

THE SPIRITS OF MEXICO



By Dori Bryant

Since the Polished Palate first coined the phrase 'the Spirits of Mexico' almost ten years ago, we've witnessed a dramatic influx of world class agave-based spirits pouring forth from our neighbor to the South. In the past eight years more than 150 brands, including 40 launches, have been tasted at our events, representing over 400 styles of Blancos, Reposados, Anejos and Extra Anejos, Creams, Flavors and Liqueurs. This year El Decreto and Montoro Tequilas, Zauco Mezcal and Vitzo Bacanora are making their debut, adding to the increased amount of shelf space and presence at retailers. Plus, inspired chefs, mixologists and cocktail enthusiasts at America's favorite watering holes all have got the bug.

Tequila is typically the first spirit that comes to mind when reminiscing about that first ritual rite of passage followed by mezcal, tequila's older sibling, which is appearing consistently with new brands and varieties. Bacanora, made exclusively in the state of Sonora in northwestern Mexico, made its debut earlier this year. Sotol, made from the *Dasyliion wheeleri* know as Desert Spoon, has won hearts and garnered only gold medals for all varieties in four years of competitions.

With every year we, too, are on a learning curve and are enjoying every sip of the journey as this industry evolves along with the growing number of new fans and returning consumers. The Spirits of Mexico Festival in San Diego increased 300% in attendance last year, to more than 2,500 attendees, and each new year will see more. Why?

When you factor in the increasing number of restaurants, bars and lounges devoted to these spirits, the visibility in the media and the welcomed number of new bloggers, aficionados, authors and experts, the continued growth of tequila is assured.



There's no worm in tequila. The worm is found in certain brands of mezcals and started as a marketing gimmick in the 1940's by Jacobo Lozano Paez. The agave worm or gusanito (little worm) is actually butterfly larva and is a bright coral color, which fades to pink in the bottle.

