

WINE ENTHUSIAST

MAY 2016

the crush
AGAVE CENTRALMARGARITA
MADNESSFour takes on everyone's
favorite Tequila tippie.

Glance down the long wooden bar at The Esquire Tavern in San Antonio—the longest in Texas, spanning over 100 feet—and you'll see a whole lot of margaritas.

It's easy to understand why. Esquire's Nuestra Margarita ("Our Margarita," in Spanish) hits all the right notes: it's strong, you don't taste the booze and it straddles the line between sweet and sour. Paired with a Frito Pie, a Texas specialty, it's hard to imagine ever vacating the barstool.

"The Margarita is the quintessential Tequila cocktail, and the cocktail most ordered in Texas bars," says Houston Eaves, beverage director for The Esquire Tavern and creator of the Nuestra, which he describes as "my interpretation of the perfect margarita."

His version stays close to the classic recipe, with a couple of subtle tweaks: he adds a little aged reposado Tequila in addition to blanco for complexity, and uses super-acidic Key limes, "the lime most often encountered in Mexico," he says.

"These ingredients harmonize into a wonderful symphony of flavors," which Eaves says "truly represent what a Margarita can and deserves to be."

Here are four margaritas to try at home for Cinco de Mayo (May 5), which commemorates the 1862 victory of the Mexican army over the French (it's not Mexican Independence Day, as many mistakenly believe). Whether your taste runs to the sweet-and-tart classic, fruity, smoky or spicy, raise a toast to Mexico's heritage—and get ready to mix up a second round.

—Kara Newman

HOW TO RIM A GLASS WITH SALT

This easy technique adds a mouth-watering touch to margaritas. Experiment with different types of salt like pink Himalayan or black salt for drama. If a salted rim isn't your thing, you can skip it or just rim half the glass, as many bars do.

- ¼ cup salt
- 1 lime wedge

Pour the salt on a plate or shallow dish. Cut a slit in the lime, and rub it along the rim of the glass to moisten. Roll the edge of the glass in the salt to coat. Set the salt-rimmed glass in the freezer while you mix your drink.



SPICY: El Pepino

Adapted from Rob Day, beverage manager, Maya, New York City

- 1 ounce cucumber purée
- ¼ inch slice fresh jalapeño pepper
- 1½ ounces blanco Tequila
- 1½ ounces fresh lime juice
- ½ ounce agave nectar
- Chili piquin or ancho chili powder and salt to rim glass, optional
- Cucumber wheel, for garnish

Crush the jalapeño in the bottom of a mixing glass using a muddler or back of a spoon. Add remaining liquid ingredients, cucumber purée and ice to glass. Shake well, and strain into a double rocks glass rimmed with chili powder and salt, if desired. Fill glass with fresh ice and garnish with cucumber wheel.

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