



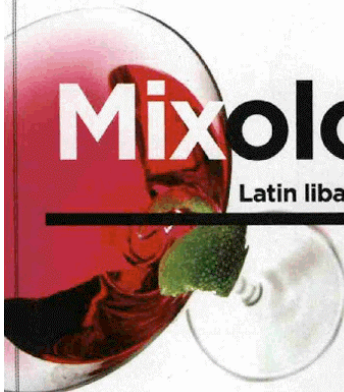
# Executive Travel

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## EXECUTIVE TRAVEL

Advice and insight for—and by—today's executive

TheGoodLife **ST** Time Off



# Mixology

Latin libations go global

Spirits from south of the border lend a new sophistication to cocktail hour. By Camper English

**P**opular cocktails change from season to season, but the Latin spirits used in them have been staying hot year-round. As new, fast-growing spirit categories pisco and cachaça have escaped their native borders, familiar ones—tequila and rum—continue to go upscale.

### Tequila

No spirit category has seen a bigger image makeover in less time than tequila, which in the last two decades has upgraded its reputation from a rotgut drink to an alcohol that rivals scotch whisky for nuance and complexity—and often price. Likely inspired by the Scots, tequila producers have been releasing increasingly longer-aged vintages, single-barrel bottlings, and finishing their products in ex-sherry, cognac and Bordeaux barrels. Even José Cuervo has entered the fray with its 250 Aniversario blend, made with 100-plus-year-old tequila from the family reserves and carrying a price tag of \$2,250 per bottle.

**Upcoming:** Formerly known as that awful stuff with the worm in it, mezcal has gone artisanal (and, thankfully, has lost the insect). Importers like Del Maguey now sell highly collectible, small-batch, single-village mezcal from remote family distillers.

### Rum

White rum will always have a place in frozen daiquiris and other beach drinks, but well-aged, boldly flavored rum from countries like Barbados (Mount Gay) and

Jamaica (Appleton) has finally come of age. Much of it is simply too good to mix into a mojito; connoisseurs prefer to sip it neat, like they would a cognac. At the same time, in the world's top mixology bars, you'll find rum versions of old-fashioned, sazeracs and other whisky cocktails—along with a surprising resurgence of tiki drinks. Welcome back, mai tai.

**Upcoming:** Just as champagne and roquefort cheese have government-monitored production laws and international copyright protection, rhum agricole, from Martinique, has earned French AOC status. Seek out the older bottlings of the brand Rhum Clément, such as the Cuvée Homère.

### Cachaça

This decade's mojito is the caipirinha (kai-purr-EEN-ya), the national drink of Brazil, made with its native spirit, cachaça (ka-SHA-sa)—a combination of fermented and distilled sugarcane juice, which often has grassy notes that make it more savory than other mixing spirits—muddled with raw sugar and fresh limes. You'll find it on drink menus everywhere these days, from beachside bars in Miami to Singapore's top-floor cocktail lounges.

**Upcoming:** Along with Peruvian food and restaurants, the Peruvian (or sometimes Chilean) grape brandy called pisco has become available around the world. Look for the simple pisco sour cocktail,

or try a pisco punch, created in San Francisco during the Gold Rush and now experiencing quite a domestic resurgence. **ST**

*CAMPER ENGLISH is a San Francisco-based freelance writer and consultant who specializes in cocktails and spirits, with a touch of travel thrown in.*

### Bottles to try



**1. Tequila**  
This brand's entire line is exquisite, but the incredibly complex **Partida Elegante tequila** (\$350) is the cream of the crop.

**2. Rum**  
A blend of rums up to 23 years old, **Ron Zacapa** (\$45), from Guatemala, is a sipping rum that also makes a mean cocktail.

**3. Cachaça**  
Some cachaças can be a bit rough on the palate, but a few months of mellowing in ex-cognac casks give **Leblon** (\$27) a soft and gentle taste.



[www.tequilapartida.com](http://www.tequilapartida.com)