

# Tequila Time

**Frozen or Neat:  
Tequila Enjoys  
Fashionable  
Resurgence**



**COCKTAIL CLASSIC**  
**Tequila Sunrise**

*courtesy geniuskitchen.com*

- 2 ounces tequila
- 4 ounces orange juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce grenadine

Salt the rim of glass and fill with cracked ice. Pour in tequila and orange juice. Slowly pour in grenadine and allow it to settle to the bottom of the glass before serving. Do not stir. Garnish with orange slice and cherry if desired.

Written by Bill Burke

It's been more than six decades since The Champs recorded "Tequila" – the infectious Latin rock flavored, saxophone-driven ear worm that set Pee Wee Herman dancing, made an appearance in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and was recently featured in the film, "Baby Driver."

Like the song's enduring pop culture presence, the spirit itself has remained popular, and is even enjoying a renaissance among enthusiasts. Sales of tequila have risen 121 percent since 2002, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, and just last year, Diageo acquired Casamigos — the tequila brand owned by actor George Clooney and his business partner Rande Gerber — for \$1 billion. Not bad for a humble spirit born in the arid, rich soil of western Mexico.

## Good tequila can – and should – be sipped like a fine whiskey: slowly and thoughtfully, savoring the flavors and enjoying the experience.

With its profile on the rise and its appeal reaching new audiences, tequila is ready for its time in the spotlight. The early spring festivities associated with Cinco de Mayo, which commemorates the Mexican Army's victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862, is a natural pairing for tequila. In the United States, Cinco de Mayo has evolved into what is essentially a celebration of Mexican music, culture and food. And while it may be associated with celebrations (it fills that role well), tequila can also be a serious, complex spirit worthy of examination.

While there's nothing wrong with a shot of tequila, it's not always necessary to drink it quickly with salt and a wedge of lime or disguise it with sweet mixers. Good tequila can — and should — be sipped like a fine whiskey: slowly and thoughtfully, savoring the flavors and enjoying the experience.

Experts often recommend 'warming up' with a sip and then letting it sit in your mouth. Rolling it in your glass will release a wide array of aromas, and when tasting, look for sweet agave, floral and herbal flavors as well as any

number of secondary, subtle flavors. It's said that the highlands of Jalisco have a distinct soil and growing landscape, which may impart different flavors than tequila produced in the lowlands of the region.

Like Cognac or Champagne, tequila can only be made in a specific region — the state of Jalisco in western Mexico, the home of Mariachi music and this nation's signature spirit. The region's rich, volcanic soil lends itself perfectly to growing blue agave. It's from

this thorny plant that tequila begins its life. Workers, known as jimadors, use long-handled knives (coa) to remove the long, spiky, barbed leaves, exposing the heart of the plant — the pina.

The agave pinas are cooked in traditional brick ovens or stainless steel autoclaves. Once, cooked, they are crushed and ground to release and extract the juice, which is then fermented and distilled. The tequila is then aged to the preferred state and bottled. There

## How to Tequila

When whipping up a tequila-based cocktail, many people will opt for the popular, refreshing margarita. Using blanco tequila will give your margarita a vegetal flavor, while using reposado will impart a smooth smokiness.

### Margarita

*courtesy serious eats.com*

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 2 ounces tequila               | 2 heaping tablespoons superfine sugar                |
| ¼ cup kosher salt              | ½ ounce Cointreau or other triple sec orange liqueur |
| 1 lime wedge                   | 2 cups ice cubes                                     |
| 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice |  |

Spread salt on a small plate. Rub lime wedge around the rim of a 10-ounce glass and dip the moistened glass in salt to lightly coat and set aside.

In a cocktail shaker, stir together lime juice and sugar until sugar partially dissolves. Add Cointreau, tequila and 1 cup ice cubes. Shake vigorously for 25 seconds and then strain into the prepared glass. Fill glass with remaining ice cubes.



