

# The Balashi Cocktail

Portugal might have its fortified wine, and Scotland can boast its whisky. But while you're enjoying your stay in Aruba, make sure to order one of the island's own famous *Balashi Cocktails*. Not only will this be the most refreshing and purest cocktail that you've ever tried, but it will probably be the cheapest. Perhaps best of all, you can drink as many as you like and still drive home. But try not to be disappointed when your waiter brings you a glass of... tap water.

Don't be disheartened, as this is no ordinary tap water. It has come to your glass from the ocean which surrounds the island. Of course, natural sea water is undrinkable, and seamen have been cursed by this fact since the dawn of time. (Remember the famous line in the Rime of The Ancient Mariner "Water, Water Everywhere, Nor Any Drop To Drink"?) But in Aruba, they've been turning seawater into drinking water for decades, through the process of desalination.

Located in Balashi, the island's desalination plant is home to the impressive machinery which cleans and purifies the water surrounding the island to turn it into safe, clean drinking water. When it was first built, in the 1930's, the island's desalination plant was the largest in the world. While Aruba's plant has been updated recently, this 33-mile-long island in the middle of the Caribbean Sea remains one of the world's leading users of a technology called Reverse Osmosis, which cleans the minerals out of the sea water to make it safe to drink. What you are left with is only the purest water. Good, old fashioned H<sub>2</sub>O. With 100,000 individuals living permanently on the island, as well as the one million plus visitors who come to spend time here each year, the plant is now busier than ever and the facilities on the island can clean over 11 million gallons of water each day.

The tap water on Aruba has a reputation for being so safe and clean, that it has even earned the nickname of *The Champagne of The Caribbean*. This reputation is well-earned, and most travellers do away with their usual bottles of spring water, since the tap water in Aruba is cleaner and tastier than most bottled water.

If you would prefer something a little stronger than tap water, however, then just nearby to the desalination plant is the island's brewery, where the local Balashi Beer is made. This pale, European-style light beer is not only the perfect refreshment while you're beach side, but it also is created using the very water which is cleaned through the desalination process - so beer lovers will be treated to a truly unique experience.

So next time you're cooling down in the middle of the day, with a refreshing glass of Aruba's drinking water, or a bottle of the local brew, take a moment to think of all the marvellous technology and hard-working scientists who made it all possible. And if you're interested in finding out more, you can arrange a visit to the Balashi desalination plant and take part in a guided tour.

