

TEQUILA
&
MEZCAL

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

TEQUILA
&
MEZCAL

KOBE DESMET & ISABEL BOONS

FOREWORD	8
A BIT OF HISTORY	
MEZCAL AND TEQUILA... ¿¡QUÉ?!	10
INEXTRICABLY CONNECTED TO	
MEXICAN CULTURE	16
REGULATIONS FOR TEQUILA	32
DECLARATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE APPELLATION OF ORIGIN (DOT) FOR TEQUILA	34
NORMA OFICIAL MEXICANA (NOM)	36
REGULATIONS FOR MEZCAL	42
DOMINATION OF ORIGIN (DO)	42
NORMA OFICIAL MEXICANA (NOM)	43
CONSEJO MEXICANA REGULADOR DE LA CALIDAD DEL MEZCAL	47
REGULATIONS IN 2016: UPCOMING CHANGES	48
AGAVE AKA MAGUEY	52
BLUE AGAVE (TEQUILA)	55
AGAVE ESPADÍN (MEZCAL)	56
AGAVE TOBOLA (MEZCAL)	56
AGAVE TEPEZTATE (MEZCAL)	57
AGAVE CUIXE (MEZCAL)	57
AVAVE ARRAQUEÑO (MEZCAL)	58
TEQUILA	59
PRODUCTION PROCESS OF TEQUILA	60
TYPES OF TEQUILA	70
UNAGED	71
- Plata - silver - blanco - white	71
- Joven - oro - gold - abocado	71
AGED	72
- Reposado	73
- Añejo	73
- Extra añejo	73
TEQUILA BRANDS	75

MEZCAL	120
PRODUCTION PROCESS OF MEZCAL	121
TYPES OF MEZCAL	130
FROM JOVEN, REPOSADO, AÑEJO TO INDUSTRIAL, ARTISINAL AND TRADITIONAL	130
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE WORM?!	134
MEZCAL BRANDS	136
OTHER AGAVE SPIRITS	152
BACANORA	152
RAICILLA	153
SOTOL	154
OTHERS	154
PULQUE	155
HOW TO DRINK MEZCAL AND TEQUILA	156
PURE	157
LIME, ORANGE AND SALT: THE MEXICAN WAY	158
WITH SANGRITA	159
AS A COCKTAIL	162
AS A LONG DRINK	164
25 SURPRISING COCKTAILS	167
SPICE IT UP!	218
FOOD & TEQUILA	218
FOOD & MEZCAL	219
16 MUST-VISIT BARS	232
GLOSSARY	248
INDEX	252
PUBLICATION DETAILS	256

FOREWORD

‘Every sip immerses
you in a bath
of authenticity
and respect
for the craft.’

Haven't we all experienced a tequila moment, one of those memorable evenings doing shots with friends? A bottle of tequila, shot glasses, lemon, salt, and off we go. Fun, pure fun, until we feel the blow... Suddenly, we feel sick and the last couple of hours of that memorable evening are nothing more than a faded memory. And that's without mentioning the hangover we wake up with the next morning. Never again!

But this book will quickly dispel all the misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinterpretations about tequila and replace that 'never again' with 'had I only known that before...' Moreover, this book is a tribute to GOOD tequila and GOOD mezcal, made from 100% agave. Because mezcal, like tequila, is ready to conquer the world. Both spirits are distilled from the

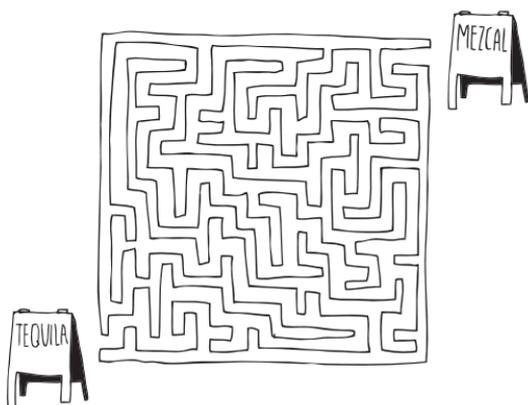
piñas, the heart of the agave plant, and thus do not originate from the cactus; the first misunderstanding that we want to dispel. For centuries, the agave plant has maintained divine status. We will consider that divine status, because without agave there would be no mezcal or tequila. Both spirits are made with a gift from the gods and their history is nothing less than majestic. First, we will take you back to the time of the Aztecs, and look for a spot under the Mexican sun, a mezcal or tequila in hand, while a mariachio band plays in the background. Then we will return to the order of the day and immerse ourselves in the regulations governing the production methods of both spirits. No other spirits in the world have such a deep-rooted tradition as mezcal and tequila. Every sip immerses you in a bath of authenticity and respect for the craft. We will, of course, also take a moment to consider the different types of tequila and describe about 25 tequila brands. We will also discuss mezcal, but because this smoked spirit is commercially still in its infancy, we will limit our description to five easily available brands. Naturally, we'll tell you the best way to drink both spirits and with which dishes to combine them.

