



Restaurant Magazine

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Mexican marvels

Tequila's bad boy image is gradually changing, thanks to an array of quality liquids that offer elegance and complexity

Tequila still carries with it an enormous amount of baggage - remnants of wild nights, mornings in the gutter, lost weekends, of carnage and chaos and carnal excess. Not even bourbon has a bad boy image like tequila. How does the rhyme go? "One tequila, two tequila, three tequila, floor." It has a fearsome reputation as the harbinger of a hangover from hell.

It's a reputation that wasn't entirely undeserved. In the past, tequila has been so eye-watering and wine-inducing that it required a method of consumption all of its own: shot fast with salt and lime to mask its taste.

But quietly tequila has grown up,

embracing a new age of premium quality and refined taste. Production methods have improved and an array of luxury brands are now available.

When made well, tequila is one of the few spirits that can reflect its terroir - the micro-climate and environment in which its raw material - blue agave - is grown. Tequilas from Tequila Valley in Jalisco, for example, are more savoury, punchy affairs, while those from the Highlands are characterised by elegant, fruity notes.

Always go for 100 per cent blue agave tequilas - as these will offer nuances and complexities rather than power and burn.

Tequila is my top tip for the future.
Paul Wootton

Jose Cuervo Reserva de la Familia

Diageo GB

Launched in 1995 to celebrate Cuervo's 200th anniversary, Reserva de la Familia is a refined, complex blend of 13 tequilas, some of which are 25 years old. An exceptional dark spirit.

Best for: Cigar-matching

Herradura Reposado

Coe Vintners

Classic Reposado and long-time favourite of bartenders, Herradura offers rich, fruity, spicy notes that stand up well, even when mixed long.

Best for: Fabulous margaritas

Gran Patron Platinum

Cellar Trends

Arguably the finest example of a silver tequila, this triple-distilled tequila, which offers plenty of fresh agave character, is so smooth it should be sipped and savoured rather than mixed.

Best for: Proving that silver is sexy

Ocho Reposado

InSpirit Brands

Recently-launched by tequila expert and owner of the Café Pacifico restaurants Tomas Estes, Ocho is unique in that it offers a 'tequila vintage', detailing the year of production and the exact fields from which its agave has been harvested.

Best for: Keeping up with the latest trends

Sauza Hornitos Reposado

Beam Global UK

This reposado, from one of the biggest names in tequila, is rested in large oak vats rather than small barrels, and the more limited contact with wood results in a livelier, more herbal agave flavour.

Best for: Long, mixed drinks

Partida Elegante

InSpirit Brands

This ultra-premium Extra Añejo is produced in one of Mexico's most modern distilleries from agave grown on Partida's own estates. Refined, highly regarded and pricey.

Best for: Connoisseurs with cash

Cazadores Reposado

Bacardi Brown-Forman Brands

The only tequila, as far as I know, that's fermented to the music of Mozart. But its wonderfully sweet, floral expression is likely to be the result of its secondary fermentation and careful distillation rather than the Mozart effect.

Best for: All-round drinking: neat or in cocktails

Don Julio Añejo

Diageo GB

Full-bodied, complex Añejo with plenty of vanilla, honey, butterscotch and toffee notes. Aged for a minimum of one year in oak barrels and supremely smooth.

Best for: Wowing the doubters



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The True Spirit of Tequila
www.partidatequila.com

