



WINE ENTHUSIAST[®]

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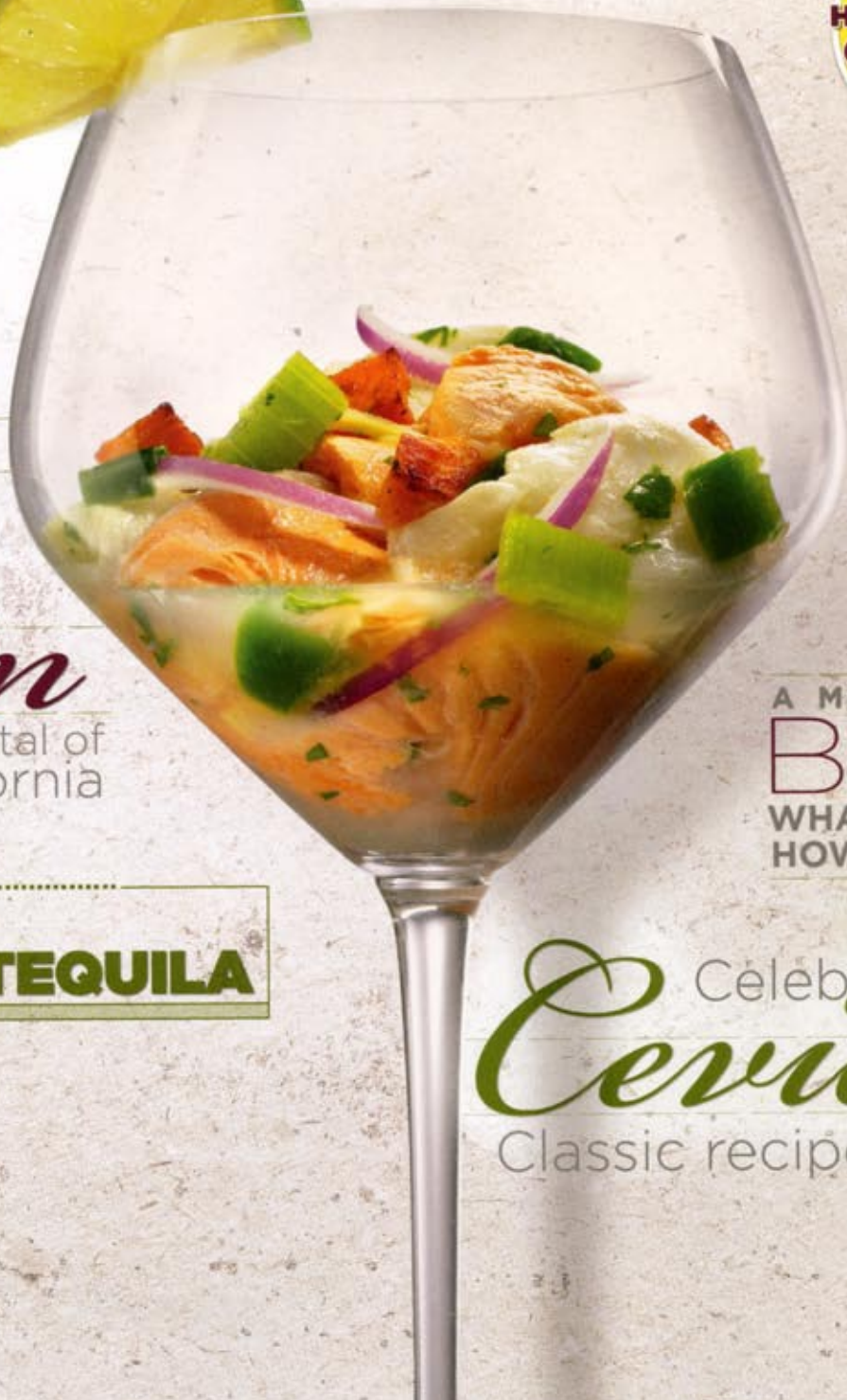


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YOU'LL LOVE
GRÜNER VELTLINER

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HOW TO
MIX THE
**HALF-COCKED
COCKTAIL**
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WINES
UNDER
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The *Zin*
Capital of California

AMERICAN
BEER
WHAT TO DRINK &
HOW TO DRINK IT

**A GUIDE TO
TOURING TEQUILA**

Celebrate
Ceviche
Classic recipes inside



WineMag.com

taking
on

Tequila

Discover the dynamic
culture and spirit of
Mexico on Jalisco's
storied trail.

