

Agave Action

The introduction of high-end sipping Tequilas continues unabated. Slick production terms like "single-barrel" and "barrique-aged" are now commonplace, and the spectre of the "single-agave-field" Tequila looms large. Below, a *W&S* roundup of the latest releases:

Porfidio Reposado is the newest in a family of Tequilas so exquisitely packaged it's almost a shame to open them. Housed in a stout, stoneware bottle with a royal blue porcelain finish, it is aged eight months in "heavily toasted" American oak. Notes of caramelized sugar in the aroma and a tannic bite on the

finish are attributable to this new wood, but otherwise the Reposado is distinguished by fresh, clean, pure agave flavors. Citrus and tropical fruit notes come through in the nose, and a grassy, herbal, limey impression grips the palate and lingers in the finish. It's a very different animal from its añejo sibling, the silky smooth, three-year-old **Barrique de Ponciano Porfidio**, which pours glycerin-thick and has a smokier, woodier, more buttery flavor impression. The pricey Barrique is Tequila's answer to barrel-fermented California chardonnay; the Reposado is more like an Australian riesling—it has a similar racy, dry, citrus quality.



Press
To
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HOW MUCH CHARDONNAY
DO YOU HAVE TO TRY
TO DEVELOP A TASTE
FOR THE BEST?

The first sip of our
Sonoma County
Chardonnay
will tell you
you've found
something
good. The
rest is yours
simply
to enjoy.



Reposado: 40% alcohol, \$80/liter; Barrique: 40% alcohol, \$500/liter (only 500 bottles shipped to US).

Todhunter Imports Ltd., West Palm Beach, FL

Gran Centenario Añejo, made from 100 percent blue agave, is a new addition to a family that already includes plata and reposado versions. Its deep, burnished gold color is reminiscent of Scotch whisky; the spirit has been aged up to eighteen months in small, white oak casks. A toasty aroma and a caramelized sweetness on the palate will make this a popular choice for those who prefer a less spicy Tequila. 40% alcohol. \$40/750 ml. *Carillon Importers Ltd., Teaneck, NJ*



Speaking of spice, the new **El Conquistador Añejo** is the perfect tequila to serve alongside a Mexican sangrita. The distinctive nose has hints of everything from white pepper to artichokes to pears, and it has guts and grip on the palate. A 100 percent blue agave tequila, it is silky and spicy, with pure agave flavor, and it finishes smooth. It's a great buy at \$35. 40% alcohol.

Heaven Hill Distilleries, Bardonia, KY

Reserva del Dueño, a 100 percent blue agave añejo aged for one-and-a-half years, is a lightly tinted, lighter-bodied tequila whose buttery pineapple nose gives way to a palate of white pepper and herbs. A pleasant suggestion of lime comes through on the finish. Use this one for top-shelf Margaritas. 41.7% alcohol, \$35/750 ml. *William Grant & Sons, Edison, NJ*



In the past year, the title of "most expensive Tequila" has changed hands three times: the muy añejo Herradura Selección Suprema (about \$350 a bottle) surrendered the crown to Barrique de Ponciano Porfidio (see above) in late 1997, and now there's **Cuervo 1800 Colección**, the first bottle of which was auctioned off at Chicago's Davis & Co. in February. Tasting samples were not available at press time, but the "multi-year-aged" 1800 Colección is described as the "product of a single, meticulously tended Blue Agave field" in Jalisco, Mexico. The tequila was aged in "two single barrels of new white French oak," and it is packaged in a hand-molded Belgian crystal decanter. 40% alcohol, \$1,000/750 ml. (345 bottles available) *Heublein Inc., Hartford, CT — D.L.*

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