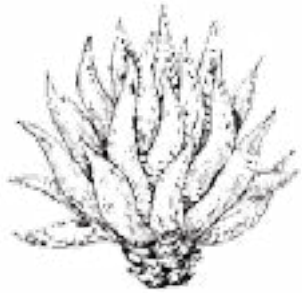


# LIQUID GOLD

*Tequila can be so much more than just the go-to party shooter associated with wild nights and hangovers*

WORDS LAUREN ENDRODY



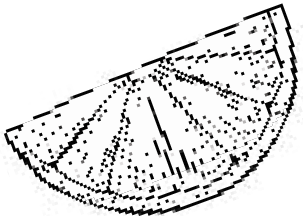
## ANCIENT FIREWATER

The earliest variant of tequila can be traced all the way back to the Aztecs in 300 AD. A plant called the blue agave was creatively used for different things such as making mats and ropes from the fibres and, of course, booze. This drink was called pulque: a fermented, milky concoction. The Mexicans happily carried on drinking pulque for hundreds of years until the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in 1519, who didn't think much of the locals' specialty drink, and decided to experiment with ways to refine it.

They began to distil the pulque and made what they called *Vino de Mezcal* or mescal wine (*mezcal* meaning 'oven-cooked agave'). In the 17th century, mescal wine was being produced all over the country, but especially in and around the town of Tequila. Its popularity grew, and by 1750 an official industry had developed around it. In the 1890s, the drink formally began to be referred to as 'tequila'. The Cuervo and Sauza families were the first to commercialise and export tequila to the United States in the late 1800s. Today, there are in excess of 100 tequila distilleries in Mexico that make more than 900 brands.

## TEQUILA TYPES AND TASTES

**Blanco/White/Silver:** This very clear and almost colourless tequila is bottled and stored immediately after distillation. It either hasn't had time to age at all or it has been kept in stainless steel or neutral oak barrels for a maximum of two months. Thus, it has a very sharp taste including the strongest, purest agave and an earthy, herb or vegetal flavour.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLO/GETTY IMAGES, UNSPLASH

**Oro/Gold:** Although colouring and caramel is added to make it seem aged, this tequila is usually not aged and has a strong taste like Blanco.

**Reposado:** Meaning 'rested', this tequila is aged in oak barrels for between two months and a year. Since it has been allowed to rest for a while, it doesn't have as much of a bite to it as Blanco, but still has hints of agave, as well as vanilla, caramel or hazelnut.

**Añejo:** Meaning 'aged' or 'vintage', this tequila is usually left to age for between one and three years, and has a deeper golden colour than the rest. It is also much smoother on the taste buds with complex flavours and a woody character from the oak barrels.



**Extra Añejo:** This is still a very new type of tequila, and has been aged for at least three years or longer. It resembles whiskey and should be enjoyed on the rocks and sipped slowly.

## SAY CHEERS!

The traditional way of drinking tequila, as they do in Mexico, is of course neat, and not as a shooter with salt and lime. The Mexicans often have it with a side of *sangrita*, which is a mixture of orange juice, grenadine or tomato juice, and chilli. Another popular way to drink tequila in Mexico is with three shots: one with lime juice, one with white tequila, and one with *sangrita*. This is called a *bandera* (meaning 'flag') because it has the colours of the Mexican flag. In some European countries, such as Germany, tequila gold is often had with cinnamon and orange instead of salt and lemon.

Then there are many cocktails that just wouldn't be the same without tequila, such as the famous margarita or tequila sunrise.

*FOR MORE QUICK AND EASY KILLER TEQUILA COMBOS, TRY THESE:*

### Tequila lime spritzer

Mix one shot of tequila and one shot of lime cordial over ice, and top up with sparkling water. Garnish with rosemary and cucumber slices.

### Tequila and pineapple juice

Mix a shot of tequila with ice-cold pineapple juice in a glass for a refreshing drink. Garnish with lime and mint leaves.

### Paloma

Mix ¼ cup fresh grapefruit juice, one tablespoon fresh lime juice and a teaspoon of sugar in a glass. Stir well until the sugar has dissolved. Stir in a shot of tequila. Add ice and top it up with soda water. Garnish with a grapefruit wedge.

*WHERE TO GO FOR THE BEST TEQUILA IN THE COUNTRY:*

### J Rabbit Tequileria, Sandton

Open Wednesday through to Saturday, this ultra chic spot in the CML Laundry boasts one of the biggest collections of tequila in South Africa.  
[jrtequileria.com](http://jrtequileria.com)

### Mootee Bar, Joburg

There's no wonder this unconventional bar has become one of the favourite hangouts in Joburg for locals and tourists alike. Discover a splendid array of mixed drinks and an even more splendid setting.  
[mootee.co.za](http://mootee.co.za)

### Cabrón Taco Bar, Cape Town

Tucked away in the Mother City's ever-bustling Bree Street, you'll find this exquisite tequila spot with a Mexican menu to die for.  
[cabron.co.za](http://cabron.co.za)

### The Chairman, Durban

When tequila is too strong on its own, opt for a cocktail that packs a punch at one of Durban's coolest watering holes, The Chairman.  
[thechairmanlive.com](http://thechairmanlive.com)