

RECOGNITION TO REVENUE

The Case for Recognizing American Brandy and American Rum as
Distinctive Products of the United States

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We are not inventing a history. The history isn't missing. The recognition is.

WE ARE NOT INVENTING A HISTORY

American brandy and American rum have been here for centuries. They were part of American agriculture, trade, distilling, and drinking long before anyone thought about building a campaign around them.

The history isn't missing.

The recognition is.

In 1964, Congress recognized Bourbon whiskey as a distinctive product of the United States. Congress didn't invent Bourbon. It recognized what America had already created.

That is the idea behind AMBRu.

AMBRu has a long-term objective: recognition of American Brandy and American Rum as distinctive products of the United States. We believe they deserve the same conversation Bourbon received in 1964. That is why this paper exists.

A category that cannot be named cannot be defended, taught, or toured at scale.

TWO NAMES MATTER

Brandy is made around the world. So is rum. That shouldn't change.

AMBRu isn't trying to claim brandy or rum for America. We're interested in something much more specific:

- American Brandy.
- American Rum.

If those words are going to mean something, American has to mean something.

Not because they are new. Because they aren't.

AMBRu does not ask the public to prefer these spirits as a matter of taste. It asks the field to stop treating them as leftovers of other nations' classifications. Cognac, Calvados, rhum Agricole, and Bourbon became powerful because someone wrote the sentence that made substitution harder. American brandy and American rum still borrow other people's sentences.

The work is to write an American sentence strong enough that those other names are no longer the default.

If American Rum or American Brandy can be printed on flavored neutral spirit, the name is doing no work. Recognition is not a taste contest. It is a decision that the American words have to stand for the spirit, not for an imitation of one.

BOURBON SHOWED THE WAY

The Bourbon precedent matters.

In 1964, Congress recognized Bourbon as a distinctive American product and called for protection against imported whisky being labeled Bourbon. That was more than a nice statement about American heritage. It attached a place to a name.

Today, Bourbon is recognized around the world as American.

American brandy and rum should not copy Bourbon. But we can learn something from it:

Recognition matters. Origin matters. Names matter. And protecting an American name can matter economically.

AMBRu is not writing the production rules for that recognition in this paper. If American Brandy and American Rum are ever going to mean something legally, producers will have to help define what American guarantees. That work comes after the question is on the table — not before.

WHY THIS IS A NATIONAL QUESTION

This is not a regional branding exercise. American brandy and American rum were made across a continent: fruit districts, cane and molasses ports, farms, and working stills. A name that only works in one state is not a national product identity.

The public question is therefore national. What should the United States call these spirits. What should that name guarantee. How should producers, farms, and host communities share the value that follows from a name people can actually find.

Recognition to Revenue is the working name for that sequence: a clear American product identity, a producer network that can be discovered, and a trail that turns heritage into visitation for the places that still grow and distill it.

FIRST, WE HAVE TO AGREE ON WHAT WE MEAN

AMBRu is not declaring a new legal standard. We don't certify American Brandy or American Rum. And we're not going to write the rules for an entire industry from one desk.

If formal recognition is ever going to mean something, producers have to help define it.

What has to happen in America? What should American guarantee to the consumer? Where should the definition be strict? Where should American distillers remain free to innovate?

Those aren't small questions. They are exactly the questions we need to start asking.

Ask first. Agree next. Regulate last.

AND THEN: PUT IT ON A MAP

There is another problem. You can recognize a history and still leave it sitting on a shelf.

People need somewhere to go.

That is why AMBRu is also building the idea of an American Brandy & Rum Trail. Not one state. Not one company. Not one style of distilling. A national trail connecting producers and the places behind them.

Orchards. Vineyards. Farms. Cane country. Ports. Distilleries. Historic places. Small towns. Big cities.

American brandy and rum don't have one hometown. The history is already distributed. The map should be too.

The world's longest distillery trail is only worth building if it is longer than any one company's reach.

RECOGNITION TO REVENUE

This is where the title comes from.

Recognition → Discovery → Visitation → Economic Opportunity

Give people a name they understand. Give them producers to discover. Give them places to visit. And suddenly a spirits category can mean more than bottles on shelves.

Visitors eat. They stay overnight. They visit farms and historic sites. They shop. They discover another distillery down the road.

The history creates the reason to come. The community gets part of the benefit. That is how culture starts becoming infrastructure.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

The ambition is simple to say and difficult to accomplish:

- **American Brandy — a distinctive product of the United States.**
- **American Rum — a distinctive product of the United States.**

Getting there should not begin with Washington. It should begin with producers.

Build recognition. Build the network. Find where we agree. Find where we don't. Develop definitions that producers can actually stand behind. If real consensus emerges, take the next step toward formal federal recognition.

That may take years. That's fine. Bigger ideas usually do.

Later AMBRu working papers will take up the producer questions this paper refuses to settle in advance.

THIS CANNOT BELONG TO US

AMBRu may have started the conversation. It cannot own the answer. The campaign was founded to open this national question, not to settle it from one desk.

If American Brandy and American Rum are ever going to represent an industry, the industry has to build them.

Distillers need to argue about the definitions. Historians need to correct the history. Regulatory people need to tell us when an idea doesn't work. Farmers need a seat at the table. So do bartenders, retailers, tourism organizations, writers, and the people who actually buy the bottles.

Challenge the idea. Improve it. Join it. Or tell us where we're wrong.

Comments are welcome at ambru.org. This paper is an invitation, not a petition.

That's how this gets stronger.

THE QUESTION

In 1964, America recognized something it had already created.

More than sixty years later, perhaps it is time to look again at two of our oldest spirits traditions. Not to invent them. Not to rewrite them. To recognize them.

Should American Brandy and American Rum become distinctive products of the United States?

AMBRu is ready to start the conversation.

The test is not applause in a room. The test is whether the sentence survives the speaker.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Recognition to Revenue is the first AMBRu Working Paper. It states a national endeavor: to open a producer-led path toward recognition of American Brandy and American Rum as distinctive products of the United States, and to develop a producer-led American Brandy & Rum Trail so that recognition can be found on a map.

It is a starting point, not a regulatory proposal, certification, protected designation, or claim of industry consensus.

Caroline Porsiel is co-founder of the AMBRu Campaign and author of the Recognition to Revenue framework. The paper is published by the campaign for public comment.

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