This is the story of the Bacardí family, their attitude, and their spirit.
IT’S THE STORY
OF HOW, BACK IN 1862, ONE MAN
HAD A VISION, and kept going until
HE MADE IT A REALITY.
It’s the story of how EACH GENERATION
followed their passion for rum
in a different way and turned
a SMALL CUBAN BUSINESS
into a WORLD-FAMOUS NAME, and a
FAMILY-MADE RUM into the
WORLD’S FAVOURITE RUM.
Don Facundo travelled from his birthplace of Sitges, Spain to work with his brothers in Santiago de Cuba. There he saved long and hard while working in their general store. Eventually in 1844, Don Facundo was able to establish a mercantile shop of his own.

Less than a decade later, disaster struck. In 1852, an earthquake tore through the city, wrecking churches and triggering landslides. The earthquake, aftershocks, and subsequent cholera outbreak claimed the lives of one in three inhabitants of Santiago de Cuba, including Don Facundo’s son Juan and daughter María.

Devastated, Don Facundo fled to Spain to keep his family safe. When he returned to Cuba, the store that he had saved so long to create was looted, and with economic conditions at rock bottom, he had no choice but to file for bankruptcy.

But for Don Facundo in this darkest of times, there was an opportunity. In the mid-19th century rum was viewed as nothing more than a cheap, sugary firewater, but Don Facundo knew it could be much, much more than this. With bankruptcy bringing a chance for a fresh start, there was nothing to stop him pursuing his passion.

He persevered, spending all of his time developing and distilling at home, never losing sight of what he instinctively felt rum could be.

And finally, in 1862, he was ready to unveil the drink that he had strived for. Don Facundo’s light-bodied, refined rum was the product of the secret recipe and rum-making process that he perfected over ten years.

And still today, every bottle of BACARDÍ comes from the original recipe.
So when Don Facundo Bacardí Massó had the idea for a light-bodied, refined rum, the task called for some creative thinking. Watching a friend making boiled sweets and brandy, Don Facundo figured that the same equipment could be put to a different purpose, and he started to experiment. There was no guidebook for working like this, and a lot of trial and error followed.

With the equipment eventually mastered, Don Facundo then set about improving every aspect of the production process: he tried local Cuban yeasts before settling on a particular strain, he tasted and tested until he found the best molasses for fermentation, and he bought American white oak barrels to rest his rum bases in.

Finally, he had the perfect combination of ingredients to make sure that every glass of BACARDÍ tasted the way it should. It took ten years, but by the time he’d finished, Don Facundo had a new standard for the entire rum industry.

Don Facundo Bacardí Massó’s wife, Doña Amalia, was well aware of the positive symbolism of bats. To Cuba’s extinct native people, the Taínos, bats were regarded as the possessors of all cultural goods. To the Spanish, they were thought to bring good health, fortune, and family unity.

More importantly, Doña Amalia was a woman ahead of her time. She had already worked out before anyone else that if her husband’s rum was going to reach a wider audience, it needed a strong visual identity. She was aware that a huge number of Cubans couldn’t read or write, but if they saw a logo they recognized they could still order their favorite drink. So from that point on – thanks to Doña Amalia – every barrel of BACARDÍ came stamped with the black outline of a bat burned into its head. Everyone – from all walks of Cuban society – could identify the sign and be safe in the knowledge that where they saw the bat, their rum was guaranteed pure and light-bodied, and could only be BACARDÍ. And it’s the same to this day – there’s still a bat on every bottle.
The tradition traces its roots to Don Facundo Bacardí Massó’s first distillery on Matadero Street. His 14-year-old son, Facundo Bacardí Moreau, planted the tree to commemorate the opening of the distillery, and the tree stood firm throughout the tumultuous decades that followed. While earthquakes, wars, and distillery fires broke out around it, the palm kept flowering, just as the men inside the plant kept on making BACARDÍ rum.

The local legend was that the Bacardí family’s company would survive in Cuba just as long as the palm – or ‘El Coco’ – outside it lived. This was the case until 1960 when Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces confiscated the company’s Cuban assets – the tree withered and died soon afterwards. Luckily, the local legend was just a story – even without the original tree, Bacardi kept going strong. But palm trees are still found on Bacardi company premises worldwide as a permanent reminder of where BACARDÍ rum comes from and how it all started.
Richard Drake – who had held several notable public positions in England – served under Sir Francis Drake and made this homebrew palatable by adding sugar, lime and mint to it until the taste was masked. The sailors named this concoction ‘El Draque’ and introduced it to Cuba in the 16th century.

