



Raising the Bar



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Proudly Presents:



THE SEMI-ANNUAL BEVERAGE MENU MAKE-OVER CONTEST

One lucky restaurant will win 2 days of hands on staff and management training by master mixologist and renowned flair bartender Gavin MacMillan, focusing on:

- accuracy, • speed • flair • cocktail synergy
- time management behind the bar • review of current menu and full menu makeover.

Here's what to do: Complete the ballot below (one entry per establishment). Mail/or fax your ballot to the coordinates listed below. We'll take care of the rest. Gavin will visit your restaurant to help your staff 'Raise the Bar.'

Name: _____

Establishment: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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One Way Ticket to Margaritaville

As a Canadian, when I think of tequila I get flashbacks of an all-inclusive vacation in Mexico with a hangover. To most of us, it's simply a shot that gets thrown back with a lick of salt and a squeeze of citrus fruit to kill the after-taste. All of that is about to change...

Tequila is one of the more versatile spirits. It's diverse and its great depth of flavour makes it a natural ingredient for cocktails. Despite a massive worldwide tequila shortage in 2000 and the resulting increase in price as supplies diminished, tequila remains one of the premier spirits on any bar south of the border. While vodka still reigns supreme as the number one spirit sold, the cosmopolitan falls a distant second to the margarita which is the world's most popular cocktail, and has been for years.

In London, England, tequila is such a phenomenon that there are upscale tequila bars boasting tequila lists with 300-400 brands, including Extra Añejo (Aged) sipping tequilas priced in the stratospheric range of a great single-malt scotch. As Canadians, we're somewhat limited by the small selection of tequilas on offer in liquor stores. Most provinces (with the exception of Alberta) have only a few dozen tequilas available for sale, however, most government agencies will special order the top shelf brands on request. To simplify things, here are a few tequila facts to dispel the rumours. Tequila is usually bottled in one of five categories. Only the first two should be used to mix cocktails.

- Blanco "white" or plata "silver" – not aged white spirit.
- Oro "gold" – unaged or young, which means that caramel, fructose, glycerin and wood flavoring can be added to resemble aged tequila.
- Reposado "rested" – aged a minimum of 2 months but less than a year in oak barrels.
- Añejo "aged" or "vintage" – aged minimum one year, but less than three years in oak barrels.
- Extra añejo "extra aged" – aged minimum three year in oak barrels. This is a new category established in March 2006.

One of the greatest rumours surrounding tequila involves the presence of a worm in the

bottom of the bottle. In fact, the worm phenomenon was started in the 1940s as a marketing gimmick. The worm lives on the Mezcal plant. It's harmless to consume and is only found in select brands of Mezcal. Mezcal is a Mexican distilled spirit made from the agave plant, and covers any agave-based liquors that are not tequila.



Tequila is a Mezcal made from the blue agave plant in the town of Tequila, Jalisco,

much like cognac is a brandy made in the cognac region, or champagne is a sparkling wine from the champagne region.

One reason margaritas may have never enjoyed the same success in Canada as they have in the south is due to the fact that most bartenders rim the glass with table salt and the three tiered rimmer "dip and dunk" method. When you're rimming a margarita glass remember that the rimming ingredient belongs only on the outside edge of the glass, not on the inside, where it will likely become part of the cocktail. Moisten the outside of the glass with a lime and roll the moistened surface in coarse sea salt or kosher salt for your glass rimmer. It's the easiest way to ensure that your glass is not overloaded with salt. If you must use the dip and dunk method, please do yourself and your guest a favour and wipe the excess off of the inside of the glass with a beverage napkin before you pour the cocktail in and inadvertently create a salt water margarita.

Following the infusion trends of vodka, rum and gin, several tequila distillers have jumped on the flavoured spirit bandwagon. I have tried quite a few but recently came across a new one called Kaban which produces 100 per cent agave tequila in lime citrus, tropical pineapple, and most notably tangerine-infused varieties. All are good, but the Kaban Tangerine goes brilliantly in this month's cocktail of the month – the azure margarita. The synergy of tangerine with the larahas orange flavour of Blue Curacao is a natural match that is appealing to both the eye and the palate.

Made correctly, the tangerine-infused azure margarita will sell itself. With guests rightly demanding more from their bartenders and their dining and drinking experience, it's important to make sure your staff is well trained. Until next time keep 'raising the bar' in your establishment, because if you don't, someone else will!

The Azure Margarita

1 oz. Kaban Tangerine Tequila

1/2 oz. Blue Curacao

3 oz. Island Originals Margarita Mix

Sea salt rim and garnish with and orange and cherry



Gavin MacMillan was Canada's Top Ranked Flair Bartender in 2005. He trains, competes and performs all over the world and operates Canada's Premier Bartender Training Facility, BartenderOne. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.