspect that Rick's journalistic instincts have now been piqued and that he will be on the search.

However, Schneider's did yield Gosling's Ginger Beer — oh, happy day! We did a tasting comparison of Gosling's and Barritts, with the result that Rick prefers the sweeter Barritts but I really like the slightly spicier Gosling's, which is still not nearly as highly-spiced as the Jamaican kind. My parents also found the Gosling's ginger beer when they got back to their home in Florida; my dad said he also heard that the Dark 'n Stormy is popular at the bar at the [Cocoa Beach Pier](#), although he'd never heard of the drink before. Many years ago, when I was a waitress back in Cocoa Beach (including up at the Pier), dark rum and ginger ale was a standard drink, but I never worked anywhere that carried ginger beer.

**Gosling's for dinner *and* dessert?**

A quick gander at the Gosling's website also revealed a recipe for Bermuda Onion Soup, which inspired me to create the following recipe. A somewhat cooler evening than is usual for late August made it possible for me to whip this up for dinner last night — and I saved my Dark 'n Stormy for dessert!



### Bermuda Black Rum Onion Soup

- 3 large onions, preferably Bermuda, sliced
- 4 cups stock (I used mushroom, but vegetable or chicken would work)
- 2 – 3 cloves of garlic, sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup Gosling's Bermuda Black Rum (or another variety of dark rum)
- 1 tsp. sugar
- salt and pepper to taste
- for garnish:*
  - thick slices of toasted bread (sourdough or a French baguette)
  - sliced Swiss or Gruyere cheese
  - dried oregano

*optional:* additional drizzle of rum

Heat the olive oil in a large stockpot over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and add sliced onions, turning to coat in the oil. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the rum, sugar, and bay leaves and continue to cook over low heat, uncovered, for about 20 minutes, until the onions are soft and slightly golden and the liquid is reduced by half. Add the broth and stir in salt and pepper to taste. Allow to simmer for 10 minutes.

Turn on the oven broiler and ladle the soup into oven-proof bowls, leaving about an inch or so at the top. Place toasted bread in the center of each bowl, top with sliced cheese and a pinch of crushed oregano. Put under the broiler until the cheese is bubbling and beginning to brown.

If you wish, drizzle with a few drops of black rum just before serving. Serve immediately. This recipe will feed 6 happily.



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