Fast-forward to the 19th century and people started to think that there might be something worth saving from the old recipe. Nobody wanted to continue drinking like a desperate sailor, but the same ingredients – mixed with a very different, charcoal-filtered rum – could create something completely new. The hunch paid off and the mojito was born – some of the earliest surviving recipes for the cocktail list BACARDÍ as the crucial ingredient.

By 1930 and the prohibition era, the drink was in its heyday. For those travellers escaping America and prohibition, the mojito was the taste of liberation. It remains just as popular today, and all over the world the BACARDÍ mojito is the standard by which all other mojitos are judged.
THE STORY OF
EMILIO BACARDÍ’S
FIGHT FOR
CUBAN INDEPENDENCE

The Bacardí family history is rooted firmly in the fields and streets of Cuba. As the first member of the family born in the country (and Don Facundo’s eldest son), Emilio Bacardí Moreau was heavily involved in the battle for Cuban freedom.

Between 1868 and 1898, Cuba fought three liberation wars against their Spanish colonizers. In 1895, during the final war (The War of Independence), Emilio set up an independent trading company. He then used his role as a businessman to covertly raise funds while travelling, and to liaise between the revolution’s New York headquarters and the field commanders in the hills outside Santiago de Cuba.

This act of passing on communication was highly dangerous; had he been caught, Emilio would have been sentenced to death. However, occupying Spanish forces could never prove Emilio’s involvement so, in 1879, – unable to pass a death sentence – they threw him in prison instead.

Following a second arrest in 1896, Emilio was separated from his family, and exiled to prison in Spanish North Africa.
CUBA’S WARS OF INDEPENDENCE FINALLY ENDED IN AUGUST 1898. EMILIO BACARDÍ MOREAU RETURNED FROM PRISON TO FIND HIS HOMETOWN OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA DEVASTATED: UNEMPLOYMENT WAS RIFE, AND THE CITY’S INFRASTRUCTURE WAS ON THE BRINK OF TOTAL COLLAPSE. DESPITE THIS, THE BACARDI COMPANY HAD SURVIVED.

The chaos of the war years and his time in prison had done nothing to dent Emilio’s enthusiasm for politics, and both local people and the American military (who had fought alongside the Cubans) viewed him as having a cool head. So, at the end of the war, Brigadier General Leonard Wood appointed him Mayor of Santiago. The pair worked on everything from public education to street cleaning, in a campaign to get Santiago de Cuba rebuilt and working again.

The program proved so successful that, when elections were introduced in the country in 1901, Emilio became the first Cuban to be freely voted in by his fellow countrymen as Mayor of Santiago. He went on to become a senator in 1906, and devote the rest of his life to building everything from hospitals to public parks, for the people to enjoy. Throughout wars, prison, politics, and the family business, Emilio worked towards the same goal – that life was good, but could always be improved.
THE STORY OF THE CUBA LIBRE

SOME COCKTAILS ARE NAMED AFTER THE BARMAN WHO INVENTED THEM, OR THE HOTEL WHERE THEY WERE FIRST POURED. NOT MANY WERE INSPIRED BY A REVOLUTIONARY WAR CRY.

The War of Independence ended with Cuba finally liberated from Spain following America’s intervention in the conflict. At the end of the war, the Mambises soldiers from the Cuban Liberation Army were already drinking a rough mixture of water and brown sugar that they called the Cuba libre (free Cuba) after their liberation salute. But with independence – and the arrival of the U.S. Army Signal Corps – the drink got an upgrade. In 1900 an American soldier was drinking at The American Bar in Havana when he combined BACARDÍ rum with cola and a squeeze of a fresh lime. Raising his glass with a shout of “¡Por Cuba libre!” (“To a free Cuba!”), he was joined in his toast by others at the bar. With the improved taste the name stuck and this Cuban-American collaboration went on to become one of the most popular cocktails in the world. Not a bad legacy for a soldier’s call to arms.
In high summer, Cuba gets hot. Bad enough if you’re out in the open, still pretty draining if you’re in the shade. But even worse if you’re deep underground, digging in a mine.

