

THE LAST WORD

Porfidio's Bottles Don't Get Recycled

By Craig A. Shutt

Every new product must overcome packaging hurdles before it makes it to market. But for Porfidio tequilas, the technical challenges are a little more complex: the packaging is not only hand-made, it's hand-blown.

The Guadalajara, Mexico-based company produces super-premium tequilas imported to America by Todhunter Imports Ltd., West Palm Beach, Fla. To express its custom approach to distilling an ultra-high-end product, the distiller uses hand-blown bottles from Germany and Mexico that have distinctive shapes and colors. The bottles have gained cult status and have become sought-after items by American liquor connoisseurs.

In January, Porfidio extended its line to include a fourth product: Plata, a triple-distilled, 100-percent Blue Agave tequila. The liquor is packaged in a frosted bottle that's cobalt blue in color at the base and gradually lightens to a vivid turquoise at the top. A silver label and cork complete the package.

The product is now available nationwide in very limited distribution, says Tom Valdes, president of the distributing company. "There is a very, very limited production run for this product, because the category is very small and our volume is allocated from Mexico," he explains. "Our goal is to ensure it reaches the markets where a product this premium will sell through to customers." That includes key markets in the Southwest, as well as major cities such as New York and Chicago.

Even within markets and neighborhoods, distribution is pinpointed precisely because it is such a high-end product: Plata retails for \$40 per bottle,

joining the line of Cactus (\$80), Anejo (\$40) and Silver (\$30).

The hand-blown blue bottles originally achieved their coloring via hand-applied paint, Valdes says, but quality was inconsistent with paint bubbles that detracted from the look.

A consistent look is trickier in the Cactus line, the company's ultra-premium, single barrel-aged tequila. Not only is each bottle hand-blown from clear glass, but it features a green glass cactus blown into the bottom that juts up into the center of the bottle's barrel. "Because each cactus has a different shape, some are significantly bigger than others," Valdes explains. The shape of the bottles can also differ, particularly around the neck, so some bottles look fuller than others, as the tequila rises higher.

To assure customers that all bottles contain the advertised 750 ml., and to emphasize the features of each brand, the company is using shelf talkers created by Haff-Daugherty Graphics in Hialeah, Fla., in conjunction with the company's advertising agency, Reisigl Associates in Jupiter, Fla. The cards, measuring about 2 inches by 3 inches, highlight the special distilling process-



Unique challenges are caused by using hand-blown bottles to package the four products in Porfidio's line of imported tequilas. The ultra-premium Cactus, for instance, features a cactus shape that juts up into the barrel of the bottle.

es and are color-coordinated with the products.

The line is the creation of Porfidio's owner, Martin Grassl, who continues to look for ways to make his products stand out, notes Valdes. Recently, the double-distilled Silver brand's packaging was switched to a Georgia-green glass for its bottles to add a new tone to its look. □