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Reporting from Mexico: Robert Parker Wine Advocate Launches Mezcal Review

With the growing popularity of Mexico's agave-based artisan spirit, Robert Parker Wine Advocate branches out to deliver an authoritative introduction and review of 20 Mezcals in a special report

Robert Parker Wine Advocate brings its readers a special report on mezcal this July, adding to the breadth and depth of trusted wine and drinks coverage available on its subscriber-based website, robertparker.com.

This agave-based spirit is often called "Mexico in a bottle," and its explosive array of flavors and character have attracted increasing global acclaim. From fresh, sweet and clear styles to the textured cindery smokiness of more serious sips, and even the unexpected discovery of rabbit-infused pechuga mezcal (a style of mezcal made with an infusion of meat, fruit or herbs), the evocative tastes of mezcal are brought to life for new generations of drinkers around the world.

Says Nicolas Achard, CEO of *Robert Parker Wine Advocate*, "Agave-based spirits such as mezcal and tequila have shown up as one of the fastest-growing spirits categories of the past few years. *Robert Parker Wine Advocate's* new mezcal report offers insightful reviews on this category that complements our latest initiatives to provide consumers with timely, expert opinions on global drinks trends."

"Vino de Mezcal"

Once called *vino de mezcal* or "mezcal wine" by Spanish colonists, the distillation of agave-based spirits became widespread in Mexico in the mid-17th century. As guest columnist Emma Janzen reports, agave has long been central to the lives of Mexican people, and each variety has its own distinct shape, size, color, growing season and time to maturity—all characteristics that influence the flavor of a finished mezcal.

For this first Mexico report, *Robert Parker Wine Advocate* is pleased to tap the expertise of Emma Janzen, who is the author of *Mezcal: The History, Craft & Cocktails of the World's Ultimate Artisanal Spirit*, which was nominated for a James Beard Award in 2018, as well as a veteran reporter on the drinks and spirits beat for multiple publications.

The report consists of 20 recommendations for every level of mezcal drinker, from the beginner to connoisseurs. Below are excerpts from the list.

Good for Beginners

Los Siete Misterios Coyote:

The mezcal-making tradition in the Sola de Vega area of Oaxaca is to distill in clay pots, which makes for mezcal with a big, soft mouthfeel. Made with the coyote variety of agave, this mezcal from Siete Misterios offers a round body with a good layer of minerality, plus notes of cooked yams, cocoa and cinder.

Montelobos Ensemble:

For drinkers looking for a thick layer of smoke character, the Ensemble mezcal from Montelobos—a mix of cultivated papalote, tobalá and espadín agaves, made in the state of Puebla—is a robust and stirring spirit with flavors of charred green bell pepper, yellow flowers and wet soil.

Good for Special Occasions

Grulani Tobalá:

Made by mezcalero Leo Hernández (the son of Cosme Hernández, who produces for Alipus), in the Oaxacan town of San Baltazar Guelavila, this tobalá-based mezcal tastes elegant and elevated with a sublime balance and great depth of flavor. It carries the palate on a journey from luminous white lily flavors deep down into the dark depths of smoldering oak.

Bosscal Conejo:

Historically, pechuga mezcals (a style of mezcal made with an infusion of meat, fruit or herbs) were only made and consumed for rituals, holidays and special occasions, so in that same spirit, the rabbit-infused mezcal from Bosscal in the state of Durango is a unique savory mezcal that's a great fit for non-vegan drinkers. It explodes with flavors of salty cinnamon, blood orange rind and hints of dried thyme and oregano.

Good for Cocktails

Del Maguey Vida de Muertos:

When Del Maguey first released Vida, it was a game-changer for bartenders everywhere; and recently the company released a new version of the famous mezcal, made with a slightly higher proof than the flagship. This bump in alcohol percentage gives the mezcal a boost in structure and flavor, which means it works even better in cocktails than its predecessor. It also functions as an easygoing sipper with lovely notes of pineapple, limestone and peppery spice.

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About Emma Janzen

Emma Janzen is an occasional contributor to Robert Parker Wine Advocate, journalist, photographer, and formerly Imbibe Magazine's digital content editor. Emma has manifested countless stories on the origins and nuances of drinks for the past decade, for publications such as PUNCH, Bon Appetit, Eater, and Serious Eats.

Her first book, Mezcal: The History, Craft and Cocktails of the World's Ultimate Artisanal Spirit, was nominated for a James Beard Foundation award in 2018; The Way of the Cocktail, which she co-authored with Kumiko owner Julia Momosé (2021) won a JBFA in 2022; she's contributed to David Wondrich's The Oxford Companion to Spirits and Cocktails (2021); and co-authored The Bartender's Manifesto with Toby Maloney of The Violet Hour (2022).

Writing and editing from her home base in the Midwest, Emma prefers her mezcal neat and her martinis made with gin.

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About Robert Parker Wine Advocate

Robert Parker Wine Advocate is the world's premier independent wine buyer's website, with a database of more than 450,000 tasting notes, scores and reviews from professional critics around the world. For over 40 years, *Robert Parker Wine Advocate* (a part of the MICHELIN Group of companies) has been the global leader and independent consumer's guide to fine wine with its 100-point rating system and in-depth coverage of major wine regions.

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