

Heritage Liqueurs: A royal treat!

The vibrant culture of Rajasthan is not only reflected by its majestic forts, palaces and sumptuous cuisines, but also brews. This haven of royal heritage and culture, boasts of several royal brews. The most famous among them is Royal Chandr Haas and Royal Kesar Kasturi - a gem from Marwar house of Rajasthan. Recently, **AK Singh**, Deputy General Manager, Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills Ltd. (RSGSM), has penned down a book on Heritage Liqueurs of Rajasthan 'Liqueur World-History & Making' in which he talks at length about the origin and properties of various brews besides other aspects of the liqueurs. **Toprit Saifi** exclusively interviewed **His Highness Maharaja Gaj Singh** and talked to Singh to know more about the prized possessions of Rajasthan.

Heritage liqueurs are a delightful experience and sipping a swig exclusively meant for royalty gives an additional high. The heritage liqueurs of Rajasthan include Chandr Hass, Kesar Kasturi, Jagmohan, Mawalin, Mehansar, Royal Elaichi, and Royal Saunf among others. These exotic tipples are prepared from ingredients like saffron, dry fruits, honey, spices, milk, and several herbs to name a few.

The spread of liqueur culture, and commercialisation started soon after 1924 when a modern state-of-the-art distillery was set up in the state of Jodhpur. "After independence, unified Rajasthan state came into existence and the excise policy of the state government was enforced. Alcoholic beverages being an important source of revenue for the state government, the government decided to set up a company to trade in spirits which are the basic input in the production of alcoholic beverages. This was the time when public sector was poised to rise, and thus Ganganagar Sugar Mills was formed which is now known as the Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills (RSGSM)," mentioned Singh in his book.

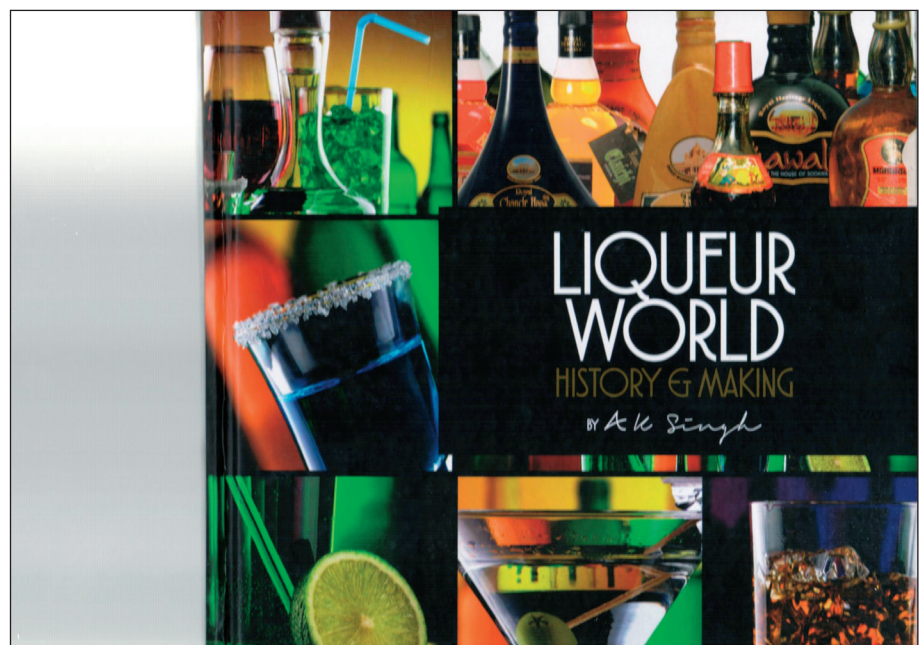
Trail of royalty

During the reign of royal families, three types of brews like Ikbara, Dobara and Asaav were prepared and segregated

according to the class system. While Ikbara liqueurs were meant for common men and Dobara for officers, and higher-middle class people, the Asaav was especially prepared for rulers, princes and royal families. Marwar, Mewar, Jodhpur, Kanota, Haroti, Bikaner and many such royal families had their own exclusive liqueur and the recipe was heavily guarded against imitation. The elixir was brewed in earthen pots, brass and copper utensils. However, these liqueurs were banned after

independence and the apparatus used for the production of brews were too seized when the principalities were abolished. The descendants preserved the recipe, thus keeping alive the traditional liqueurs.