We will wrap up our tour with several signature cocktails concocted by legendary bartenders and enthusiastic spirit-lovers before ordering our final round – we are not referring to shots – in several must-visit bars. After reading this book, you will surely give tequila and mezcal a second chance. We are also convinced you will say goodbye to doing shots; after all, mezcal and tequila deserve far more respect!

Kobe Desmet and Isabel Boons

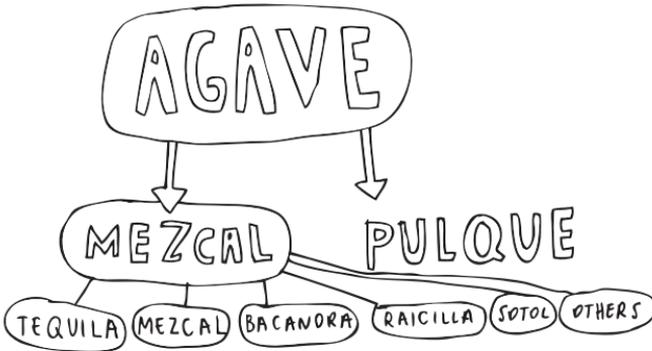
MEZCAL AND TEQUILA... ¿QUÉ?!

Before we take you along to fascinating Mexico and its mesmerizing culture, inextricably connected to mezcal and tequila, we'll take a slight detour to have a closer look at both spirits. The history of mezcal and tequila are actually so closely tied that a layman has difficulty distinguishing between them. And believe me, we too – as writers – have had to find our way through the mezcal-tequila maze. But once we found the exit, both worlds turn out to be just as interesting and mysterious. Although the differences between mezcal and tequila seem to be minimal, the bottles contain a world of differences. Those who are already familiar with these two brothers can simply begin with a tour of Mexican history. To those who have some patience and are still convinced that tequila is made from cactus juice, we definitely advise reading further, so that from now on you will never confuse mezcal with tequila or vice versa. Except perhaps once you have tasted one too many, after we have initiated you into various tasting techniques, but that's for later... a lot later.



FROM A TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mezcal is a generic term for any alcoholic drink – such as tequila, mezcal, bacanora, raicilla, sotol and more – that is distilled from the juice of the agave plant (in Mexico usually called maguey). In other words, tequila is a mezcal. Indeed, you’re reading it loud and clear, but perhaps now you’re totally confused. Just give us some time; think of mezcal as the supra spirit that governs all agave distillates while tequila and other less-known agave spirits (see: other agave spirits) are part of the mezcal family. Don’t get us wrong, mezcal is not necessarily better than tequila... just different. Pulque is also made from the agave juice, but this light alcoholic drink is not distilled, only fermented. More about this later...

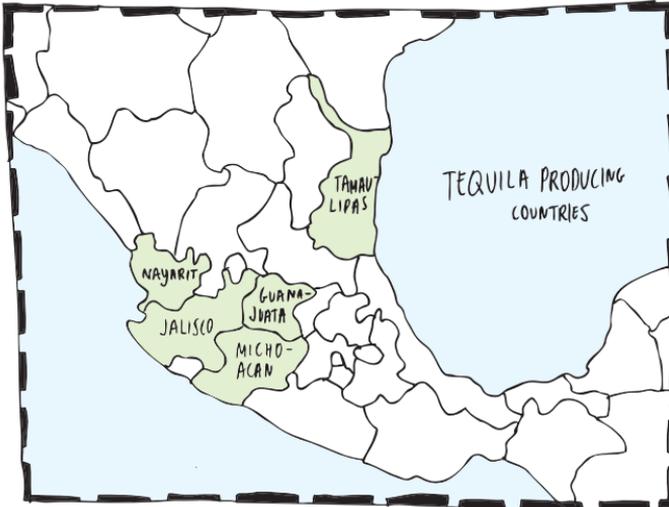


MEZCAL VERSUS TEQUILA

The easiest way to draw the difference between the two spirits is by comparing them to one another. These are the four most notable differences:

- 1 Mezcal and tequila are made in different areas of Mexico, although they occasionally overlap. According to the Appellation of Origin (see: Declaration for the Protection of the Appellation of Origin “Tequila” (DOT), page 34), both spirits may be made only in Mexico but they are produced in different Mexican states.

- **Mezcal:** Oaxaca, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas and Michoacán.
- **Tequila:** Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Nayarit and Tamaulipas.



As you can see, Michoacán, Guanajuato and Tamaulipas are allowed to produce both mezcal and tequila. In other words, those states produce lots of good spirits!

