

## ABOUT TEQUILA



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Mezcal wine, tequila's grandparent, was first produced only a few decades after the Conquest that brought the Spaniards to the New World in 1521. It was variously called mezcal brandy, agave wine, mezcal tequila and finally simply tequila—appropriately named after Tequila, a small town in a valley in Jalisco state, México.

Distillation of pulque, tequila's distant ancestor, into something stronger may have originated by the Conquistadors as early as the 1520s. After the Conquest, the area around today's Jalisco state was originally called New Galicia by the Spanish conquerors. The community we now know as Tequila officially became a village in 1656. In the 1700s, mezcal wines became an important product for export because the town of Tequila lay on the route to the newly opened Pacific port of San Blas.

The first licensed manufacturer was a gentleman by the familiar name of José Antonio Cuervo. Sr. Cuervo received the rights to cultivate a parcel of land from the King of Spain in 1758, and the rest is history. However, tequila did not achieve its prominence until after 1821 when México attained independence, and Spanish products were more difficult to obtain.

## Mezcal vs Tequila

Few understand the difference between tequila and mezcal, and many don't even know there is a difference. While traditionally, all tequilas were known as a type of mezcal. Today, they are distinct products, differentiated by the production process and taste, much the same way rye whisky differs from Scotch whiskey. Most mezcal is made today in the state of Oaxaca, although some is also made in Guerrero and other states. Tequila comes from the northwestern state of Jalisco (and a few nearby areas). They both derive from varieties of the Agave plant, known to the natives as mescalmetl. Tequila is made from only agave tequilana Weber, blue variety. Mezcal, on the other hand, can be made from five different varieties of agave. Tequila is double distilled and a few brands even boast triple distillation. Mezcal is often only distilled once.



Agave Plantation



Processing



Distillation

## The Worm

Another interesting error is an urban legend related to a worm. The worm-in-the-bottle myth is old and tired. The truth has been broadcast and expounded for years by the cognoscenti of tequila, in newspapers, magazines and on the internet. Yes, it's true, some American-bottled brands put one in their bottle to impress the gringos and boost sales, but it was a marketing ploy developed in the 1940s, not a Mexican tradition.

### **Blanco, reposado & añejo**

Taste is the ultimate deciding factor. Some people prefer the rougher edge of the young blanco tequilas with their more distinct agave flavor. Others like the sharper, almost peppery flavor of a middle-aged reposado. And some may prefer the smooth, woody aroma in an older añejo. Like single-malt scotches, or small-brewery sakes, tequilas vary according to the company making them, the process, and the growing environment. The temperature, soil, types of equipment, age of the plants and the means by which the plants are baked and aged all affect the flavor and body