

Next sip of India: Ochre Spirits doubles down on bold, regional blends

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In a market that is quickly embracing local innovation and premium experiences, Ochre Spirits is making an impact with its latest release: Mango Citron Rum. This new expression combines the vibrant tang of raw mango with bright citrus notes, capturing the essence of Indian flavours with a modern craft sensibility. In an exclusive interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, John Royerr, the founder of Ochre, discussed the inspiration behind the blend, the brand's unique approach to flavour innovation, and how Ochre is redefining what Indian spirits can be, one bold sip at a time.

What inspired the creation of Mango Citron Rum, and how did the idea of combining raw mango and citrus come about?

Mango Citron Rum was born out of nostalgia and demand in equal measure. We've always wanted our flavours to feel rooted, and the raw mango and citrus combination is something every Indian palate recognises instinctively. It's zesty, slightly tart, and incredibly refreshing. We wanted to bring that feeling into the glass but in a premium, clean, and sippable way.

You mentioned that this flavour was "requested repeatedly." Could you share more about the insights or trends that led to its development?

What stood out in conversations with our trade partners and early consumers was the consistent ask for something "more local, but still elevated." Raw mango was a top recurring flavour, not the sweet variety, but the bold, tangy note that stands up beautifully in a rum base.

Interestingly, this wasn't just anecdotal. Our team picked up on the rise of citrus-forward drinks in beach bars and mango-based cocktails across Goa and Maharashtra. Consumers were leaning toward bold, fruit-driven flavour profiles without the sugar overload. That's when we knew this blend wasn't just a creative instinct; it was what the market wanted.

With Mango Citron Rum being your second rum release, how is Ochre differentiating itself in the growing spiced and flavoured rum category, especially in the Indian market?

Our approach to rum and craft spirits in general is about pushing past the clichés. We focus on layered, bold, yet drinkable profiles that can be sipped neat, with soda, or mixed into cocktails with no sugary mixers required.

Mango Citron is a great example of that ethos. It's sharp, aromatic, and clean on the finish. It doesn't hide, it stands out because of how little we mess with it. That's our differentiator. We want our spirits to feel like a fresh take on the familiar profiles and not just an imitation of a Western trend.

Tell us more about the production process. How does Ochre balance flavour innovation with authenticity and quality, particularly when using real fruit extracts?

Flavour innovation is easy when you cut corners. It's much harder when you're using real ingredients and want a product that's both shelf-stable and consistent in every batch. For Mango Citron, we work with raw mango and citrus peels that are slowly macerated in the spirit – it's a time-intensive process that allows the oils and esters to release naturally.

We let the fruit lead the process, which means balancing acid, aroma, and tannin the way a chef might. Every bottle carries that commitment to integrity. That's how we keep things real, quite literally.

You're targeting Goa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka as key growth markets. What strategies are you deploying to engage consumers and build visibility in these regions?

These three states are incredibly dynamic, but each one behaves differently, so our strategy is built around precision, not scale for the sake of it. In Goa, the focus is on visibility through high-footfall, high-influence venues, beachside pop-ups, and bartender collaborations that put Ochre into people's hands in experiential ways.

In Maharashtra and Karnataka, we're prioritising premium retail and on-trade placements where consumers are actively exploring new-age, flavour-forward spirits. It's less about being everywhere and more about being in the right places, boutique wine shops, craft-led bars, and influencer-friendly outlets that cater to discovery-driven drinkers.

As the Indian craft spirits scene evolves, what role do you see Ochre playing in shaping consumer preferences and expanding the flavour-forward portfolio in the years ahead?

We see ourselves as both creators and challengers, pushing the envelope on what Indian consumers expect from a bottle. Ochre was never meant to be just a craft brand; it's a response to a new generation that wants quality without pretension.

As the category matures, we want to lead the flavour-forward movement not just with rum, but across vodka, gin, and eventually whisky and agave spirits. We're building a portfolio where each blend feels thoughtful, different, and deeply rooted in what modern India tastes like. If we can make a spirit that surprises you and still feels like home, then we've done our job.

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