

Avery Cardoza's Player

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MAMBO TO THE BAR

A TASTING TOUR OF CUBA, MEXICO, PERU AND BRAZIL

BY DALE DEGROFF



MEXICO

Many years ago I was introduced to tequila by a friend who produced a tall brown bottle... and tequila aficionados know what brand I am referring to—the original Sauza Conmemorativo. This was 1978, well before anyone had heard the words “100% blue agave.” We consumed the bottle slowly over many hours with food, and there was no hangover!

In those days, the typical tequila was consumed straight. You just held your nose and threw shots back. I mean, way back—so you missed all the taste buds and the palate with this rotgut. Not so with the new tequilas on the market today. They are priced with fine malt scotches and sipped the same way in tasting glasses. The days of lime, salt and a slug of tequila are numbered. You don't want to mask the flavor and the sensation of the mouth with today's readily available 100% blue agave artisan-produced tequilas.

Tequila is a heritage product of Mexico and protected by appellation of origin in a mutual agreement between the European Community and the Mexican States that designates place of origin for great wines and spirits like champagne, cognac, malt scotch and tequila, to name a few. This is an agreement that, sadly, the United States is not a signatory to; we still bottle and alter bulk tequila that's shipped by tanker to this country and make sparkling wine and label it champagne! When you purchase tequila, look for the words *Hecho en Mexico* to be sure that you are purchasing the real thing.

Within Mexico, the agave from which tequila is produced is protected by type and place grown. The procedures of production are closely regulated by the Consejo Regulador del Tequila (CRT). These protections, like those on our own heritage spirit, bourbon (protected by Congress in 1964), guarantee that agave-based spirits will continue to be produced to the highest standard.

RUBY PARTIDA

1 ½ ounces Partida Reposado Tequila

1 ½ ounce ruby grapefruit juice

½ ounce Cointreau

½ ounce fresh lemon juice

½ ounce French Cassis

Preparation: Assemble the first four ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice and shake well. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass and dribble the cassis down through the drink. Serve with a stirrer on the side.