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9 NEW MEZCAL S TO TRY RIGHT NOW

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Running alongside the tequila boom, agave-curious consumers have expanded into mezcal, too, making it one of the fastest-growing categories of the moment. According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS), in 2020 mezcal sales climbed 17.7%, or \$19 million, totaling \$124 million.

While much of the spirit's consumption is in mezcal-based cocktails, a growing category at bars following the popularity of the Oaxaca Old Fashioned and other drinks, still others are limited editions intended to be savored and sipped.

Among the most interesting newcomers right now is legacy mezcal producer Sombra, which now offers a category-busting bottle rested in ex-Bordeaux wine casks. It's such an unusual combination that its producer coined a new term for it: reposé. Meanwhile, **Bozal** is rolling out a limited-edition

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pechuga-style mezcal appropriate for vegetarians. Instead of distilling it with chicken or other meat, typical of the style made to celebrate the bounty of the harvest season, this version instead is made solely with seasonal produce such as pumpkins and plantains.

Part of mezcal's appeal is the spirit's ties to the land and Mexico's heritage, some experts say. So perhaps it makes sense that many new releases name-check a widening array of varieties and regions as a way to tighten the connections of terroir. Just a few mentioned on the latest labels: salmiana agave from Zacatecas (Don Ramón Joven); agave angustifolia (espadín) from Oaxaca (Bozal's Guías de Calabaza); and agave papalote, also known as agave cupreata, sourced from Guerrero (Clase Azul Guerrero).

No matter which technique, variety or region most appeals to you, you'll want to test-drive these nine new bottles right now.

BOZAL GUÍAS DE CALABAZA

The latest addition to the excellent Bozal line is a vegetarian version of a pechuga-style mezcal, which is usually made using chicken breast or other meats. In this case, pumpkin stems, pineapple, plantains and chepiche—an herb used in Mexican cooking—are used to create bright, vegetal flavors. The base of the mezcal is 100% agave angustifolia. This limited-edition bottling was released for Cinco de Mayo 2021.

BOZAL / GUÍAS DE CALABAZA