- 2 Mezcal is made from thirty types of agave, while tequila is only distilled from the *Agave tequilana Weber, var. azul*, also known as blue agave.
- 3 Mezcal and tequila have different production processes, which undeniably determine the flavour of the final product. To produce tequila, the heart of the agave, a.k.a. the *piña*, is cooked in an autoclave, known in Spanish as a *horno de mampostería*, usually under high pressure. The traditional method of cooking the *piñas* in a pit in the ground, a *palenque*, is hardly used anymore. However, when producing mezcal, the *piñas* are still cooked in the *palenque*. This ensures that the *piñas* are smoked out and caramelised. The result is that most mezcals have a smoky flavour, while tequila does not. However, we must mention that several tequila producers, such as Los Tres Toños, use the same traditional production method as mezcal to reach that smoky flavour. Mezcal and tequila don't just differ in how the agave is cooked; extracting the juice is also different. While mezcal producers still use traditional tools, such as the millstone (*tahona*) to grind the *piñas*, tequila producers are increasingly switching to mechanic grinding.
- 4 Mezcal must always have an alcohol content of between 36% and 55%; tequila—an alcohol content of between 35% and 55%.



7 LEGUAS

TOWN • ATOTONILCO EL ALTO
STATE • JALISCO (LOS ALTOS)

Master distiller:
Arturo Valle-Salcedo



Casa Siete Leguas is located in the town of Atotonilco El Alto in Jalisco and has over 50 years' experience in producing tequila based on traditional processes. 7 Leguas owes its name to the horse of Pancho Villa, who played an important role in the Mexican Revolution. Although Pancho Villa had many enemies, he also had many followers. One of his greatest admirers was Ignacio González Vargas, who named his tequila after the general's horse.



hornos de mampostería



molina



double/copper
*triple/stainless steel



• blanco



38%



/



**



\$

• reposado

38%

white oak

**

\$

• añejo

38%

white oak

**

\$\$\$

• extra añejo

38%

white oak

*

\$\$\$\$





30-30

TOWN • CAPILLA DE GUADALUPE
STATE • JALISCO (LOS ALTOS)

Master distiller:
Sixto Vera García



30-30 honours the Winchester 30-30 rifle that was known in Mexico as the *treinta-treinta* (Spanish for 30-30). This rifle has been around since 1895 and played a major role during the Mexican Revolution. It was also the favourite rifle of Pancho Villa.



autoclave



molina



double/stainless steel



• blanco



38%



/





\$

• reposado

38%

American oak

\$

• añejo

38%

American oak

\$\$



TRADE MARK

IMPORTADO

TEQUILA
30-30[®]

100% PURO DE AGAVE
RESERVA ESPECIAL



NOM 1068 CRT



BLANCO

40% vol. 70 cl. e

40% vol. 70 cl. e



ARETTE

TOWN • TEQUILA
STATE • JALISCO (VALLEY)



Master distiller:
Eduardo Orendain

Arette was the name of the famous horse that won the gold medal for Equestrian Jumping at the London Olympic Games in 1948. Just like Arette, the Orendain brothers invested passion and strength in making their tequila. The EL LLANO distillery is located in the heart of the magical town of Tequila and is one of the oldest in the region. Arette tequila is made with spring water that comes from the Tequila volcano.



autoclave



molina



double/stainless steel



• blanco



38%



/





\$

• reposado

38%

American oak

\$

• añejo

38%

American oak

\$\$

• artesanal blanco suave

38%

/

\$\$

• artesanal reposado suave

38%

American oak

\$\$

• artesanal añejo suave

38%

American oak

\$\$\$

ARETTE GRAN CLASE:

• extra añejo

43%

American oak

\$\$\$\$\$



TEQUILA



ARETTE

100% de Agave

Blanco



NET. CONT. 70cl

Produce and Bottled in
Tequila, Jalisco,
Mexico

38% Alc. Vol.



ECHO



25 SURPRISING COCKTAILS

Nowadays, mezcal and tequila are popular ingredients in the bartender's glass. For a long time now, tequila has been used in various cocktails, but we are witnessing a clear trend towards the use of 100% agave tequila. In other words, tequila is no longer hidden in the glass, but plays a prominent role. In the world of bars, tequila is treated with much awe and respect and that is noticeable: as a substitute for gin or whiskey in classic drinks, as a surprising star in trendy newcomers or as an infusion with various spices and fruits, which never loses sight of the flavour of the fresh agave. Mezcal, on the other hand, is relatively new in the bar scene, although the smoky, more rustic mezcal is considered the mother of all spirits. The unique umami flavour is the missing link that mixologists and bartenders were looking for. Mezcal brings the flavour of various cocktails to unprecedented levels: not only does mezcal give every cocktail a smoky flavour, it also gives it style and swag. We asked several prominent bartenders and enthusiastic spirit lovers to mix us their signature cocktail with tequila or mezcal. The results are surprising and prove the respect with which these spirits are treated. The brands used in the recipes below are suggestions, but definitely not a must.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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