

AUGUST 2026

LUXE BEAT

Hôtel Swexan
DALLAS

Salsa, Sea and
Sewing Machines

Venetian Vibes,
RHODE ISLAND
Roots

Le Relais
50



*Netto Bar Founder Ernesto Koster.
Photo By Michael J. Solender*

GREEN WITH ENVY: **Why Netto Bar Is Curaçao's Most Legendary Neighborhood Watering Hole**

by Michael J. Solender

In Otrabanda, the island's most famous watering hole has served its signature Rom Berde to everyone from soccer icon Pelé to Netherlands Queen Beatrix.

It's my second evening in Curaçao, and my local host suggests we make a pre-dinner stop at a tiny neighborhood bar for a cocktail.

One of the Dutch Caribbean's ABC Islands alongside Aruba and Bonaire, Curaçao is a colorful, character-driven Caribbean Isle with plenty of arty, epicurean and cultural diversions beyond the crystalline waters off its shores. I'm staying in downtown Willemstad, smack on the beach and close to the Otrobanda ("the other side") neighborhood, where bright murals spill across coral-stone building facades and sculpture-filled courtyards abound.

We were off to Netto Bar. Established in 1954, Netto is the oldest bar in Curaçao and one of the oldest in all the Caribbean. The tiny dive bar is a local hangout festooned with netted soccer balls hanging from the ceiling, cracked tile floors, a few tables, and walls covered in photos featuring celebrities past and present — including soccer legend Pelé, former Netherlands Queen Beatrix, and many members of Curaçao's World Cup team, the Blue Wave.

