

RICH IN FLAVOR, RICHLAND RUM SUCCEEDS IN GLOBAL MARKETS

In the small town of Richland, Georgia, a single-estate rum is making a name for itself across the globe with a little help from their friends: the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). What began as a private passion project for Dutch immigrants Karin and Erik Vonk can be found in the homes of rum-enthusiasts on three continents.

“For many years we were the only American-made, single-estate rum in the entire nation,” said Karin Vonk, co-owner of Richland Rum. “We don’t source any outside material to make our products.”

From field to bottle, Richland Rum is a Georgia-grown original. The sugarcane is grown and harvested on the Vonk’s farm, made into syrup, and distilled into a hand-crafted, aromatic sipping rum in restored buildings in downtown Richland and Brunswick. This premium product was named Best American Rum by Forbes in 2018.

As the Vonks’ reputation for quality grew beyond Georgia, so did interest from international buyers.

“The first couple of exports were for individuals from Holland and Denmark, who told us, ‘I don’t have an American rum in my portfolio,’” remembered Vonk.

With determination and support from others, Richland Rum has broken into markets as far as Japan, Germany, and even Puerto Rico, a region famous for its own rum.

“I know it sounds like carrying sand to the beach,” Vonk laughed, “but we went there to promote it and sold it to them.”

With new opportunities come new complexities – and GDEcD’s Trade team knows how to approach a challenge. The Vonks have felt that even if they don’t know what they need, the Trade team knows what to look for. This expertise has proven helpful when they’re looking at a new market, and the Trade team helped the Vonks avoid costly missteps.

“Their assistance helped us explore the possibility of entering Canada before realizing it wasn’t the right fit,” said Vonk. “The research and assistance [provided by the Trade team] saved us time and money that could have been lost.”

Looking ahead in late 2024, the Vonks focused on expansion.

“It’s been a good ride overall, and we want to keep growing,” shared Vonk. The small family business is selling to buyers in various states and countries, with its eyes on long-term growth in distribution nationwide and abroad.

Considering expanding your international sales? GDEcD’s Trade team provides services ranging from market reports and competitor analysis to best practices and in-market connections. Learn more at **[Georgia.org/trade](https://georgia.org/trade)**.



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The Georgia Department of Economic Development’s nationally recognized Trade team works with Georgia-based small businesses like American Dakota to expand their global sales, making companies more resilient and creating opportunities for growth. The Trade team’s services, ranging from market research to international connections, are provided at no cost to eligible Georgia businesses. **To learn more or connect with one of our trade team members, visit georgia.org/trade.**

