



Cheech Marin
LIVING BETTER



LOVING BETTER
DRINKING BETTER

By Ruth Tobias

Photos by Phillip Stark / Tres Papalote Mezcal

For many a teen in the 1970s and 1980s, Richard “Cheech” Marin, along with his comedy partner Tommy Chong, was the diplomat of dope, the guru of laughing grass, the sky pilot of stoner culture. However, he’s about to become the life of another, rather more grown-up party as the ambassador of newly minted mezcal Tres Papalote.

Distillates of Agave cupreata, a wild mountain species native to the Mexican states of Guerrero and Michoacán, are fairly rare on this side of the border; most of the mezcal we import hails from Oaxaca. But as interest in the spirit grows, so do opportunities for the industry to prove its diversity. Brooklyn-based Riviera Imports set out to develop a brand that would appeal broadly to both agave novices and vets curious about its range of expression, “So we worked with a Mezcalero in Guerrero to create a mezcal that would be easy to drink straight up or on the rocks as well as in cocktails,” Marin explains. “The result, cupreata-based and unaged (joven), has a slightly sweeter flavor and a bit less smokiness than the category standard, with a hint of citrus on the palate. Even my friends who are whiskey drinkers agree that the taste is unique; it’s so smooth.”

That isn’t to say production is atypical. On the contrary, the distillery (or palenque) that makes Tres Papalote exclusively for Riviera does it the way it’s always been done, by hand, from the harvesting and processing of the piña (as the heart of the plant is called), which is roasted in a pit and then crushed by a pack animal pulling a stone wheel, to the barrel fermentation it undergoes prior to distillation.

Marin jokes that “I have the best role as brand ambassador: I do all the tastings! But seriously, it’s a fun experience,” one without a downside, he swears. “You’ll have no nasty hangover the next day. Believe me, I’ve tested it out!” His appreciation for the product is such that he even collaborated on the packaging design: the label depicts “Koo Koo Man,” a glass sculpture from his own Chicano art collection by Guadalajara-born brothers Einar and Jamex De La Torre. Though contemporary, it resembles pre-Columbian relics in a way that “truly represents the whole concept of Tres Papalote,” says Marin. “It’s 100% artisanal,” yet “cool and on the cutting edge.”

And that, after all, is pretty much what today’s drinkers are looking for. Asked what he thinks about the rise in popularity of a spirit that most Americans tended to shy away from on the assumption that it amounted to firewater, Marin asserts, “I’m not surprised at all. I’ve long been a fan of mezcal, from way back; it has an illustrious history and has always been intriguing to me.” It’s the aura of authenticity it carries that most appeals to discerning consumers “looking for the next trend,” he points out. “It’s all about living better, loving better, and drinking better!”

SMOKEY EYES

INGREDIENTS
2 oz. Tres Papalote Mezcal
1 oz. Grapefruit Juice
¾ oz. Campari
¼ oz. Cynar
1 dash Bittermens Xocoloti Mole Bitters

PREPARATION
Shake all ingredients until cold and strain into a coupe. Flamed orange twist to garnish.



THE SPIKE

INGREDIENTS
2 oz. Tres Papalote Mezcal
¾ oz. Fresh Lime Juice
½ oz. Agave Nectar

PREPARATION
Shake all ingredients until cold. Strain over fresh ice. Rocks. Lime wedge and smoky spicy salt rim.



STRAWBERRY FIELDS

INGREDIENTS
1 oz. Tres Papalote Mezcal
¾ oz. Fresh Strawberry Juice
¾ oz. Fresh Lime Juice
½ oz. Agave Nectar

PREPARATION
Shake until cold. Strain into a chilled shot glass. Strawberry ball on a pic to garnish.

