



# PastE

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## THE BEST WHISKEYS (AND MORE!) OF 2022

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### Quechol Sotol Wheeleri

In any given year, I always try to discover at least one style of spirit that is newly thrilling to the palate, and in 2022 that spirit was definitely sotol. Another traditional Mexican spirit distilled from a native plant, sotol is superficially similar to tequila and mezcal, but it's not produced from any species of agave. Rather, sotol is made from ... well, sotol, the plant known otherwise as "desert spoon." The cores, or piñas, of the sotol plant are roasted in underground pits, as in the production of mezcal, although for whatever reason most of the sotols I've tasted haven't had nearly the same overt smokiness as your average mezcal. Rather, sotol often tastes like an herbaceous explosion, celebrating the plant-forward flavors of its point of origin.

### 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORPORATION

Quechol Sotol is one of the companies trying to pounce on the tiny U.S. market for sotol, with a very traditional product that comes in two expressions, each highlighting a different species of sotol plant. In each case, the spirit is produced by cooking the cores in a volcanic rock pit oven for three days, fed by mesquite, before the cores are shredded and undergo natural fermentation without the use of additional cultivated yeast. The fermented liquid is then distilled twice in copper pot stills. I found myself preferring the Quechol Sotol Wheeleri, as we wrote when first tasting it:

The nose on this one quickly announces that the differences between the two brands will be fairly easy for most drinkers to perceive—they're similar, certainly, but the Wheeleri immediately stands out in a different way from the Texanum. This one is significantly brighter and sweeter on the nose, with much more pronounced, tangy fruit tones of lemon or grapefruit, paired with bay leaf and a little brown spice. Clove, perhaps? On the palate this is likewise tart and punchy, while also being significantly sweeter than the Texanum. That sweetness and acid makes for a brighter and more angular profile, suggesting creme brulee grapefruit, and a habanero-like fruitiness, albeit without the chile heat. The Wheeleri is also sort of perfumey and floral, which to me likely makes this one the more attractive of the two for neat drinking purposes.

#### QUECHOL / WHEELERI SOTOL