



Grapevine

June 2014

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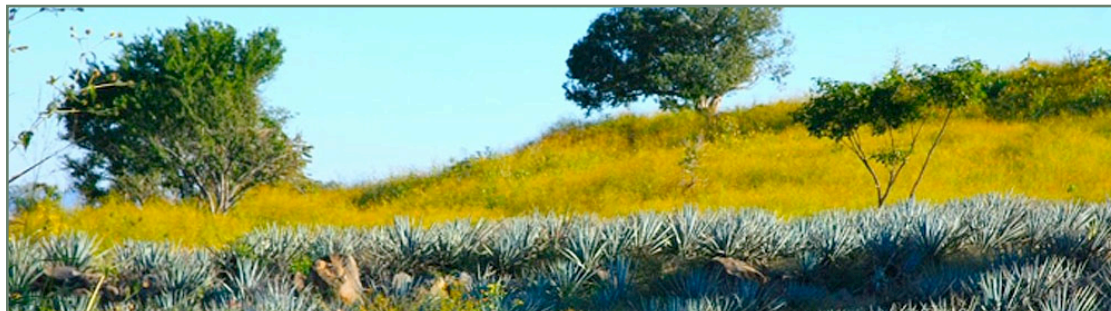
Just in Time for Summer: The Spirit of Tequila

Tequila — known for being suitable only for those with an iron constitution, if consumed straight, or as part of a lime-kissed, salt rimmed margarita or gorgeous Tequila Sunrise — is a bit of a mystery.

Named after a small town of the same name in Jalisco, Mexico, Tequila evolved from Mezcal, another alcoholic beverage made from agave — or *maguey*, as the plant is also called. Mezcal, though, is made from a different type of agave — actually many types — has a smoky taste due to how it's cooked and may include the ubiquitous worm. Mezcal fans like to say that all Tequila is Mezcal, but not all Mezcal is Tequila. Both are made by distilling the fermented juice of agave plants, but the types of agave used, the process to make them and the regulations imposed on Tequila set them apart markedly.

The agave plant provides more than a beverage. Its leaves are harvested for fiber to produce clothing, rope and paper; the heart or *piña*, so called because it resembles a pineapple, is used for the spirit. Think of peeling off the artichoke leaves to get to the sacred heart. Whereas Mezcal can use up to thirty different varieties of agave, rules for producing Tequila are much more stringent and the type of agave used is strictly limited to *blue agave*.

In 1978, the **Appellation of Origin Tequila** officially established its international protection, declaring that the spirit must be produced in the Tequila appellation and must follow official standards. Tequila that is made only from blue agave must say on the label 100% Agave and can come only from a designated territory of Mexico. This



The Blue Agave plant growing in the Mexican state of Jalisco, part of the official Tequila territory.

appellation consists of close to 27 million acres, with 180 municipalities in five states: Jalisco, Nayarit, Guanajuato, Michoacan and Tamaulipas.

If the label says simply *Tequila*, it is a *Tequila Mixto* — Tequila mixed with other ingredients — and must contain 51% blue agave, with the other 49% made up of other sugars. Additional ingredients in Mixtos may include caramel coloring, oak extract flavoring, glycerin and sugar-based syrup. Further, as of 2006, Mixto Tequila can now be bottled outside of the Tequila territory, including other countries — a leniency not permitted for the pure spirit.

After harvesting, the piñas for pure agave and Mixto Tequila are cut into quarters and slowly baked in steam ovens until all of the starch has been converted to sugar; after, they are shredded and squeezed to extract the juice. From here, the juice for pure agave is fermented; Mixtos are blended with other ingredients and then fermented. Both 100% Agave and Mixtos are divided into five varieties, based on the process used to make them.

Tequila Silver, also called *Blanco*, is blue agave in its purest form. Clear in color and usually not aged,

the plant's natural sweetness is retained. It can be bottled after distillation or settled in steel tanks for up to 4 weeks. *Patron 100% Agave* \$47.49, *Don Julio Reserva 100% Agave* \$43.99 and *Milagro 100% Agave* \$22.79.

Tequila Gold is typically a Mixto, with added flavorings and colors to achieve its beautiful golden hue. Sometimes, though, a Gold Tequila is the outcome of blending a Silver with a Reposado and/or Añejo. *Jose Cuervo Tequila Gold Especial* \$17.99 to \$35.99 in varying sizes.

Tequila Reposado, also known as *rested and aged*, is aged in oak barrels for two to eleven months, taking on a golden hue and absorbing some of the oak flavor. *Milagro 100% Agave* \$27.49 and *Herradura 100% Agave* \$42.99.

Tequila Añejo, also referred to as extra-aged, undergoes aging for at least one year in barrels that do not exceed 600 liters, absorbing more of the barrel's properties and resulting in a dark amber color and smooth, rich, complex taste. *Patron 100% Agave* \$57.99, *Cabo Wabo 100% Agave* \$46.99 and *Avion 100% Agave* \$59.49.

Tequila Extra Añejo, also called ultra-aged, is aged for more than

three years. Made according to the same process as Añejo, the Tequila takes on a dark Mahogany color, and is so rich that it resembles other aged spirits. After the aging process, the alcohol content must be diluted by adding distilled water.

There's nothing like a famous actor or song to ramp up the fan base for a spirit or cocktail. In the 1940s, Bing Crosby, an ardent Herradura Tequila fan, teamed with another actor to import his preferred brand into the US. And Jimmy Buffet crooning *Margaritaville* in the late 1970s surely helped to cement the American penchant for the Mexican spirit. Father's Day is the perfect opportunity to give your favorite Dad an unforgettable gift. Stop in for our two Tequila tastings this month (see p 2). *Cheers* to chilling out over a sizzling Summer! ♦

Incredible Savings!
15% off all Wine —
Every Bottle,
Every Day!!!