BY MIKE DESIMONE AND JEFF JENSSEN
PHOTOS BY JOHN HUBA

Long ago, in a place far, far away from Spring Break, beachfront resorts and frozen blender drinks, there lived a goddess named Mayahuel, who loved a half-man, half-god named Quetzlcoatl. Their love was forbidden by Mayahuel's grandmother, the goddess of darkness, who plucked the stars from the night sky and gave them the task of hunting down the lovers, killing Quetzalcoatl, and bringing her granddaughter home. In the heat of battle, Mayahuel was accidentally killed, and it is said that from the drops of her blood mingled with her lover's tears the first agave plant sprouted.

And from agave springs Tequila. Rich in myth and in history, Tequila is also as contemporary as any other major player in cocktail culture, in this sense: depending on the style, Tequilas can be sipped like a fine Cognac, or lend their assertive peppery-vegetal heat to cocktails.

And there is magic in Tequila, both the drink and the region. Wine lovers know the thrill, the enchantment, of enjoying wine within sight of where the grapes grow. But you can enjoy Burgundy in Burgundy and Chianti in Chianti, while for the Tequila geek there is only one pilgrimage to make: Jalisco, the state in central-western Mexico where 95% of agave is grown and the spirit Tequila is produced. Visiting there recently, our Tequila dreams came to life, seeing the sea of blue-green fronds—low palm tree-like succulents hugging the mineral-rich red earth.



The Partida family owns and operates the Tres Mujeres distillery and this rustic Tequila storefront in El Arenal.

TEQUILA

Tres
Mujeres

100% AGAVE

100% NATURAL

TEQUILA Tres Mujeres

DEPARTAMENTO
DE GUERRERO

100% DE AGAVE
100% NATURAL

TEQUILA Tres Mujeres

Pinguinos

TEQUILA
Tres
Mujeres



The history and tradition of Tequila figures strongly throughout this fertile region, and whether you traverse it by car, train or even hot-air balloon, you cannot help but return home with a newfound respect for the legendary spirit and your passion for it renewed.

The Tequila Trail, whose towns and distilleries have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a three-hour drive west from the bustling coastal resort, Puerto Vallarta, and winds its way through the lowlands region. The trail connects the Tequila-producing towns of El Arenal, Amatitan, Tequila, Magdalena and Teuchitlan. The vivid aquamarine of abundant fields of agave is rivaled by the cool blue of the area's lakes, and the landscape's prominent feature is the Tequila Volcano, closest to the town of Tequila. Its last eruption was over 200,000 years ago, but it made its mark on the terrain by depositing rich volcanic soil ideal for the cultivation of agave. The trail offers a variety of experiences for the Tequila lover, whether touring larger, internationally recognized distilleries or popping into small artisanal *fabricas* where family members personally pour their coveted product.

With a myriad of dining, hotel, distillery and sightseeing options, Jalisco offers travelers a world-class opportunity to savor Tequila in its native environment. The history of Tequila is deeply ingrained in the history of Mexico, and there is much national pride in the spirit.

The most famous town within the region is, not surprisingly, the town of Tequila. It is only a short drive from Puerto Vallarta and the Jalisco state capital, Guadalajara, but if sampling the local beverage will be the main point of your visit, it is best to plan an overnight stay here. The town of Tequila is notable for the National

Tequila Continued on page 53



Top to bottom: inside the Tequila bottling facility at the Cazadores Distillery in Arandas; colorful graffiti in the city of Tequila; Edith Fonseca Ramirez inspects a fresh delivery of agave at the Cazadores Distillery.