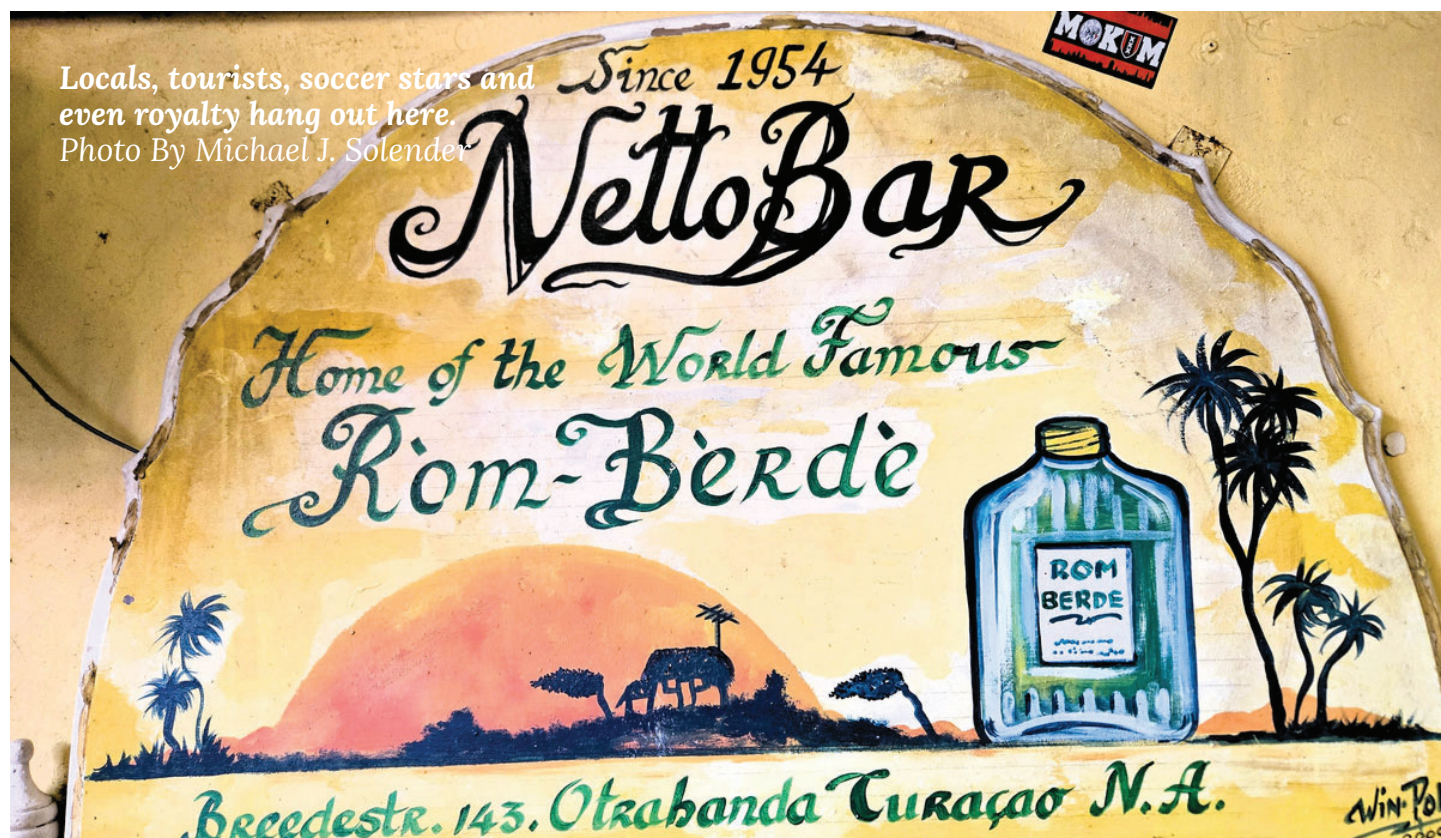
Rom Berde

Their reason for haunting Netto Bar? The same as ours: the fabled Rom Berde, or Green Rum.

The in-house spirit is legendary and traces its roots back to the bar's founders, Ernesto "Netto" Koster and Jesus "Chu" Zimmerman.

No Blue Curaçao for these guys — their Rom Berde packs a punch with anise and several secret botanicals that lend the emerald hue to their potent brew.

We arrived by tuk-tuk — a three-wheeled, souped-up love child between a golf cart and a motorcycle — that is somehow street legal in this island nation. Despite running in fits and starts, lurching upon acceleration, and known for inspiring both terror and joy in their riders, these motorized beasts are quite popular in Willemstad, Curaçao's capital city.



Otrabanda Cocktail with Green Rum is a signature drink at Netto Bar.

Photo By Michael J. Solender

“Bon Bini to Netto Bar,” said Jamal Graham, the barkeep on duty that evening, welcoming us in Papiamentu, the local dialect. “A Rom Berde for you?”

My friends and I, sporting fresh sunburns, were outed as tourists — though in a very friendly way. Before I could even say yes, Graham was already pouring taster shots for me and my crew. Only a handful of patrons were milling around that evening, most enjoying an after-work beer or cocktail. Soccer memorabilia, flags, ticket stubs, and photos lined the walls while a tiny fan behind the massive bar fought a losing battle with the sticky tropical air.

Graham explained that virtually every newcomer to the bar enjoyed an inaugural shot of Rom Berde — both an initiation into an exclusive club and an official local welcome to Curaçao.

“It’s very popular both straight and in one of our signature cocktails,” he said.

Tastes of licorice, herbs and... medicine

Licorice was the first flavor that hit me, followed by a slightly medicinal herbal note and finally the punch of sugarcane-distilled rum. Certainly unique, and apparently an acquired taste.

Graham came to my rescue with an Otrabanda Cocktail: green rum, pineapple juice, kiwi syrup and peach nectar. A bit sweet, yet delightful — and very, very green.

“Why is Netto Bar so popular?” I asked Graham.

It’s the vibe.

— Jamal Graham

The barkeep on duty at Netto Bar

”

Rom Berde.

Photo By Michael J. Solender



“It’s a comfortable place, everyone knows everyone else, we have good music” — Jimmy Cliff was jamming ska in the background — “”

and we have a history of more than 75 years behind us.

— Jamal Graham

The barkeep on duty at Netto Bar

Though Netto passed in 2002, Chu remains a fixture at the bar, often pouring drinks and slinging stories himself.

Graham told me he’s known as a very colorful character.

“He still makes the Green Rum,” said Graham. “We sell it here at \$9, \$16, and \$30 depending on the bottle size.”

As I nursed my green cocktail, I looked around and soaked in the atmosphere.

Imagining 75-plus years of patrons, I raised my glass to them. Smiling to myself, I knew I was now part of the legacy.



Barkeep Jamal will fix you a Green Rum Cocktail.

Photo By Michael J. Solender



Arrive to Netto Bar in Style
in a TukTuk.
Photo By Michael J. Solender



[CURACAO.COM/
EN/ACTIVITY/NETTO-BAR](https://curacao.com/en/activity/netto-bar)



Netto Bar.
Photo By Michael J. Solender