



*While the number of brands that come into India continues to grow there are a few facts about tequila that consumers ought to know before imbibing their favourite tippie.*

There are more than 300 types of agave, just as there are many different types of grapes. The name of a certain type of agave spirit is usually defined by a combination of the type of agave plant used to make alcohol and the region where it is produced. Throughout history, depending on prevailing fashion trends, one type of agave has been considered superior to another type of agave. Just like Pinot Noir is the grape of fashion in 2009, the Blue Agave is the agave choice of fashion in 2009.

Consumers generally assume that one of these agave spirits categories is superior to other categories based on their preference for one type of agave over another type, whereas the actual taste difference between these - as it stands today - is due to regional differences in distillation and fermentation technology. This situation - circumstantially - has been working in favour of consumer's preference for Blue Agave and the "Tequila" - and

"Super-Jalisco" agave spirits in particular - during the last two decades, as the production technology for Tequila and in particular Super-Jalisco is more technologically advanced than of most of the other above agave spirits.

All of the above agave spirits - except Super-Jalisco - are available in two variations, that is "blended" or "pure". Super Jalisco is the only exception to the rule in terms of always being produced from 100% Agave (pure agave spirit), and more explicitly, from 100% Blue Agave from Jalisco only (geographically restricted). Porfidio is a Super-Jalisco.

Long before Spain conquered its future American colonies, the native Indians in the Americas engaged in the production of fermented agave wine, known as pulque. The Spaniards brought with them to their colonies distillation technology, which they in turn had acquired from their former Arab conquerors.

Thus agave spirits were born in

Mexico and Venezuela. In Mexico, agave spirits were initially known as "Vino de Mezcal" followed by the name of the region. The production of agave spirits was confined to semi-clandestinity until Mexico and Venezuela gained independence from Spain in the 19th century, due to Spain's export push of Spanish brandy into its colonies. Up to date, Spanish brandy is the spirit of choice of the upper class in Mexico.

After independence from Spain, the consumption of agave spirits in Latin America was socially confined to the Indian or black peasant farming community, as European products were still considered to possess more social cache than native agave spirits.

The biggest production explosion push period of the agave spirits industry in Mexico occurred during the Age of Prohibition in the United States, when Whiskey factories were closed down in the United States and consumption of whiskey substituted in the Southern and Western

United States with agave spirits which was smuggled across the Rio Grande.

The agave spirits industry in South Africa was born during the Mexican Revolution in the 1910's, when agave plantations were expropriated from their former white landlords and distributed among the poor Indian peasant farmers, which in turn led to a total collapse of the Mexican agave industry, in particular the sisal agave trade. The British, being at that time the biggest consumers of sisal agave fiber for industrial use, grasped this historic opportunity and massively planted agave plantations in South Africa in Kenya. In South Africa, by historical mistake, various plantations were planted with Agave Americana (low fiber content) instead of Agave Sisal (high fiber content), which were inappropriate for agave fiber production but properly suited for alcohol production and thus the agave spirits industry was born in South Africa. Despite if this, the agave spirits industry in South Africa never managed to make a proper impact on the international agave spirits industry, as the Agave Americana has half the sugar content of the Blue Agave, thus making production for export uneconomical.

Venezuela's agave spirits industry was suppressed by the military throughout the 20th century in favour the big rum industrialists, who in turn financed the military. However, since the arrival of President Chavez in power, the Venezuelan agave spirits industry has undergone a newly found, proactive dynamism and export push.

Dr. Weber, a German scientist, is historically credited with being the first person of having properly researched and classified most agaves plants in the Americas during the first decade



of the 20th century, and is thus being considered the actual grandfather of today's modern agave spirits industry. In his honour, "Blue Agave" is actually known to botanists as "Agave Weber".

Tequila Cuervo, owned by the Beckmann family of German decent, is historically credited for having created the brand awareness for the tequila name after WW II in the United States and subsequently throughout the world.

Austrian Martin Grassl, owner of Destileria Porfidio, is historically credited for elevating the tequila category from a working class drink in Mexico and college firewater in the United States to a socially acceptable spirit with the same quality attributes and price level as the finest Single-Malt whiskies and Cognacs through the introduction to Mexico of new quality production techniques and their application to agave spirits in the 1990's. And thus the ultra premium Super-Jalisco agave spirits category was born.

Other brands which have made tequila famous include Caballo Estrella - which means a "Horse" (Caballo) named "Star" (Estrella) - Tequila is the

brainchild of Celia Villanueva. As a small child forty-five years ago, Celia would ride Estrella up a steep perilous mountain trail to her Grandfather's ranch located high in the mountains in Michoacan, Mexico. The trail was very narrow and traversed steep rocky ridges. One slip of the horse and both Estrella and Celia would have tumbled thousands of feet to their doom. But "Estrella" never slipped. The words used to describe Estrella by the neighbours that knew him are: smooth, consistent, 'the best,' mellow, reliable, dependable, and timeless. Hence, we feel there are no better words to define the Tequila produced in honour of this magnificent horse. Destiladora Del Valle de Tequila proudly produces Caballo Estrella Tequila.

Caballo Estrella Tequila is distilled in Tequila, Jalisco, Mexico, the heart of the Tequila producing regions of Mexico. Tequila is known for its very high quality and abundant water, rich fertile soil, and ideal climate for the growth of the blue agave. Caballo Estrella Tequila is produced using traditional processing methods, such as brick and stone ovens (hornos), molinos (mills), slow fermentation, and small still pot distillation. Mexcor Inc. is the U.S holding company. El Caballo Estrella is sold throughout the United States, which represents 85% of the world tequila market. Caballo Estrella is one of the best selling brands in the United States and is particularly strong in the supermarket, mega-market and discount store market segment. 2007 marked a mile stone in Caballo's history when it surpassed for the first time the two million cases mark.

Caballo is one of the tequila brands with the highest growth rate in the United States. The success of this brand consists in being a good quality product at the most competitive price point in the entire tequila segment, thus having wide mass market appeal. The marketing concept of Caballo Estrella Tequila is simple. Offer the consumer the best product at the best price. The future and international dimension of agave spirits is unlimited in terms of the agave being one of the few industrial crops which do not require irrigation and water and is thus ideally suited for cultivation in most hot semi-desert environments anywhere in the world. 🍷

Some examples how agave types are interlinked with certain name descriptions, in some occasions actually trademarks, is as follows:

- Mezcal: from Southern Mexico, made usually from Agave Espadin
- Tequila: from Central Mexico, made from Agave Tequilana (Blue Agave)
- Bacanora: From Western Mexico, made from Agave Tequilana, among other
- Sotol: From Northern Mexico, made from Agave Silvestre
- Cocuy: From Venezuela, made from Agave Cocuy
- South African Tequila: From South Africa, made from Agave Americana
- Raizilla: From Western Mexico, made from a meritage of various wild agave plants
- Super-Jalisco: From Jalisco only, the world's best agave growing terroir, made from Agave Tequilana (Blue Agave)