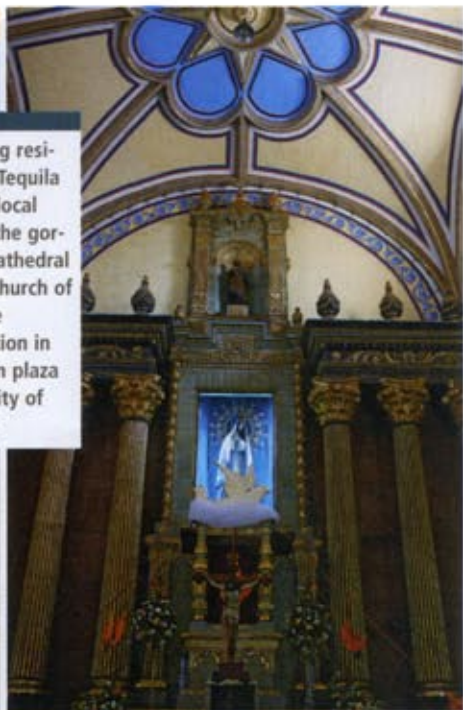


Clockwise from top: cycling the charming streets of the city of Tequila; Don Jose Daniel tests his Tequila in small batches at the family-run Don Valente distillery in El Arenal; a mariachi trumpeter warms up his pipes; enjoying a cool treat at the Hotel Casa Dulce Maria in Tequila.





A smiling resident of Tequila exudes local charm; the gorgeous cathedral of the Church of the Pure Conception in the main plaza of the city of Tequila.



In Arandas, a worker strolls the blue-green sea of agave; the Don Valente Distillery's colorful delivery truck in El Arenal; a collection of wooden casks inside the Museum of Tequila.



TALKING TEQUILA



When shopping for Tequila, look for "100% blue agave" on the label. If you don't find that assurance, it is a **mixto**, with as little as 51% blue agave Tequila. It might be okay for mixing in fruit juices and liqueurs, but for quality, crowd-pleasing, headache-free cocktails, stick with the 100% blue agave

bottlings.

In the true blue 100% category, these are the types: **Blanco and Silver** Tequilas are either unaged or aged for two months in oak barrels or stainless steel; bracing, peppery and vegetal spirits, can be sipped but best for cocktails. The best **Gold** Tequilas are blends of Blan-

cos and aged Tequilas; they will have a slightly rounder profile and faint caramel notes. Lesser Golds are mere blends of Blancos and coloring. **Reposado** (rested) Tequilas have been aged for no less than two months but no more than a year in oak barrels. Again, can reward sipping neat but still deluxe

cocktail-worthy. **Anejo** (aged) Tequilas have been aged in oak barrels for a minimum of one year but less than three years. Definitely sipping Tequilas, with the oak-driven flavors minimizing the nervy-vegetal flavors of the younger spirits. **Extra Anejo** are aged a minimum of three years in oak.

Tequila *Continued from page 48*

DISTILLERIES ON & NEAR THE TEQUILA TRAIL

Check out these diverse distilleries on your tasting adventure—the best the region has to offer.

Cazadores Distillery, Arandas

Located in the highlands town of Arandas, the red mineral-rich soil of the Los Altos de Jalisco imparts a unique flavor to one of the best-selling brands of premium Tequila in Mexico. Take a tour of the impressive fermentation and distillation areas and visit the large barrel aging room before sitting down to a tasting in the visitor's center. You will have the pleasure of enjoying silver, reposado and añejo Tequilas from Cazadores as well as all three from their super-premium Corzo brand. cazadores.com and corzo.com

Hacienda Del Patron

On the road to Arandas, very much in the planning stages (and therefore not receiving visitors) is the site of Patron's future visitors center and tasting room, near the nine (and soon 10) small-batch distilleries where this popular spirit is crafted. patronspirits.com

Destileria la Alborada, Tequila

Five blocks from the main square in Tequila, the Alvarez-Borges family has been making quality Tequila for 15 years. English-language tours may be led by the owner, Edgardo. granjubileo.com

Don Valente Distillery, El Arenal

A fine example of a family-run distillery, where father and son Don Jose Daniel and Jorge Jauregui make small-batch Tequilas. Located on the Tequila Trail, this distillery bakes their pinas in old-style brick ovens. tequiladonvalente.com

