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BARTENDERS NAME THEIR FAVORITE UNEXPECTED SPIRITS TO SIP STRAIGHT

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There are a handful of spirits that fit the criteria for drinking neat. We're talking about Scotch, bourbon, rye, and various other whiskeys, rums, tequilas, and mezcals. Otherwise, most spirits are best suited as mixers. Or so drinkers are often led to believe. But if you branch out and try some different spirits, you'll find that there's a whole world of unexpected sippers out there just waiting for an ice cube.

Jorge Centeno, head bartender at The Deer Path Inn in Lake Forest, Illinois has a pick that's usually used as a cocktail ingredient.

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"Definitely Vermouth," he says. "I enjoy it because it's so full of flavor, it's fun and complex, the options are endless, lower ABV than vodka or whisky. There is definitely a vermouth for everyone."

Centeno isn't the only bartender with strong opinions on less-than-typical bottles to enjoy neat or on the rocks. 16 bartenders and mixologists were kind enough to let us in on their picks for the best unexpected bottles to drink straight. Check them all out below and click the prices to buy a bottle for yourself.

Deke Dunne, master mixologist at Allegory DC in Washington, DC

ABV: 45.5%

Why This Bottle?

I recently tried Bozal Guías de Calabaza, their vegetarian pechuga-style mezcal, at Espita, a Washington, DC based mezcaleria. It was an absolute joy to drink. Pechuga is a traditional, ceremonial style mezcal that is usually distilled with chicken or other types of meats, and is incredibly savory and creates a unique drinking experience. I was blown away by Bozal's vegetarian offering, Guías de Calabaza. Firstly, I had never had a vegetarian pechuga, and secondly, it was one of the most fun drinking experiences I have had in a while. Here they used ingredients such as pumpkin stems, plantains, and seasonal fruits and grains. They also used chepiche, an herb commonly used in Mexican cooking to season meats. It was a super vegetal, as one might expect, but it surprised me with a fruity, but meaty savoriness.

The fact that they could achieve the same savoriness as a regular pechuga while using strictly vegetarian ingredients is super cool stuff. Needless to say, I ended up ordering a couple more pours that evening. This bottle is a limited release but pick it up if you can. You won't regret it.

BOZAL / GUÍAS DE CALABAZA MEZCAL