



WallStreetJournal.com

February 26, 2010

New York, NY

Circulation: 1,183,654 visits/month

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FEBRUARY 26, 2010, 9:37 PM ET

Finding Brilliant Light, Honey Color In A Post-PE Career

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By Beina Xu

For Gary Shansby, tequila is just like fine wine: there should be absolutely no whiplash in the process of drinking it.

The founder of consumer buyout firm Shansby Group, now TSG Consumer Partners LLC, has always been a wine guy when it comes to his drinks ("I have a vineyard up in Sonoma which I always tell people is the best way to lose money.")

But after decades in the private equity business, he's taken his palette elsewhere – to the agave fields of central-western Mexico, where he launched tequila brand [Partida Tequila](#) from scratch.

"I'm close to turning 70, I'm an old guy now – I've raised enough funds and made enough money and I now I'm going to do something fun," he said.

Spirits was one category his firm had never looked at during his 23 years there, but it piqued his interest after he left the private equity industry. Shansby researched the sector, and tequila came back as the highest growth category for spirits.

The company distills a line of tequila from blue agave, a lily plant "like grapes" and produced like the fruit as well, Shansby explains. The former buyout executive rattled off flavor nuances and distillation statistics.



The True Spirit of Tequila
www.partidatequila.com





"You'll see the different nuances come out like fine wine," Shansby said. "It'll be floral, then dry nut, then you'll get light caramel, and if I didn't do anything there would be a lingering taste that would be very much like agave cooked – like sweet yam."

He explained that 85% of tequilas are cooked in stone or clay ovens, which are beautiful, but leave a bitter taste from the soot; that highland and lowland tequilas differ like Syrah to Pinot Noir; and that the American white oak barrel is the best out there. He named it Partida, which means "departure," after a common family name in Mexico's Jalisco region. Partida bottles range from \$50 to \$350.

Shansby will soon be touring the country with a fellow investor, meeting with chefs to spread the word about food and tequila pairings.

"Think about the brilliant light, honey color in the glass, as the smooth flavors of apricot, pear, peach, and dried herbs settle in your mouth," he wrote in a follow-up email. The tequila is "like a fine wine. You sip it."

As much as the venture is for fun, every good asset will have a wanting buyer: Shansby says he's been getting many calls from interested parties. But would he ever sell Partida to a private equity firm?

"No," Shansby said without much hesitation. "As much as I know the business, they're mostly financial engineers. I'm not down on PE; it just doesn't have the patience it takes here."



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