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**Ave Margarita**

**Learn how to charm your way through one of the most common tequila-based cocktail – the margarita.**

**By Linda Lee****CATS Classified in The Straits Times**

The margarita is a common tequila-based cocktail made with orange-flavored liqueur or triple sec, and lemon or lime juice; and it's often served in a glass with a salt-encrusted rim.

Considering its popularity with many booze aficionados, it's a pretty cool drink to serve when you are inviting friends over for an alcohol appreciation party. You can prepare the drinks straight up, on the rocks or frozen, or create new concoctions by adding fruits and other flavoured beverages.

Want to learn how to whip up a mean margarita, and know more about tequila – the prime ingredient in this cocktail? Read on...

- There are basically three types of tequila: The blanco or "silver" tequila is bottled before it ages so that it retains the pure quality and strong flavour of the premium blue agave (a species of plant) from which it's made. The reposado or "rested" variety has been aged in oak barrels for months, and the añejo or "aged" tequila has been aged for at least a year.
- A blanco or reposado is suitable for making margaritas, whereas using an añejo would be considered wasteful, as the other ingredients are likely to overpower or nullify its intricate flavour.
- If your budget allows it, get the 100 per cent blue agave tequila. Unlike cheaper alternatives, which may contain more than 40 per cent distilled spirits derived from sugar crops, the pure variant simply tastes better and is less likely to give you a nasty hangover.
- Other alternatives include the herradura blanco, el tesoro blanco, porfidio silver or patrón silver. If you want to go for something more affordable but which offers no compromise in terms of taste, go for the hornitos.
- If you intend to serve up a lot of margaritas, then it's best to prepare a big portion of it in advance. You can add all the ingredients in a container – sans ice (it'll dilute the mixture when it melts) – and store it in a fridge or cooler till it's time to serve them.
- Want to surprise your guests with a classic margarita? Then combine 1.5 ounce of tequila, one ounce of fresh lime juice, half an ounce of Cointreau or triple sec, and syrup (a minimum of one tablespoon), and blend these ingredients in a shaker with lots of cracked ice. Shake it, then strain and pour the drink into a chilled margarita glass with a salt-encrusted rim.
- You've just learnt how to make the standard tequila cocktail. Now, here's how you coat the glass rim with salt without making a mess of it: Mash up coarse kosher or sea salt (avoid using ordinary table salt as it has less flavour) slightly for a couple of minutes with a mortar and pestle; this makes it less coarse and



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stick more easily onto the surface of the glass rim. Place the salt on a wide and shallow plate. Next, wet the rim of your glass with a little water (you could use a slice of lime to add taste) and press the rim of the glass onto the salt in the plate. Rotate the glass gently to ensure that the whole circumference of the rim is coated. And voila, you have a cocktail or margarita glass ready to be filled and served!

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