

America's best bars for tequila lovers
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Barrio Star's roasted jalapeño blackberry margarita is made with roasted jalapeño-infused Giro tequila, agave, fresh lime juice and blackberry puree.

Tequila — despite lack of judgment in our college days — is a fine spirit that should be respected. And while it's flavorful in a cocktail and certainly deserves accolades in the margarita, good tequila can be sipped. And finally, we have places to do so.

But first, a bit of history: Tequila is distilled from the Weber Blue Agave plant, which is a member of the lily family. Antonio Rodriguez, the Patron production manager, advises that in order to legally be called tequila, the spirit must be

produced in Mexico, in specifically designated areas called appellation of origin, and it must contain at least 51% agave. Rodriguez says that tequila is widely recognized as the

first spirit produced in North America. “The history of tequila dates back hundreds of years to the ancient Aztecs who drank a variation of this popular spirit at religious ceremonies and celebrations.”



With a fine tequila selection, Barrio Star truly shines with outstanding and fresh tequila-based cocktails — mostly of the margarita variety.

Gone are the days of poor-quality Tequila Sunrise cocktails. Today, top-shelf tequilas are often best served simply. “A top-quality tequila like Patrón is so highly versatile — you can drink it in any number of cocktails (not only margaritas, but also in drinks that typically call for vodka or other spirits), or neat, or on the rocks,” says Rodriguez. There’s also the popular Paloma, made with tequila, grapefruit soda, lime and a pinch of salt.



Barrio Star, in San Diego, is a bright and funky restaurant from Isabel Cruz.

Tequila is also taking the place of vodka, rum or whiskey in traditional cocktails. Swap rum for the spirit in a mojito, call a tequila-based Bloody Mary the Bloody Maria, and try using tequila or mezcal as an alternative in the Old Fashioned. You can find many of these cocktail variations at the bars and restaurants in the gallery above.