




# Beverage Industry News



**BIN**

## THE ART OF MAKING MEZCAL

### Cheech Marin Introduces Tres Papalote

by Francine Cohen

*Scads and scads of celebrities have affixed their names to wines and spirits throughout the years; from red and white wines to bottled margarita mixes, sake, tequila, rum and cognac. No matter the spirit, or the relevancy of the association, these celebrities and their managers (and the brands) have seemingly found a certain additional cache to be found in promoting themselves and bolstering their career as the face of the brand. For many, these partnerships were head scratchers and clearly just a marriage of convenience (and capitalism). Nothing in their career, nor their personal lives, indicated there was any relevancy to the brand they were pushing and, while we don't want to name names, many spirits professionals who were called upon to pour said spirits didn't take many of these brand representatives, or their products, all too seriously. But then came along Cheech Marin and his new mezzal Tres Papalote.*

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Finally, a marriage of celebrity and sipping that makes sense. Many spirit professionals with a sense of humor, especially those who recall the beginnings of Marin's career, are taking positive notice of this spirit which includes an element of smoke in its production process. They are connecting the dots of mezcals production and its no-brainer relation to the fellow who, in 1978, went "Up In Smoke" in his first feature length film. Why? Sure, it's funny to giggle about getting high (or when you're high) but Cheech, the renowned comedian, actor and director who first hit the scene as one half of the irreverent stoner-hippie comic duo Cheech and Chong has always come across as authentic. And, if there's anything that mezcals can be labeled as (aside from an agave spirit), it's as an authentic taste of Mexico.

As a Mexican American who set out early in his career to do comedy and, in the process tweak his nose at the establishment a bit, Cheech has aged like a fine reposado and, over the years, he has amassed one of the world's most impressive Chicano art collections. Like Marcus of Rivera Imports (the group which brought Tres Papalote to the States and together with Cheech) comments on his long and successful career and his favorite role of all he's taken on now, "Cheech Marin has long been heralded as one of America's favorite comedians and has gained a reputation as a 'feel good, enjoy life, have fun' persona. Cheech brings to the Tres Papalote collaboration his passion for living one's best life ever, with an invitation to consumers to step up to the elegance of the Tres Papalote experience. Cheech is admired as the owner of the most extensive Chicano art collection in the world. He feels that it is important to use his celebrity status to call attention to what he sees as an under-appreciated and under-represented style of art. Cheech

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proudly travels the world exhibiting his art collection as an avid supporter of the Chicano art form. Accompanying his experience as a respected businessman and art collector, Cheech has developed the taste level of a sophisticated gentleman. As Brand Ambassador, his message to the public is "Now it's your turn—discover the spirit of a new era and experience the magic of Tres Papalote Mezcal—my Mezcal!"

The public will soon be enjoying the magic of Tres Papalote. Marcus and her team at Riviera were thrilled to recently add this mezcals to their portfolio knowing that the burgeoning spirit category could use another great contender. When they went to Mexico to research existing mezcals that they could bring back for Americans to enjoy they were fortunate to happen upon Tres Papalote fairly early on in the process. Immediately upon tasting the mezcals made from the Capreata agave they knew they had found "the one." Tres Papalote has a slightly sweet taste with a hint of citrus notes and is not quite as smoky as other mezcals already on the market. She comments, "We tried very few. Once we tasted the mezcals from the Capreata agave, we loved the delicious slightly sweet taste, and that was it! We recently were at a big Mezcal tasting event in San Francisco and tasted at least 20 other brands and believe that Tres Papalote was one of the best - if not the best tasting mezcals. It simply tastes wonderful!"

She continues, "Mezcal is trending all around the U.S. It's fun, it's chic, it tastes excellent in a mixed cocktail, and the experience of mezcals is like no other. Once you get down in - it never lets you go. Cheech has been a mezcals devotee for years and wanted to share his appreciation for this mystical spirit with others." For those who may or may not already be mezcals drinkers,



it doesn't matter, Tres Papalote will appeal to a variety of palates. Marcus explains, "We believe the audience will be very broad based. The tequila lover will enjoy Tres Papalote, as well as a single malt whiskey drinker. We have taken Tres Papalote to many different environments to be tasted by consumers - and was quite surprised that scotch drinkers - many who drink no other spirit - really like Tres Papalote. As far as age demographic: the young are setting the trend by a growing interest in mezcals - and the mature, sophisticated drinker has now discovered this category. As Cheech says, "It's your turn - Discover a new era!"

Discovery has long been a passion of Cheech's and he is pleased to share his new mezcals with people as he is thrilled to show off his art (which has been on a multi-city tour to much acclaim. The exhibit: Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Vegas was a 15-city tour that broke attendance records in the major museums in which it was housed. Drawing that many people and getting them involved and interested in his art is exactly what he looks forward to replicating with Tres Papalote. He derives an especially large amount of pleasure in sharing this new product with people and opening their eyes to the liquid art of mezcals making. He says, "Mezcals has long been admired by a small amount of consumers, as it has been mostly unknown for years. Because Mezcal went underground many decades ago - not many people have known about it. It was made

in such small batches and totally artisanal that it didn't gain the attention that tequila did. With Tres Papalote coming to mezcals - this will now change. We are committed to sharing the experience of Tres Papalote with consumers everywhere."

Everywhere that consumers are in the market for mezcals it shouldn't be hard to spot the Tres Papalote bottle; the front label is emblazoned with one of Cheech's prized pieces of artwork. Marcus shares, "The bottle image, is a one-dimensional adaptation of a piece brought into Cheech's collection in 2011, developed from a glass figurine embodying the colorful and fun-loving essence that is part of the intrigue of Tres Papalote/Mezcal. The figurine itself was skillfully crafted by the artists Elinor and James De La Torre. The brothers moved from Guadalajara, Mexico to California in 1972. James started lampworking glass in 1977 - Cheech is a great admirer of their talent."

She continues, "We knew we wanted the bottle decoration to come from Cheech's art collection - and as proud as he is of the Tres Papalote product, he is of his art collection. A perfect match!"

The beauty of the artwork on the bottle is easily matched by the beautiful spirit within the bottle. Riviera is bringing three expressions of the mezcals to market; the 40% ABV which is the flagship product for everyone who wishes to experience

the smooth-tasting, elegant notes of Tres Papalote; a 40% ABV offering which is designed for on-premise, offering access to Tres Papalote at a lower price point and 2016 will see Tres Papalote's Botanical Mezcal with a delightful infused fragrance. The Master Mezcalero is both a mezcals aficionado and, more importantly, an expert grower. He oversees every phase of the production process from the aging of the pitas and determining their ripeness, to keeping a close eye on the talhons used to crush the agave, as well as counting his perlas (more on that in a moment). The capreata agave is grown high on the mountainside and is aged for approximately seven years before heading down the hill and Marcus explains, "The pitas are indeed carried down from the mountainside by a donkey or a horse. The hills are way too steep for a vehicle."

Depending on the amount of pitas that are being brought down at a time - they will use a cart or just transport them in satchels on the side of the donkey or horse." Once the four-legged helpers have brought its precious cargo down to the distillery the agave is muddled in an Egyptian mill and prepared for distillation. This process can take as long as a week depending on weather and season. After being crushed by the traditional talhona (a heavy stone which is used to grind the pitas to a pulp) the juice is placed in wooden barrels and the natural fermentation process begins. The barrels are covered with agave fibers to avoid contact

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