Until 2006, the heritage liqueurs were a luxury of elite class, when Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills Ltd. started production of royal heritage liqueur. The company has eight brands of royal heritage liqueurs; Royal Kesar Kasturi, Royal Jagmohan, Royal Chandr Hass, Mawalin,



Royal Elaichi, Royal Rose, Royal Apple, Royal Orange and Royal Saunf. It is an acclaimed name in the production of heritage liqueur. So far, the production of royal heritage liqueurs has been carried out at Royal Heritage Liqueur Distillery with state-of-the-art technology and semi-automatic plant with R.O. plant for purification of water. For manufacturing the product, super-fine Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) were used for soaking spices in the copper utensils for 3-7 days depending upon requirement then it would be filtered and distilled. Moreover, to keep the unique flavour and method of preparation intact, the process of fermentation and distillation of the heritage liqueurs were kept similar to the process adopted by the rulers.

His Highness Maharaja Gaj Singh, the ruler of erstwhile princely state of Marwar, coined the term 'Heritage Liqueur' and has put in great efforts to preserve and revive the liqueur culture of Marwar. He was the first one to come up with the innovative concept of revival of heritage liqueurs. His Highness Maharaja Gaj Singh was so much fascinated by the liqueurs 'Kesar Kasturi' and 'Jag Mohan' which was made in erstwhile princely state of Rajasthan that he pursued the government to frame the rules so that these liqueurs could be brewed again.

Famous Liqueurs of Rajasthan

Royal Chandr Haas

It means 'Sword' which symbolises destruction of enemies. Royal Chandr Haas was first introduced in the year 1863 for the royal house of Jaipur by the prominent family of Kanota Thikana. Since 1863, the family of Kanota takes pride in contributing the century old tradition of royal liqueur following the original secret recipe with traditional distillation process.

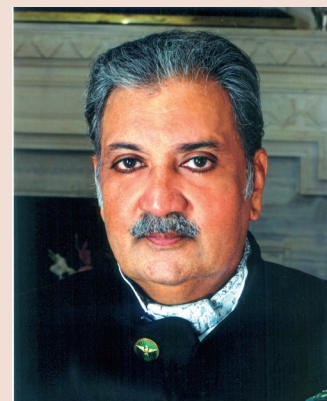
Royal Chandr Haas contains exotic and stimulating ingredients such as herbs, spices and dry fruits. Due to inherent medicinal properties it acts as a digestive, carminative and stimulant. Its aphrodisiac quality is talked about by the connoisseurs.

Royal Jagmohan

Royal Jagmohan is an exclusive recipe from the House of Marwar, Jodhpur. It used to be distilled in the royal cellars for the royal families. "It comes from Manmohan, another heritage liqueur which was prepared in the erstwhile state

You were the main force behind the revival of heritage liqueur. What made you float the idea? What were the challenges you faced? What are the opportunities you see for this genre?

During my tenure as Chairman Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation I had written to Chief Minister to preserve and promote heritage in totality whether Forts, Palaces, Traditions, Cuisine; all aspects of our rich culture. Heritage Liqueur was thereafter produced by Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills Ltd. as 'Royal Heritage Liqueur' based on old recipes of erstwhile princely states and landed gentry.



H.H. Maharaja Gaj Singh

What are your views on royal brews in other part of the world?

Just as in India, the royal brews across the world are equally rich, rooted in tradition and have their own unique flavour specific to the region and its heritage. In other parts of the world, liqueurs are made from herbs, spices, fruits, berries, flowers and eggs and emulsions. The liqueurs made from herbs and spices are generally used as digestifs. Benedictine and Chartreuse liqueurs are such examples. In India, royal liqueurs are made through distillation process, however in other parts of world liqueurs are made by maceration (i.e. steeping herbs/fruits/spices) in alcohol i.e. without distillation but there are others that are made through the process of distillation also. The liqueurs made by distillation are the best ones.

What is your favorite royal liqueur?

Kesar Kasturi

Please tell us about the origin of Kesar Kasturi.

Kesar Kasturi liqueur in Marwar was first produced commercially during times of my grandfather Late His Highness Maharaja Umaid Singh when first modern distillery was established in 1924 at Mandore.

Can you elaborate on the current process of fermentation and distillation of the heritage liqueurs and how does this compare to the processes used in earlier times?

