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THE 12 BEST MEZCAL BRANDS YOU NEED TO TRY, ACCORDING TO EXPERTS

By: Meagan Drillinger

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Tequila and mezcal. What's the difference? Quite a bit. Both tequila and mezcal do come from the agave plant, and both are indigenous liquors to Mexico. But the comparison stops there.

To be fair, all tequilas technically are part of the mezcal family. Mezcal is a liquor that is produced from the agave plant, and there are 30 different types of agave from which the beverage can be made. Tequila, however, is only the product of a specific type of agave: Blue Agave. To be considered tequila, the liquor has to be produced in one of five designated states in Mexico, whereas mezcal is produced in nine different states, with the largest production in Oaxaca.

The taste of mezcal is also completely different than tequila. The one thing mezcal newcomers can agree on is that mezcal tastes smoky, which is either what turns them on or off to the beverage. But as you get deeper into the wide, complex world of mezcal, it becomes apparent that there is so much to the flavor than just "smoke."

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And you should definitely sip this neat. When it comes time to taste mezcal, most experts agree that the best way to really get to know the beverage is to sip it neat.

So what are these experts pouring into the glasses? Here are the 12 best mezcal brands they said you need to try, in no particular order.

9. Bozal Sacatoro

According to Swanson, Bozal Sacatoro is her newest obsession. "It just has a lot of character," she said. "Sacatoro is a very close relative to Espadín, so its flavors are familiar yet also new and exciting."

BOZAL / SACATORO SINGLE MAGUEY MEZCAL