

Tequila, pour favor?

Cork up the Courvoisier, stow The Macallan – it's time to head South

These añejos – or old ones – are the Rolls Royces of the tequila family and are meant to be savored the same way as a fine single-malt scotch. Unlike the “mixtos” that are plentiful at your local cantina, añejos are distilled from 100 percent blue agave (plant) and aged for more than one year in oak barrels. I chose a dozen personal favorites from my collection to fit all palates and pocketbooks. Although any one would be a bold addition to your bar, I've rated these 750 mL bottles on a 10-point scale. As with other premium spirits, the length of aging directly affects the smoothness and the barrels themselves may impart a flavor to their contents. These tequilas should be enjoyed as a simple pleasure – served neat, with no lime or salt-rimmed glass. Only the traditional chaser of sangrita (a spicy tomato/orange drink) should accompany these offerings from south of the border. And if someone asks, “Where's the worm?” Tell them that's mezcal, and that's another story.

SELECTIONS BY **EVANGELOS MIHELIS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BOB BIELK**

Milagro Romance¹

The bottle is a marvel to look at: a 1-year-old reposado (750 mL) surrounds triple chambers of a 3-year-old añejo (250 mL). Although the quality of the liquors does not compare to others on this list, the unique presentation is worth a place at your home bar.

Price: \$120
Rating: 6

Don Julio Real¹²

It begins with a full agave nose and finishes silky smooth with just a hint of sweetness. This 5-year-old is the flagship for Don Julio – a consistently outstanding line.

Price: \$350
Rating: 8.8



Stallion²

An uncomplicated 4-year-old that is reasonably priced. Not an ultra-premium añejo, but a solid offering from one of Mexico's consistent producers.

Price: \$60
Rating: 7.5

Los Azulejos³

Not as sweet as some, but this young 3-year-old has a full agave nose and vibrant flavor. A gorgeous mosaic bottle houses this fine offering.

Price: \$100
Rating: 8.2

Casa Noble⁴

A pleasant agave nose and deep gold color, but with more bite than other extra-aged tequilas. Bottles are hand-painted with 18-karat-gold accents.

Price: \$80
Rating: 7.8

Chinaco Emperador⁵

More bourbonlike than others with an aggressive agave nose and robust flavor. Released in limited quantity, this 7-year-old añejo is a collector's tequila.

Price: \$300
Rating: 8

Rey Sol⁶

Bold with a slight caramel sweetness to it, this 6-year-old is a treat for the mouth. The golden liquid, as well as the bottle, will bring a smile to your face.

Price: \$230
Rating: 8.7

Jose Cuervo Reserva⁷

Forget what you know, this is the only Jose Cuervo worth tasting. Based on a 200-year-old recipe, the Reserva de la Familia is a must for your bar.

Price: \$80
Rating: 9.5

Herradura⁸

Seleccion Suprema Smooth with just a hint of sweetness. This 4-year-plus aged tequila is one of the stars of its class. An amazing after-dinner drink.

Price: \$300
Rating: 9.8

El Tesoro Paradiso⁹

Aged in bourbon and cognac barrels, this 5-year-old has a slight bourbon flavor and a beautifully dark amber color. One of the smoothest available.

Price: \$110
Rating: 9.2

Porfidio¹⁰

Single Barrel Sweet like dark chocolate caramel, with a thick texture that dances on the palate. It is difficult to find, but well worth the search.

Price: \$140
Rating: 9.0

Don Fulano¹¹

Imperial Flowery with a slight honeysuckle taste. This 5-year-old is deceptively dark in color, but surprisingly sweet and mellow tasting.

Price: \$110
Rating: 8.9