

Tales of the Cocktail: Top vodkas, rums make snug fit as stocking stuffers

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Dec 03 2010, New York — There's no better way to get into the holiday spirit than with a few sips of the holiday spirits rolled out during the annual "Tales of the Cocktail" gathering. The special vodkas, rums and other liquors introduced during the four-day summit of bartenders and mixologists -- which took place in July -- are the perfect stocking stuffer for the adult beverage aficionado. Among the more exceptional choices is 360 Vodka, pretty darn drinkable on its own and doubly yummy with its Double Chocolate brand. The very chocolately, clear vodka blends well or as a dessert cordial, over rocks, or accompanied by a cannoli.

Another good vodka is **Vermont Gold**, available at Borisal Liquor & Wine on Fourth Ave. in Brooklyn. The nice folks in the Green Mountain State take some of their maple sugar sap and triple distill it into an exceptionally clean vodka that offers the slightest hint of maple syrup when sipping. Vermont Gold will let you enjoy the taste of Vermont all year long without the cold weather. One last vodka to try is Medea, a reasonably priced premium vodka, available at Stew Leonard's Liquor Store and other venues. Medea's bottle has a miniature version of the Times Square Zipper on it and is user programmable to display up to 5-inch-high, 255-character scrolling messages on the bottle.

Those preferring rum need to get their hands on a bottle of Dos Maderas, maker of the world's only dual- and triple-aged rums. Dos Maderas, meaning "two woods" in Spanish, is a true sipping rum, on the rocks or straight up. The rums, "born" in Barbados and Guyana, are aged there for five years in old bourbon and whisky barrels. They then get some frequent flier miles, when they're shipped to Jerez, Spain, for additional aging in Sherry casks. The 5+3 spends three years in the sherry casks while the Dos Maderas PX rum sits for five years. Light wisps of the sherry come through as you sip and it's a noteworthy holiday treat for the naughty or nice at around \$40 a bottle.

Another option is Brugal, a well-priced Dominican rum produced for more than a 100 years by generations of the same family. From their Carta Dorada, aged for a year, to the Anejo Reserva, a blend of rums aged two to five years, Brugal is a perfect gift for a New York Rangers fan. The rum's logo is similar in shape, color and design to that of the hockey team and the rum tastes fine on ice.