

Más Mezcal

A MEXICAN SPIRIT TAKES MANHATTAN. BY DALENE ROVENSTINE

Casa Mezcal

The bar at this LES spot stocks nearly 40 kinds of the namesake agave spirit, including Los Amantes, Mezcales de Leyenda Oaxaca, and Yuu Baal (a heavy-weight at 51 percent alcohol). Try them by the glass, or indulge in a house cocktail—most of which have mezcal as a base. One spicy drink, the Llano en Llamas, blends the smokiness of mezcal with pineapple, basil, and serrano pepper. Top off your evening downstairs at mixologist Miguel Aranda's Botanic Lab bar, which has an inventive cocktail menu based on botanicals. **86 Orchard St., 212-777-2600; casamezcalny.com**

Empellón

Whether visiting the taqueria in the West Village or the cocina in the East Village, Empellón does not disappoint. Both locations use mezcal to spice up cocktail classics like the Old Fashioned and the Lagerita. The Sangria Blanco (made with Fidencio Clásico mezcal, St-Germain and Combier liqueurs, and dry white wine) pairs perfectly with the lobster tacos. **230 W. Fourth St., 212-367-0999; 105 First Ave., 212-780-0999; empellon.com**

La Biblioteca

Sink into a cozy sofa in this candlelit, Prohibition-style hideaway with

mezcal glass in hand and a bowl of spicy crab guacamole nearby. The underground bar and lounge from restaurateur Richard Sandoval has more than 40 types of mezcals—among them such premium brands as Pierde Almas, Scorpion, Don Amado, Illegal, and Los Nahuales—available by the snifter or bottle. “La Biblioteca allows me to share the food I am passionate about cooking along with my hand-picked collection of premium mezcal pours,” Sandoval says. Frequent guests can even obtain a locker for six-month storage of purchased bottles. **622 Third Ave., 212-808-8110; richardsandoval.com/labiblioteca**

La Cenita

The EMM Group's latest restaurant project focuses on Mexican-inspired small plates. And what better way to complement them than with a Mexican spirit? Mezcal newbies should try the sweetened Pancho Villa cocktail, which uses Alacrán mezcal, maple syrup, lemon, and Cointreau. “Being a big fan of mezcal and knowing how acquired a taste it is, I created the Pancho Villa to be an accessible introduction to the spirit,” says lead bartender Billy Potvin. “Right now, mezcal is attracting a younger crowd, and also [introducing] the palates of an older, Scotch-drinking generation to a

new cocktail experience.” **409 W. 14th St., 646-289-3930; emmgrp.com/restaurants/la-cenita**

Los Americanos

This Latin fusion eatery in Tribeca recognizes the growing influence of mezcal. “The spirit is now being made by great companies—like Illegal—in smaller batches, so it has more of an artisanal [quality],” says head bartender Juan Arboleda. “And who doesn't love hand-crafted?” Cocktail aficionados can try Arboleda's namesake drink, the Juanarita—made with mezcal, anise, egg white, and jalapeño syrup—or the house favorite, Under the Volcano, with mezcal, jalapeño, rosemary, bitters, lime, and worm salt (yes, it's salt made with ground agave worms). **305 Church St., 212-680-0101; losamericanos.com**

Mayahuel

This East Village restaurant was the first bar in Manhattan to develop a drinks program solely around agave spirits. The menu typically has between 40–50 cocktails, half of which are made with mezcal. “The majority of our cocktails are structured in the vein of pre-Prohibition drinks,” says owner and beverage director Philip Ward, referring to their complex flavors and technique. At a place that goes through two to four cases of mezcal a weekend, guests are sure to encounter the spirit in some form or another—whether it's in a savory or spicy drink, a custom cocktail mixed with whiskey or brandy, or simply paired with a red snapper and scallop ceviche. **304 E. Sixth St., 212-253-5888; mayahuelny.com** **G**

Casa Mezcal's Spicy Mezcal Margarita.



Drinks at Pouring Ribbons incorporate exotic ingredients.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Pouring Ribbons gives mezcal a tropical makeover.

The East Village's Pouring Ribbons is known for its exclusivity and custom concoctions by renowned mixologists. The menu is dotted with flavorful creations, and the takes on mezcal are anything but ordinary. The Midnight Marauder, for example, is a twist on the Negroni made with Del Maguey Vida mezcal, while the tiki-style Border Patrol features Sombra mezcal and too many ingredients to list, topped by a pineapple frond and dried chile. Additionally, the bar includes the complete Alipus mezcal lineup, many Fidencio types, and rare Del Maguey bottlings. **225 Avenue B, Second Fl., 917-656-6788; pouringribbons.com**