### ON OUR COVER

### Spicy Pineapple Margaritas

*courtesy pretty plain janes.com*

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- Sea salt and lime for glass rimming
- 1 fresh jalapeño, sliced into ¼" rings
- 6 cups fresh or frozen pineapple, cubed
- 1 cup lime juice
- 1 cup tequila
- ½ cup orange liquor
- Pineapple and lime wedges for garnish, optional

Rim 4 glasses with lime juice and dip in sea salt. Throw 2 to 3 jalapeño rings in each and lightly muddle with the end of a wooden spoon. Half-fill glasses with ice.

Place pineapple in a blender and add lime juice. Blend until very smooth. Add tequila and orange liqueur and blend until well combined.

Divide evenly among the glasses. Garnish with lime or pineapple wedges.

Tequila also lends itself well to simple recipes. Try this two-ingredient mixer for an easy, refreshing cocktail.

### Tequila Spritzer

*courtesy buzzfeed.com*

- 2 ounces tequila
- Grapefruit soda
- Lime wedge for garnish

The classic brand is the grapefruit-flavored Jarritos, but any brand — Fresca, Goya or Ting — will do. (Or, make it yourself with grapefruit juice, seltzer and simple syrup.)

Pour the tequila into a glass and top with the grapefruit soda. Garnish with a lime wedge.



## MIXOLOGY: TEQUILA TIME

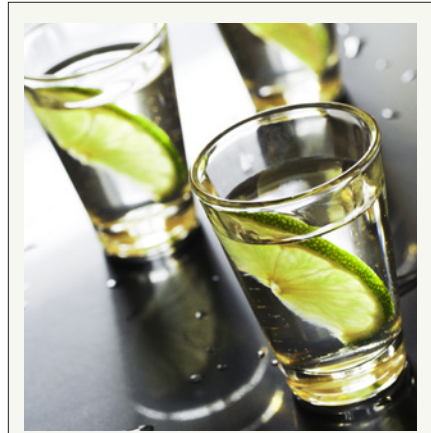
are several types of tequila, typically categorized by how long it is aged:

**Blanco** is usually clear in color, unaged and bottled or stored immediately after distillation. Offering fresh, citrusy flavors, it's considered perfect for mixing in cocktails and is commonly found in margaritas.

**Reposado**, which means "rested" in Spanish, is sometimes straw in color, aged a minimum of two months, but less than a year, in oak barrels of any size. Slightly mellow than a blanco, reposado tequila can pick up notes from the wood.

**Anjeo** is aged at least one year, but less than three years, in small oak barrels. It is typically smoother and more complex than the younger tequilas. With its smoother, slightly spicier flavor and a darker color, añejo tequila is perfect for sipping.

**Extra Añejo**, or "ultra aged," is aged at least three years in oak barrels. This newest category of tequila was established in March of 2006. Extra añejo is best sipped and enjoyed neat. 🍸



## Get to Know Tequila

- Blue agave, from which tequila is made, typically takes 8-12 years to mature.
- A tequila bottle should not have a worm in it. (If it does, it's likely mezcal — tequila's close cousin.)
- All tequila is mezcal, but not all mezcal is tequila. Tequila can only be made from blue agave, but mezcal can be made from more than 30 varieties of agave.
- There are two types of tequila: 100 percent agave, and 'mixtos,' which contain non-agave sugars.
- Unlike whiskey, tequila does not benefit from the addition of water. However, try it in a fluted glass to concentrate aromas.
- Approximately 15 pounds of agave pinas are needed to produce a liter of tequila.
- National Tequila Day this year will be observed on Tuesday, July 24.

Whichever style and however you prefer your tequila, it might be best not to delay. The rising popularity of the spirit is creating a shortage of agave, which could, in turn, lead to a shortage of tequila. Producers are preparing, however, planting more agave to meet the growing demand, but it can take years for the plants to mature.



A jimador uses long-handled knife to harvest a pina from a field of blue agave.

A full-length photograph of a bottle of Maestro Dobel Diamante Tequila. The bottle is clear glass with a black label. The label features the text "RESERVA DEL MAESTRO TEQUILERO TEQUILA 100% DE AGAVE DE CAMPOS SELECTOS PRODUCCION ANUAL LIMITADA Y NUMERADA HECHO EN MEXICO" and "MAESTRO DOBEL DIAMANTE 40% ALC/VOL. TEQUILA REPOSADO". The bottle is set against a dark background.

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