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The samba of liquors

Local company brings Brazil to Mile High City

Joshua Wolpe, DDN Staff Writer

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

Do you fashion yourself a connoisseur of libations? If so, you may have heard about a Brazilian liquor making a name for itself in cocktails near you. If not, we can bring you up to speed and add a new drink order to your repertoire next time you saddle up to the bar.

Happy hour

Cachaca (pronounced ka-cha-sa) is considered to be the national spirit of Brazil, which consumes approximately 396 million gallons annually. Cachaca is the main ingredient in an increasingly popular cocktail, the caipirinha (pronounced ky-pir-in-ya). Boca Loca Cachaca is the first branded cachaca in the U.S. and they are based here in Denver. They started selling in Denver in 1996. The brand is now sold in 17 states. Boca Loca's COO, Rhonda Follrath, explains cachaca's appeal.

"Cachaca is a cousin of rum as it is also a sugar cane-based spirit," she said. "Cachaca, and specifically Boca Loca, varies from rum as it is distilled directly from the fresh sugar cane juice. The juice is extracted from the sugar cane immediately after being picked and is sent straight to distillation. Rum traditionally is distilled from molasses, which is formed by boiling the sugar cane to create the sweet, stickier substance before distillation."

Popularity in Brazil is merely the tip of the iceberg. Cachaca is one of the most consumed liquors in the world.

"Cachaca is third in volume only to beer and whiskey," said Follrath. "While popular in many countries for decades, it is only now taking off in the U.S."

Straight up

The traditional way to drink pure cachaca is to sip it in a small glass. The drink is then supposed to linger in order to savor the aftertaste. According to Boca Loca, Brazilians who drink it straight will often spill a few drops for the saints before imbibing. If that is not your style, then the caipirinha might be just what the doctor ordered. Similar to a mojito, the caipirinha is served over ice; made of cachaca, muddled limes and sugar.

Follrath has a tip for the burgeoning cachaca drinker learning to judge quality. Beware, it might cause you some discomfort.

"Be sure to request to taste the cachaca before you buy it. If you sense a burning sensation in your mouth or on the back of your throat, it is of poor quality."

WHERE TO FIND: Visit www.drinkbocaloca.com for drink recipes and a list of bars, restaurants and stores that carry Boca Loca Cachaca.

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