


Redeye's spirits list breaks tequila down to *añejo*, or aged, tequilas, priced \$6-8, and silver tequilas, whose flavors are unchanged by wood aging, priced \$6. The former group includes Chinaco Añejo, El Tesoro Añejo, and Herradura Añejo, along with products like Cuervo 1800 and Sauza Conmemorativo. The latter includes Patron Silver and Porfidio Silver, among others. So far, snifter sales "aren't tremendously big," Chin says, "but we're trying to build it." But there's ample interest in upscale brands, proven by the sales of eall-brand margaritas like the Blue Margarita, made with blue curaçao, and the Fuzzy Margarita, with peach schnapps and Cointreau. Each can be made with any of 13 tequilas.

Redeye Grill's promotional idea is to "make it visual," advises Chin. The prime example is the tequila "shrine" at the bar, a tiered bottle display fronted by lighted candles. "It's a Mexican way to promote it, like a madonna thing," he says. The flickering votives suggest the mystery of the Mexican spirit.

Upscale tequila is finding its way into chain restaurants, again more often in margaritas than snifters. At Who Song & Larry's in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, ritas rule 60% of the bar trade, but sipping tequila "is starting to come around," says manager Frank Ambrosio. "As they get into the \$6-8 price range, it's more likely that customers will sip them in a glass."

Tequila is worth raising a snifter to at d.b.a., a neighborhood bar in New York City's East Village with the motto "drink good stuff." Its 20 upscale tequilas share the backbar with distinguished single malts and small-batch bourbons. "These are cognac-quality beverages," says owner Ray Deter. "We serve them in snifters to encourage people to linger over them, not shoot them."

Fitting its neighborhood identity, there are no pretensions at d.b.a., just chalkboard listings and knowledgeable staff adept at hand-selling. Says Deter, "The job of the tequila seller is to reintroduce them to it and take it out of the realm of salt and lime." 

DRINKLINE

Taking Beans To The Bank

YOU CAN'T GET A CAFFE LATTE or a pound of Columbia Supremo from an ATM machine. But you'll be able to get that and more while banking at Home Savings locations in Southern California. Starting in June, when Irvine, CA-based Diedrich Coffee will open the first of three pilot shops inside its branches.

For Home Savings, it's a way to better use its large, ornate buildings. Unused floor space will be converted to 1,200-2,000-sq.-ft. Diedrich shops, which will have separate signage and front entrances and a door leading from bank to brew.

For the 47-unit, publicly traded coffee operator, "it's a real estate play," says president Steven Lupinacci. Home Savings sites are attractive downtown "Main and Main" type locations with high traffic. They typically have private parking, and, in some cases, patios that could be used for service. Each joint venture shop will offer Diedrich's full range of coffee drinks, pastries, sandwiches, and retail packages of whole coffee beans. Juxtaposing java and banking is "a comfortable, compatible use," Lupinacci says. "Coffee goes with whatever else you're doing."

BY JAMES SCARPA

BETTER THAN BAR NUTS

FOLIE GRAS, caviar, truffles—so many gourmet treats are hefty in price as well as flavor. Olives are an exception. To prove that theory, Istana, a Mediterranean fine-dining restaurant which opened recently in New York City, has devised a bar laden with more than 25 kinds of olives—Greek, Spanish, French, Italian, and Californian varieties—from 13 different vendors. At \$7 a plateful, "We're not looking to make money," admits chef Vince Hodgins. Rather, he expects that the olives will help develop "a sherry following" for the house's world-class array of finos and olorosos. Pours start at \$7, and a glass from Istana's 30-year-old bottle of dry amontillado will set a customer back \$15. In this price range, smiles Hodgins, Istana is effectively using gourmet olives to "replace the give-away bar nuts."

BY M.F. ONDERDONK

TOP TEN WINE BEEFS

OF THE 10 MOST COMMON pet peeves people have about service in restaurants, half concern wine, including three of the top five most prevalent complaints. So found a survey of 1,000 restaurant customers sponsored by Domaine Chandon, a sparkling wine producer in Napa Valley, CA. All respondents, who were drawn from around the country, had eaten out in the month prior to the survey and had ordered a bottle of wine with the meal.

The most common kvetch, mentioned by 64% of respondents, was receiving a wine glass still warm from the dishwasher. No. 2, noted by 52%, was improperly chilled wine. The third most common complaint was "my waiter can't tell me anything about the wine list but its price," noted by 47%. Tied with 47% was a non-wine peeve, finding the tip included in the check without prior notice. Other top 10 complaints included being served a bottle with a torn or missing label (46%), in fifth place, and being served a vintage different from the one ordered (39%), in seventh.

J.S.