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How to Get Faded off Mezcal Like Cheech Marin

The legendary comedian launches a new brand of liquor and shares the recipe for his favorite Timothy Leary cocktail

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There was no bonding over shared joints or laughing fits between fistfuls of Cheetos at Cheech Marin's cliffside Malibu home that night. Rather, it was filled with street tacos from *La Reyna*, conversations about his private Chicano art collection, and craft cocktails made with his new brand of mezcal, *Tres Papalote*. He really has come a long way since driving a van made entirely of weed in *Up in Smoke*.

Even Marin's introduction to mezcal was fancy. Having pool-pooched the spirit when he was growing up in L.A. ("It looked like a souvenir you got when you went down to T.J."), he didn't develop an interest in it until his good friend Chef John Sedlar (Rivera) presented it to him in the form of a cricket-rimmed cocktail.

"[Sedlar] turned me onto it, not through straight shots but mixed drinks. And that really made all the difference in the world," he explains. "It's really tropical, it had a smoky flavor—chiles—and I thought, 'Wow, this is good!'"



At the same time his friend Edward Caan of Riviera Imports, the same company that imported the *Ron Burgundy* scotch, was looking to create a product with Marin. Since the tequila category was already oversaturated, Marin's newfound love for mezcal presented itself as the direction to go. Apart from the fact that it seemed like a great opportunity—it's what all the celebs are doing these days—the comedian liked the idea of becoming the face of a seemingly faceless category. "What I figured is that mezcal didn't really have a face. It had no identity. And mezcal seems to be on the rise," he says.

What sets Tres Papalote apart from most other mezcals, besides its celebrity backing, is that not only is it made from Cupreata agave which comes from Guerrero as opposed to Oaxaca, the mezcal is approachable with just a subtle smokiness.

Even *Los Angeles* magazine's resident mezcal expert *Bill Espares* liked it: "It was a pleasant surprise to learn that Tres Papalote mezcal clocks in at 46 degrees, respecting tradition, and is a nice, balanced expression of Guerreran cupreata, or maguay papalote. And as a *poco*, having Cheech as a brand ambassador seals the deal."

Its drinkability was an important feature to have according to Marin who wanted to create a mezcal that appealed more to the mainstream public. "You don't want the taste to be very specific, very esoteric that only aficionados can appreciate," he says.

Yusef Austin, the mixologist and representative for the brand, highlighted the spirit's versatility by creating a light, bright cocktail for the launch event, rather than the usual dark and intense mezcal cocktail. "It lends itself really well to a plethora of different ingredients. I'm using it with sesame, guava, blood orange, Kaffir lime leaves," he says.

But if you really want to drink like Cheech, make his favorite cocktail at home. It's basically a tequila and tonic with a lemon twist (one-third tequila, two-thirds tonic and a twist). "Timothy Leary taught me that drink," he says, namedropping but not, because he's Cheech Marin. "We used to drink that all the time; he was a good buddy of mine. I suppose you could do it with the mezcal, too."

Tres Papalote mezcal will be available in Southern California at the end of March. *Liquorama* is slated to start shipping it in a couple of weeks.

TAGS: CELEBRITY, CHEECH MARIN, COCKTAILS, MEZCAL

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