



FOOD & WINE

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9 MEZCAL TO MAKE COCKTAIL MAGIC

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After years of being relegated to the shadows of premium tequila, mezcal is finally moving from the proverbial wings of the bar to center stage. Still, there remains a fair bit of misunderstanding about what exactly mezcal is, how it's different from tequila, and where it comes from.

Ultimately, mezcal is a broad category of spirits made from agave and tequila is a small subset of mezcal. Think of this as similar to how bourbon is a kind of whiskey, or Chardonnay is a kind of wine.

From there, however, things get more complicated with mezcal. After all, unlike tequila, mezcal can be produced from a wide range of agave varieties, as opposed to tequila, which is required to be crafted solely from the Blue Weber. And that range of agaves, and the terroirs in which they grow, means that mezcal has the potential to be produced in a broad range of styles.

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It's worth stressing here that not all mezcal comes off as a smoke bomb. In fact, there are many top producers that are working to place a particular mezcal's origins front and center. Amarás, for example, goes as far as using native yeast in their initial fermentations, an important and terroir-specific step that wine lovers will find familiar.

Across the range of mezcal, exciting expressions are being crafted. These nine, all under \$75 except for one, are a great place to start.

The Best Mezcal Under \$75

Bozal Madrecuishe Single Maguey Mezcal Artesanal

One of the many single maguey expressions from Bozal, this Madrecuishe – a variety of agave – is grown in San Luis Amatlán in the state of Oaxaca. This mezcal has assertive yet balanced smoke that amplifies peppercorn, charred chipotle, as well as celery seed flavors, all lifted with bright citrus acidity and structured with a serious spine of minerality.

BOZAL / MADRECUISHE MEZCAL