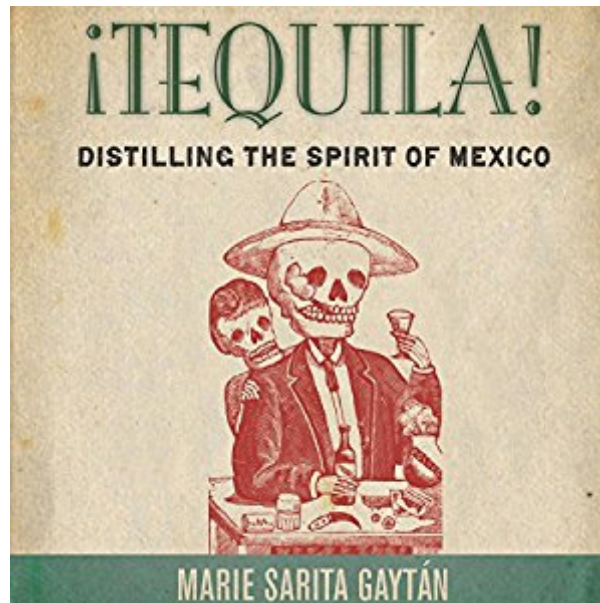




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¡Tequila!: Distilling The Spirit Of Mexico



Synopsis

Italy has grappa, Russia has vodka, Jamaica has rum. Around the world, certain drinks - especially those of the intoxicating kind - are synonymous with their peoples and cultures. For Mexico, this drink is tequila. For many, tequila can conjure up scenes of body shots on Cancun bars and coolly garnished margaritas on sandy beaches. Its power is equally strong within Mexico, though there the drink is more often sipped rather than shot, enjoyed casually among friends, and used to commemorate occasions from the everyday to the sacred. Despite these competing images, tequila is universally regarded as an enduring symbol of lo mexicano. *Tequila! Distilling the Spirit of Mexico* traces how and why tequila became and remains Mexico's national drink and symbol. Starting in Mexico's colonial era and tracing the drink's rise through the present day, Marie Sarita Gaytán reveals the formative roles played by some unlikely characters. Like all stories about national symbols, the rise of tequila forms a complicated, unexpected, and poignant tale. The book is published by Stanford University Press.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What an interesting history and an insight into influence of the Blue Agave and Tequila on the Mexican culture and its history.

Great book. Ordered it for an anthropology class i am taking for my undergrad. The author draws you in to the genuine Mexican spirit. Great read.

Contemporary style (Human, narrative oriented) history books are rapidly proliferating for every subject under the sun, providing entertainment and information in equal parts. Naturally the history of alcohol, particularly those with a cultural tradition as long and rich as tequila, are obviously fertile ground. While this book has the building blocks to be a great contemporary history, the execution could have been improved:-First and foremost, Ms. Gaytan is more than a little heavy handed with sociology theory and terminology, at times reading like a textbook with voluminous footnotes and cross-references with other works. Historians will no doubt appreciate this, but it might drag down the experience somewhat for everyone else.-She has the bad habit of many modern historians to discuss the human experience exclusively through the lens of social division and oppression. According to the author every part of the history Tequila evolved in spite of latin colonists, the spanish upper class, only to be appropriated by that self-same upper class and later international corporations as an additional tool of oppression. All this might be true, but the unleavened cynicism is tough to digest at times. None of this is to say that Tequila is not worth reading, so long as you are in the right mindset, but there are more enjoyable, digestible, and equally rich histories available.

Books on simple tequila trivia are three a penny but if your interest in the topic goes beyond the manufacturing process and how many parts of grenadine to put in your next Tequila Sunrise, this is the one for you. As the ingenious title suggests, Dr. Gaytan's primary focus is how tequila became Mexico's national spirit, taking an in-depth look at the national and international forces that have shaped its perception, and, in one stand-out chapter, why it beat down the many other contenders for the throne. Tracing the drink from its pre-Colombian origins to its present-day ubiquity, Gaytan's deep research employs historical texts, film, novels, media, interviews, and examinations of important cultural figures such as Pancho Villa and Lucha Reyes, who have, rightly or wrongly, become synonymous with the beverage. Later chapters look at how marketing and legislation have cherry-picked iconography from tequila's past to maintain and elevate tequila's emblematic status, all with thoughtful analysis of the actors conspicuously excluded by this process. The last chapter consolidates the ideas of the previous five through interviews with tequila consumers. Gaytan's scintillating prose shows how enjoying a simple beverage can be code for so much more. With my university days an increasingly faded memory, I'm not a huge reader of academic tomes. I am missing at least 20 years of cultural/ gender/ commodity studies vocabulary but luckily Dr. Gaytan has a knack for getting

complicated ideas across without dumbing down or diluting meaning. Stanford University Press have on their hands the most accessible, readable, in-depth study of tequila I have yet come across. Dare I even call it a page turner.

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