In old times, fermentation of herbs and spices were done with jaggery (*Gur*) and distilled. Later on, jaggery (*Gur*), herbs and spices were added after distilling alcohol. These were then soaked in alcohol for 7 to 10 days and then distilled. Thus in old times, jaggery was used for making alcohol and alcoholic beverages (*Asavas*). But now, as alcohol is readily available, hence the ingredients are soaked in alcohol. In other words, now a day we are extracting the essential ingredients of herbs and spices by soaking in alcohol and this is the difference in fermentation process.

There is more awareness about singular brands from overseas market. What are your views about the promotion of heritage liqueurs?

Overseas people and connoisseurs are aware about heritage liqueur as most have been taken over by large corporations who spend a lot on marketing. Of course we can also leverage on our rich heritage of liqueurs and promote them across the world as our indigenous brand but this will require proper packaging, marketing and conformation to international standards.



of Kishangarh. HH Maharaja Umaid Singh improved the recipe of Manmohan and prepared the liqueur at Mandore Distillery for the royal family, to commemorate the victory in World War II. Later on in 1945-46, HH Maharaja Umaid Singh improved this recipe further and the alluring 'Jagmohan' came into existence. The RSGSM has introduced this unique liqueur to the delight of connoisseurs as one of the most authentic heritage liqueurs of Rajasthan," informed Singh. The main ingredients used are herbs, spices, dry fruits, seasonal fruits, malade (*murabba*) and barks which are finely blended with milk, butter oil (*desi ghee*), saffron and crystal sugar. Being a prominently herbal liqueur it has reputation of its own. Basically, Royal Jagmohan is for winter, but can be consumed on the rocks during the summer season in small quantity.

Royal Kesar Kasturi

Kesar Kasturi is prepared with high quality of herbs, spices and saffron. It was exclusively made in the royal cellars of Marwar, Jodhpur. Historically, it was prepared with a blend of *Kesar* (Saffron) with *Kasturi* (Musk) extracted from black deer. Now due to prohibition under the Wild Life Act, Kasturi is not used in the manufacturing process. Kesar Kasturi is made from exotic ingredients like high quality saffron, dry fruits, herbs, nuts, seeds, roots and spices with fine blending of *desi ghee* (butter oil), milk, crystal sugar etc. It is a very useful herbs based liqueur

consumed during the winter season. It can also be taken on the rocks in the summer season in small quantity.

Royal Saunf

The Royal Saunf liqueur belongs to Mehansar Thikana. The Mehansar family has been known for its heritage liqueurs for last three centuries (1770 AD). The heritage liqueurs manufactured by Mehansar family were used on all traditional occasions of the family and is based on aromatic exuberance of herbs, spices and fruits. Royal Saunf liqueur turns milky when water is added to it. This ethnic blend truly energizes and stimulates the digestive system.

Royal Elaichi

The Royal Elaichi liqueur originated from Sheopur Thikana of the then Jaipur State. Elaichi liqueur was a respected and sought after drink for special festivity and it was considered auspicious. Besides its heady fragrance, it offers exquisite taste that lingers on for a long time.

Royal Mawalim

Mawalim was developed by the aristocratic cellars of Sodawas, Jodhpur, in the year 1940. Mawalim is distilled from 42 ingredients. It was and is an ideal cure to common cold, cough, mild aches, pains and was also proclaimed as a good appetizer which worked wonders on the digestive systems.



Mehansar

The Mehansar family is known for heritage liqueur since 1770 AD. "The Mehansar family manufactures the traditional heritage liqueur, which is used on all traditional occasions of royal family. The Mehansar liqueur is based on aromatic patterns, fruits and herbal spices. The recipe of this exotic liqueur was promoted by Thakur Durjan Saal Singh of Mehansar, who belonged to the *Jagirdar* family of Mehansar situated in Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. Thakur Rajendra Singh belongs to the eighth generation of Mehansar family and owns the approved trade mark registered on the brand name of Maharaja Mehansar, Maharani Mehansar and Royal Mehansar," mentioned the book. Ancient method of manufacturing is that after due fermentation the material is distilled in a copper pot after this process the spirit is ready and then with the second distillation milk, honey, spices, herbs, flowers etc. are added in the content. Thakur Rajendra Singh has inherited a patrimony of different type of liqueur recipes used by the Mehansar royal family for the manufacturing of liqueur such as aniseed, mint, honey, coriander, orange, pear, lemon, grapes, apple milk, rose, cumin seed, saffron cardamom, clove, cinnamon, liqueurices, peppermint etc. The liqueurs use only natural ingredients and have a sharp sweet flavour. It may be pointed out that each recipe is a secret and has been handed down from generation to generation. 🍷