Did you know...

The Blue Agave plant's spiky leaves can spread 7 feet wide, with its central core or *piña*, weighing up to 265 pounds.

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Fri 6/6: Burger Wines: A spectrum of whites and lighter reds that can handle the summer heat.

Sat 6/7, 6/21 & 6/28: New Arrivals: We'll pour a stellar line-up of our latest, greatest discoveries.

Fri 6/13: Staff Picks & Don Julio Tequila: June Staff Picks and cocktails made with Don Julio Tequila.

Sat 6/14: Wines for Father's Day: We'll pour a selection of great wine gifts for your favorite Dad.

Fri 6/20: Unheralded, Unrated Gems: Spectacular wines not rated by the experts — wines we love and think you will, too!

Fri 6/27: California Dreamin' & Cuervo Tequila: Wines from California and cocktails made with Jose Cuervo Tequila.

Fri 7/4: Sangria for the 4th of July! We'll feature red and white sangrias to help make your July 4th celebration a hit.

News & Our Latest Goings-on

Tasting Cheese and Tasting Wine — More than a Little in Common...

Last month, Sheila and a few of her staff had the pleasure of attending a cheese tasting at *The Cheese Traveler* in Albany. Much like how grapes are grown and made into wine, how cheese tastes is a result of the type of milk it's made from, diet, the cultures it's made with and how it is aged. FYI, sheep's milk cheese is the highest in butterfat.

Like wine tasting, cheese tasting requires multiple senses and focus so that you fully experience the aromas, taste and texture. As Joe says, *no drinking without thinking*. Cheese, too, requires attentive tasting. They tasted cow, goat and sheep, some of them raw, and then featured a few of them at a wine tasting in May. Searching for a party idea? Pick up some cheese from The Cheese Traveler and some wine from Wine & Spirits of Slingerlands and call a few friends for an evening to delight the senses. We hope to see you soon.

Classic Margarita

2 oz Milagro Silver 100% Agave
1 oz Cointreau
1 oz lime juice



Shake well with cracked ice and strain into a chilled glass that has had its rim rubbed with lime juice and dipped in coarse salt.

Agave Smash

2 oz Patrón 100% Agave Anejo
¾ oz lemon
½ oz Grand Marnier
5 mint leaves
¾ oz agave nectar
mint leaf and lemon wheel



Muddle lemon and mint leaves in a cocktail shaker. Add remaining ingredients and ice. Shake vigorously and pour into a glass filled with crushed ice. Garnish with a mint leaf and a lemon wheel.

1/4 cup reduced-fat sour cream
2 Tbsp fresh lime juice
Coarse salt and ground pepper
1/4 small red cabbage, thinly shredded (2 1/2 cups)
4 scallions, thinly sliced (1/2 cup)
1 jalapeno chile, halved lengthwise, one half minced
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 lb tilapia fillets (or other firm white fish), cut into 16 strips
8 flour tortillas (6-inch)
1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves



Fish Tacos

Adapted from *Martha Stewart Living*

STEP 1 In a large bowl, combine sour cream and lime juice; season with salt and pepper. Transfer half the mixture to another container; set aside for serving. Toss cabbage, scallions, and minced jalapeno with remaining sour-cream mixture. Season again with salt and pepper.

STEP 2 In a large nonstick skillet, heat oil and remaining jalapeno half over medium-high heat; swirl to coat bottom of pan. Season fish on both sides with salt and pepper. In two batches (starting with larger pieces), cook fish until golden brown on all sides, 5 to 6 minutes. Discard jalapeno.

STEP 3 Warm tortillas according to package instructions.

STEP 4 To make tacos, fill tortillas with slaw, fish, and fresh cilantro leaves. Drizzle with reserved sour-cream mixture. Serve immediately.

SUGGESTED PAIRING A refreshing Margarita (see left), of course! And if you are a devoted wine fan, consider an unoaked, bright, tropical Chardonnay like the *2012 Joel Gott*, Sheila's June wine pick.

June 2014 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2012 Joel Gott Unoaked Chardonnay (California) \$12.99 (reg \$14.99) Aromatics of melon, papaya, and red apple with notes of spicy vanilla and honeysuckle. Clean and bright acidity make it a perfect partner to fish tacos.

Ted: 2012 Domaine de Fontaine Corbières (Languedoc, France) \$11.99 (reg \$13.99) Fruit, spice and garrigue from herbs growing on surrounding limestone hills make this medium-bodied Red a natural for grilled leg of lamb.

Joe: 2011 Los Vascos Grande Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Chile) \$15.39 (reg \$17.99) Made by the Rothschild Family, this 100% Cab is well balanced with intense dark fruit aromas. Pair with grilled pork tenderloin and portabellas.

Bill: 2010 Valley of the Moon Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) Lush black fruit aromas with subtle notes of cedar, cassis, black pepper, black tea and herbal flavors. Enjoy with a grilled Delmonico steak.

Graham: 2013 Chateau de Bonhoste Bordeaux Blanc (Bordeaux) \$10.19 (reg \$11.99) Blended from Muscadelle, Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, it is light and crisp with balanced fruit flavors. Pair with crab cakes and a Caesar salad.

Damian: 2012 La Crema Pinot Noir (Monterey) \$14.49 (reg \$16.99) Pomegranate and blackberry are highlighted by notes of anise and mocha with well-integrated acidity. Pair with grilled salmon spiked with Dijon and capers.