



industry icon

Diageo, one of the leading drinks businesses in the world, launched Rowson's Reserve in India last month. Christopher Armes, Technical Innovation Director, Diageo Asia Pacific, gave us a few details about the latest addition to their bouquet.

Interviewed by Nisha Samson

Images courtesy: Diageo

Slainte, India



Diageo has entered the Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) category with the launch of Rowson's Reserve. This whisky is a blend of reserve stocks of the finest aged Scotch whisky matured in American oak casks and blended with selected premium Indian whiskies to give the drink a rich, smooth finish.

With brands such as Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, J&B, Windsor, and many more, **Liquid** finds out what this whisky is about and, what it means for the ever-growing Indian market.

Christopher Armes has been associated with Diageo since 1982, and is currently responsible for Diageo Technical Innovation projects within the Asia-Pacific region. For almost 30 years now, he has been crafting alluring, unique blends for Diageo to

appeal to varied palates, which are appreciated all over the world.

Please elaborate on the concoction that resulted in Rowson's Reserve.

Rowson's Reserve is a blend of selected premium Indian whiskies and reserve stocks of the finest aged Scotch whisky matured in American oak casks.

It has a well-rounded and balanced flavour profile, with a lovely soft lingering aftertaste. The sensory descriptors are malt, oakwood, smokey, slightly peaty and complex in the background, with dried fruit notes.

We undertook a great deal of qualitative and quantitative research to understand the Indian consumer palate and preferences. Our blenders and technical experts met consumers across the country and conducted a detailed flavour

and taste mapping exercise. We then carefully analysed the results to determine the best possible mix. The multiple formulations created were again researched with consumers until we arrived at the perfect proposition. The final liquid for Rowson's Reserve was a hands-down-winner with consumers — a smooth liquid with a beautiful flavour.

Most launches are phased out. Please tell us where you will be launching this drink currently, and of course, expansion plans after that.

We are launching Rowson's Reserve in Maharashtra, Haryana,

ROWSON'S RESERVE HAS A WELL-ROUNDED FLAVOUR PROFILE .”

Punjab and Karnataka in the first phase. We will let you know when we launch nationally.

Please give us details regarding the positioning of this product.

Rowson's Reserve is positioned for the smooth and self-assured man – unruffled and completely sorted. This is a brand personality a consumer can identify with – free spirited, affable and smooth.



Rowson's Reserve delivers a balance of reassurance and credibility through the pack, product and proposition. Our research indicates that consumers prefer the liquid and packaging to the leading brand in this price tier.

Considering that the Indian beverage markets are teeming with new launches, please tell us how you perceive its reception.

Rowson's Reserve is one of the smoothest you will taste, and we are confident it will quickly become the choice of the new generation, reflecting their spirit of adventure and spontaneity. This superlative liquid comes in fantastic packaging that has an international look.

What can India expect out of Rowson's Reserve?

India can expect a smooth liquid with a beautiful flavour. I believe that Rowson's Reserve has a degree of complexity and a flavour profile that will be loved by Indian consumers. It is certainly a blend that I am proud of and am sure it will be a success in India.

Please give us details on other unique drinks you've developed so far.

Recent brands I have worked on are Shanghai White Vodka sold in Hong Kong and Smirnoff Green Apple RTD in Thailand. Whilst working in India, I was involved in the development of liquid and packaging of the complete IDV brands portfolio in India including Smirnoff, Archers Peach County Schnapps, Malibu, Kellys Cream Liqueur, Spey Royal Scotch Whisky, and the Gilbeys Whisky range.

Can you give us details on the research on Indian consumers' taste, please?

Given that we were entering a new

© ALEXANDER BATHS | DREAMSTHE.COM



segment, we undertook a robust programme of sensory research to identify the taste preferences of the Indian consumer prior to undertaking the liquid development. After this, we developed a number of liquids which were further validated through iterative and traditional quantitative consumer research.

Please elaborate on the difference between Indian palate and others across the world.

In many ways, the Indian palate has many similarities to those in other markets, in that a complex flavour profile which are well balanced and smooth are generally appreciated in whisky.

And finally, please tell us about your experience working in the Indian/Asia-Pacific market.

Working in the APAC market for me has been a marvellous experience since it has given me the opportunity to learn about different cultures and tastes, and helped me grow not only professionally but also personally. 🍷