In 1898, an American engineer called Jennings Stockton Cox was in the town of Daiquirí, overseeing the exploration for iron ore. The miners were already receiving a monthly ration of BACARDÍ rum to keep their spirits up after stints underground, but after experiencing the heat first-hand, Jennings fancied something even cooler. So one evening in the mines’ dining room, he set about mixing the local BACARDÍ rum with lime juice and sugar, and shaking vigorously over ice. The drink was a hit with the miners, and quickly spread elsewhere. You might not be digging underground in a Cuban summer, but when you’re feeling the heat it takes more than a beer to refresh you.
Selling the rum wasn’t an option, but destroying it was just wrong. It was Don Facundo’s son-in-law Enrique Schueg who came up with a solution. As boss of Bacardi, Schueg announced the sale of 60,000 shares in the BACARDÍ U.S. Bottling Company. Following this announcement the company was closed down with each shareholder given one case of rum per share by way of compensation. The new shareholders were happy, Schueg had spread the word about BACARDÍ, and not a drop had been wasted.
CHAPTER 11

THE STORY OF

PROHIBITION TOURISM

IF YOU WERE TRYING TO MAKE ALCOHOL IN AMERICA, PROHIBITION WAS CLEARLY TERRIBLE NEWS FOR BUSINESS. BUT IF YOU WERE MAKING RUM SOMEWHERE CLOSE BY – SOMEWHERE HOT, WITH BEAUTIFUL BEACHES, THE BEST NIGHTLIFE AND A PLANE DELIVERING YOU STRAIGHT FROM THE U.S.A. – IT SUDDENLY DIDN’T SEEM SO BAD.

Soon after Prohibition kicked in, tourists were heading to Cuba in vast numbers. An airline even ran advertisements telling customers to ‘Fly to Cuba and bathe in BACARDÍ rum’, while Havana was named ‘The unofficial United States saloon’ by Fortune Magazine. And when the Americans arrived, the bars were waiting. At El Edificio Bacardi new arrivals would often be greeted by ‘Pappy’ Valiente – a legendary salesman – who made sure guests tasted mojitos, daiquiris and Cuba Libres the way they were supposed to be made, in the bar’s authentic black and gold Art Deco surroundings. And in case the new arrivals had left anyone behind, the Bacardi company printed up a series of specially designed postcards that they could send home to show exactly what was so special about Cuba; and just what they were raising a glass to.
His epitaph in The New York Times summed him up: ‘One of the most popular men in Cuba.’
THE STORY OF

BACARDÍ AND MUSIC

THE BACARDÍ FAMILY ALWAYS KNEW THAT HOWEVER GOOD THEY MADE THEIR RUM TASTE, IT NEEDED TO BE ENJOYED IN THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE. AND IN CUBA, THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE FOR RELAXING USUALLY MEANT THAT MUSIC WAS PLAYING.

In the 1940s and '50s, this was delivered to the island’s homes and bars via the radio. And, knowing what their listeners liked, the CMQ station named a hugely popular program dedicated to the best new music of the day: The BACARDÍ Hour.

As the technology changed, Bacardi adapted. The company went on to support local musicians through TV talent shows, to create carnivals, and to eventually sign artists to its own record label. This was partly about celebrating where Bacardi had come from, but also about the fact that music and partying were inseparable in Cuba. Never more so than at Christmas, when the Bacardi-sponsored, island-wide dance program would take over the airwaves until 4am. As the dancers recovered and the commercial breaks started, the announcer would deliver a familiar refrain: ‘Head to the bar and ask for a Cuba Libre for yourself – and one for your companion!’

‘HEAD TO THE BAR AND ASK FOR A CUBA LIBRE FOR YOURSELF – AND ONE FOR YOUR COMPANION!’

More than 150 years later, the Bacardi company continues to be a patron of the arts, supporting emerging artists in music talent with a number of initiatives.
El Edificio was a major work of Art Deco design, the outside built from red granite and terracotta, the interior full of blue mirrors, polished brass, and elevator doors engraved with a golden rising sun. Surrounded by these fixtures and fittings the crowd could enjoy mojitos, daiquiris and Cuba Libres with people from all walks of Cuban society.

