



PROOF &
PRINCIPLE

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE & SPIRITS EDUCATION FOR BARTENDERS & HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS

01/07

TEQUILA



A friendly guide to law,
production & labels.

Origin, agave, production
and the words on
the label all matter.



IT STARTS WITH PLACE



Protected origin

Tequila is produced under a protected denomination of origin in Mexico.

The denomination covers 181 municipalities across five states.

Jalisco contains all 125 municipalities.

Production is also authorised in designated municipalities only: 30 in Michoacán, 11 in Tamaulipas, 8 in Nayarit and 7 in Guanajuato.




Denominación
de Origen
Tequila

181
municipalities
across 5 states

ONE AGAVE

Blue Weber agave

- Tequila is made from Agave tequilana Weber var. azul.
- Blue Weber agave develops over several years and is harvested once it has reached suitable development for production.
- The leaves are removed during jima to expose the piña.
- The piña stores carbohydrates primarily as fructans, which must be hydrolysed into fermentable sugars.



FROM PIÑA TO SUGAR

A common production route

Cooking uses heat and moisture to break agave fructans into fermentable sugars, mainly fructose.

Hydrolysis

Water helps split larger carbohydrates into smaller sugars that yeast can ferment.

Hornos and autoclaves are common cooking methods. Tahona and roller mills separate the sweet juice from the cooked agave fibre. Yeast then converts those sugars into alcohol and creates flavour compounds.



WORTH NOTING

This is one common cooked-agave route. Diffuser systems can extract carbohydrates from raw agave before hydrolysis, so the order can differ.

01. COOKING



02. EXTRACTION



03. FERMENTATION



THEN THE STILLS SHAPE THE SPIRIT



Fermented agave can be distilled in different types of equipment. Still design, distillation method and the distiller's run selection influence how much agave character remains in the finished spirit.

- **Pot stills**

Used in many Tequila distilleries. Batch distillation is often carried out in two passes, allowing the producer to shape style through still design and operation.

- **Column stills**

Also used in Tequila production. Continuous systems can produce a cleaner, lighter spirit depending on design and operation.

- **Run selection in batch distillation**

In batch distillation, producers decide which portions of the distillate are retained. Those choices shape balance, texture and final character.



Tequila regulations do not prescribe one still design or a single distillation method.



100% AGAVE OR TEQUILA

Read the label

100% DE AGAVE

All fermentable sugars come from Blue Weber agave.



TEQUILA

At least 51% of fermentable sugars come from Blue Weber agave. Up to 49% may come from other permitted reducing sugars, not from another agave species.



'Mixto' is common industry shorthand; the legal category name is simply Tequila.

READ THE CLASS

Maturation categories

- **BLANCO / PLATA**
Unaged or matured less than 2 months in oak.
- **JOVEN / ORO**
Blanco Tequila blended with Reposado, Añejo or Extra Añejo, or Blanco subjected to abocamiento.
- **REPOSADO**
At least 2 months in direct contact with oak or encino, in barrels or pipones.
- **AÑEJO**
Minimum 1 year in oak or encino, in vessels up to 600 litres.
- **EXTRA AÑEJO**
Minimum 3 years in oak or encino, in vessels up to 600 litres.



Cristalino tequila is aged tequila that has been filtered to remove colour. It is a style descriptor, not a separate legal class.

Rabei Zaitouna

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