Fabrica de Tequila la Cofradia, Tequila

This distillery plus boutique hotel offers themed suites, a museum and a restaurant, all on the hacienda grounds. tequilacofradia.com.mx

Mundo Cuervo, Tequila

Directly on the town square, make sure to visit Cuervo's exhibition room, tasting bar and gift shop. Tours in English, twice daily, at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. mundocuervo.com.mx

Tequila Herradura, Amatitan

Producing delicious, highly regarded Tequila since 1870, Casa Herradura is most easily reached by the Tequila Express Train. herradura.com.mx

Tequila Sauza, Tequila

Centrally located in Tequila, this well-known brand has a long and impressive history: Don Cenobio Sauza started distilling agave 130 years ago and was the first to export Tequila to the United States. sauzatequila.com

Tequila Tres Mujeres, Amatitan

Owned and run by the Partida family, with over one million agave plants, "Three Ladies" distillery offers lauded Tequila and family pedigree.

tresmujerestequila.com

Museum of Tequila and its monument to the goddess Mayahuel. Its main plaza is anchored at one end by the imposing Church of the Pure Conception, and the equally imposing Cuervo World visitor's center, at the other. Distilleries and Tequila bars surround stalls selling local crafts in the center of the plaza.

For a more urban environment, the nerve center of Jalisco is Guadalajara, a sprawling colonial city dominated by wide tree-lined avenues. Its architecture is a blend of Spanish and French, and several historical mansions on Avenida Vallarta have been converted into luxurious restaurants. Dinner choices abound, from high-end, progressive Mexican to a roster of international cuisines. While globespanning wine lists tend to lean towards Spain, Mexico, Chile and Argentina, comprehensive Tequila menus are by nature a purely local affair. Guadalajara's central historic district includes a pedestrian zone dotted with open plazas, fountains and sculpture. The Metropolitan Cathedral draws many worshippers and visitors every day, and the Government Palace, with its murals by Jalisco native Jose Clemente Orozco, is one of the area's most visited sites. Guadalajara sits between the "lowlands" and the "highlands" of D.O. Tequila, and it is convenient to the Tequila Trail and the beachfront resorts of Puerto Vallarta.

Although nearby Tlaquepaque may seem to be a neighborhood of Guadalajara, it is technically a city unto itself. Characterized by low-lying adobe buildings, cobblestone streets and strolling mariachi musicians, it is famous for pottery and blown glass. Whether you are on the lookout for souvenir shot glasses, Day of the Dead articles, heavy wooden furniture or fine art, you will find it here. Inviting garden restaurants serving traditional Mexican food hide behind whitewashed stone walls, and your pleasant stroll from shop to shop will be accompanied by the vibrant sound of horns, guitar and violin.

Whatever the level of expertise or interest, D.O. Tequila is a fascinating sidetrip for discerning, Mexico-bound cocktail and spirits fans. Shedding new light on the culture, cuisine and history of Jalisco, it's an exciting way to embrace the connoisseurship of this fast-growing gem. **M**



FOR TEQUILA REGION RESTAURANTS, LODGINGS, TASTING NOTES AND MORE, GO TO winemag.com/tequilatrail

THE ORIGINAL MARGARITA

& THE LEGEND OF MARGARITA SAMES



The original margarita was invented by socialite Margaret "Margarita" Sames in 1948. According to legend, it was during a party at her cliffside hacienda in Acapulco that Margarita began experimenting with what she then called "the drink". Looking for something to cut the dust of the hot afternoon, she mixed tequila, Cointreau, and fresh lime juice. Her cocktail kept the party going for two weeks. To this day, Margarita Sames says a Margarita without Cointreau is not worth its salt!

TODAY THE MARGARITA IS THE #1 COCKTAIL IN THE UNITED STATES.



The Original Margarita

1 oz. Cointreau

2 oz. Tequila

Fresh Lime Juice

Visit www.cointreau.com to see Dita Von Teese re-enact the creation of Margarita Sames' original cocktail.