The building was one of the earliest skyscrapers in the city and still stands to this day. Bacardi itself might not be based there anymore, but the work of Cuban architecture that they gave to Havana still stands. And at the very top of its central tower, the BACARDÍ bat with outstretched wings still keeps watch over the city.
In 1910, Enrique Schueg – Don Facundo Bacardí Massó’s son-in-law, and the third president of the Bacardi Company – decided to expand Bacardi outside of its native country. This had never been done by a Cuban company before, and Schueg first opened a facility in Barcelona, then beat harsh US tariffs by setting up shop in the Heart of Manhattan.

In 1928, in their riskiest expansion, he sent his nephew-in-law Pepín Bacardí Fernández to Mexico to set up a new operation. The early days in Mexico were tough, and after two years Fernández had died from pneumonia and been replaced by Schueg’s son-in-law Pepín Bosch. Charged with closing down the underperforming Mexican operation, Bosch instead borrowed 100,000 pesos from the National City Bank of Mexico and in 1931 opened the company’s first distillery outside of Cuba. He invested his own money into a fleet of trucks to speed up the nationwide delivery process and employed Texcoco Indians to weave locally-popular wooden baskets around the glass rum bottles. Bosch’s faith, local knowledge and refusal to quit paid off, and within a year, 80,000 cases of Bacardi had been sold in Mexico.

Bosch went on to manage the company’s US operations and to open an additional distillery in Puerto Rico in 1936. These were undeniably turbulent years for the company, but through invention and expansion the family stuck to the task, creating Cuba’s first multinational company and ensuring that whatever the future held in Cuba, the company would carry on.
PEPIN BOSCH WAS DON FACUNDO’S GRANDSON-IN-LAW.

AFTER A DIFFICULT 1940S, CAUSED BY WORLD WAR II HITTING AMERICAN WHOLESALERS, BOSCH TURNED AROUND THE BACARDI COMPANY’S FORTUNES WHILE OVERSEEING OPERATIONS IN MEXICO.

THROUGHOUT THE 1950S, HE DOUBLED RUM SALES IN MEXICO, AND GREW THE COMPANY.

Then in 1960, Cuba’s revolutionary government seized control of all foreign-owned properties on the island. Even Bacardi, by this time an icon of Cuban patriotism, was targeted by the government. This was a huge shock to a company that was Cuban-owned, well run, organized, and philanthropic.

In total, 400 privately-held properties were confiscated without compensation.

The Bacardi Cuban assets were put in government hands; army officers headed to the Havana headquarters with an expropriation document to seize the company’s assets.

However, the building the army arrived at was actually just the sales office. The real office was on the other side of the country in Santiago de Cuba. This didn’t save the Bacardi company from being seized, but the mistake did give the BACARDÍ Master Blenders sufficient time to destroy the secret yeast strain used to make BACARDÍ rum. The family kept the recipe, but lost almost everything else – distilleries, breweries, offices, warehouses, ageing rum stocks, and even their family homes. All of their assets in Cuba were illegally confiscated without compensation by the Revolutionary government, and the family went into exile.

But Pepin Bosch came to the rescue. It turned out that back in the 1950s he had registered the BACARDÍ trademark outside of Cuba. So, having already opened up in other countries, Bacardi could legally continue to produce their rum worldwide. For thirty years these companies he had registered abroad were beyond the reach of the Cuban government, and could carry on making rum, until they were reunited into one company in the early 1990s. Foresight, planning – and a healthy dose of luck – all combined to make Pepin Bosch the company’s savior.
More than 150 years and eight generations later, Bacardi is still a family-owned business and is still making rum.

The project that Don Facundo BacardiMassó started in a small tin roof distillery in Santiago de Cuba has taken the ideas and passions of its founding family worldwide. But under current chairman Facundo L. Bacardi – the great-great grandson of founder Don Facundo Bacardi Massó – much remains the same: the signature strain of yeast is still in use; the family recipe is still a closely guarded secret; and the spirit which saw Bacardi through every challenge is still in every bottle of rum that it makes.

The Bacardi Legacy Lives On.