

# The perfect blend: interview with Ron Carúpano's Master Blender

This is a special feature from *Global Travel Retail Magazine's* [2023 Summit of the Americas issue](#), on page 42.



Carmen López, Master Blender at Ron Carúpano

Located in the Macarapana Valley and off the coast of the Caribbean Sea, Destilería Carúpano benefits from what it calls an exceptional microclimate. This natural recipe for success, which depends on elements like humidity, salinity and high temperatures during the day and lower temperatures during the night, optimizes the aging process up to three times and enables air to penetrate the American white oak barrels used to increase the complexity of its rum.

Described as a pure and honest rum, with no added sugar or artificial flavors, Ron Carúpano's richness comes from its natural environment and aging process. Plus, the passion of its Master Blender Carmen López. Responsible for the continued legacy of the brand, López has helped to drive innovation, enhance product quality and position Ron Carúpano as a leading name in the prestige and prestige-plus categories in Venezuela. As the first female certified master blender in the country, López has also paved the way for other women to enter into – and make their mark on – the industry.

"I am proud to say that being a pioneer and becoming the first female blender 33 years ago has inspired other women in the field. My advice to them would be: don't be afraid to trust you are talented enough, to trust you are strong enough and to trust your sensibility," she says.



In 2020, the company revamped the look of its commercial portfolio to match the quality of its liquid

### **A divine transformation**

Leading up to the Summit, *Global Travel Retail Magazine* spoke with López, Global Marketing Director Lucia Alliegro and Sales and Marketing Coordinator Maria Luisa Sanchez to learn more about the award-winning brand and its presence in travel retail.

Discussing Ron Carúpano's mission to spearhead the elevation and premiumization of the rum category, the team says innovation is ingrained in the DNA of the brand. The aim is to show the world that rum can be as exclusive and as premium as whisky. In 2020, the company revamped the look of its commercial portfolio and launched its super premium Ron Carúpano 18. Alliegro says this move served as a turning point and the update ensured that Ron Carúpano's brand image matches the quality of its liquid.

Last year, in line with the portfolio revamp, the hero product of Ron Carúpano's Collector's line: Ron Carúpano Legendario experienced a "Divine Transformation." This transformation led to a new look and added value. The range also welcomed Ron Carúpano Reserve 1996, which is an evolution of its Ron Carúpano Zafra and a reliable starting point for those looking to dive into the world of prestige. In the second half of this year, enthusiasts can expect the look of Ron Carúpano X.O. to also change.

When asked how much the premiumization category trend played a role in the transformation of Ron Carúpano Legendario, Alliegro points out the recent general change of behavior among consumers also happened in Venezuela. With more criteria, knowledge and a tendency to self-indulge, consumers are in the know – and more demanding and better informed than ever. Central to Ron Carúpano's brand message: rum is a spirit that can be used for more than mixing, it is one worthy of sipping.

### **Women in power**

It is said that López's "feminine sensibility" helps to give Carúpano rums' a special touch. As a family-owned, artisanal business, Ron Carúpano's creative process, research and development and quality of work are rooted in sensory analysis and evaluation. To maintain the profile of its collection, López

says in addition to technical knowledge, her task as Master Blender requires that she trust her instincts and palate.

“Women have a different view on taste than men. Rum should be exquisite, beautiful and satisfying to the palate. I want my products to be mystical, magical and balanced. By lowering the tannic notes as time passes, rum becomes more feminine and seductive throughout the aging process,” she explains.

According to López, it is about having the capacity, the taste and the ultra-sensibility, as well as the dedication to know how to mix different types of rum with different aging vintages in order to create products that elevate every occasion of life. López’s personal mission is to continue to make people happy through her work because “rum unites people.”

“Ron Carúpano’s tasting journey has been a great achievement because I’m in love with what I make. Each rum that I have created I have done so with a lot of love and responsibility; I put in the passion the profession requires because loving what you do already makes it successful,” she adds.

López is also Head of the company’s Quality Department, which means she leads the team responsible for complying with International Organization of Standardisation (ISO) regulations. As shared on its site, ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization that brings together experts to develop voluntary, consensus-based and market relevant standards to support innovation.

## **Building brand recognition**

Providing update on its presence in travel retail, Ron Carúpano is using the channel to educate the consumer, draw attention to category premiumization and showcase its super premium range and Collector’s line: Ron Carúpano Legendario, Ron Carúpano X.O. and Ron Carúpano Reserve 1996.

Looking to build brand recognition, Ron Carúpano launched an endcap at JFK Airport Terminal 4 in December 2022 and plans to increase its attendance at trade shows throughout the year. The first stop: Summit of the Americas.