

# ZEST



## **HOST A TEQUILA TASTING**

*a flight of 3 premium tequilas  
plus Mexican food pairings*

## **MAKE THE PERFECT MARGARITA**

*a refreshing summer recipe*

## **FESTIVE SUMMER DECOR**

*quick & easy diy decor*

Summer 2011 Issue 1

**FOOD DRINKS & ENTERTAINING**

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*choose live cacti or succulents for quick & simple decorations*



# FROM THE ZEST STAFF

*welcome to the first issue of zest!*

We're so excited to kick off the summer entertaining season with our guide to hosting a tequila tasting party! Tequila isn't just for margaritas (though we've got a top-shelf recipe for you try inside) ~ in fact, each tequila variety has a very unique flavor profile.

What better way to celebrate summer & relax with friends and family than with a flight of tequila and some delicious Mexican-inspired recipes to enjoy?

Our tequila tasting party is designed for 6 to 8 people, with appetizers, entrees and dessert, as well as some easy, inexpensive and festive decor ideas that you can do yourself!

¡Salúd!

*Lynne & Erika*

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## *tequila blanco*

Blanco, or silver, tequila is clear and is bottled immediately following the distillation process. It is quite strong and retains much of the pure blue agave flavor. It is the variety most often used for mixing.

### *tasting notes*

aromas of citrus, apple, pear, mint, pepper or pineapple

### *pair with*

Shrimp & Scallop Ceviche

## *tequila reposado*

Reposado, or rested, tequila rests in pipones (storage vats) for anywhere between two months and a year. The process produces a pale, mellow spirit that can be sipped or used for mixing in simple cocktails.

### *tasting notes*

aromas of vanilla, honey, caramel, butterscotch, almond, toffee or spice

### *pair with*

Crab Cakes

## *tequila añejo*

Añejo, or aged, tequila rests for over a year, consequently adopting an amber color and oaky flavor from the pipones.

Its complex and refined flavors are best enjoyed as a sipping spirit.

### *tasting notes*

aromas of vanilla, caramel, butterscotch, brown sugar, almond, toffee, chocolate, oak or spice

### *pair with*

Mexican-Spiced Cocktail Meatballs

# HOW TO TASTE TEQUILA

## *a beginner's guide to tasting a flight of three varieties of tequila*

The glasses you use for your tequila tasting are an important part of the experience. Although tequila is frequently served in a shot glass, the best choice is actually a stemmed glass with a short bowl that tapers slightly toward the top. White wine glasses can be used if you don't have tequila sipping glasses.

The tequila should be at room temperature. If you have 3 glasses for each guest, you can pour all three tequilas at once. If not, pour them one at a time, just clean the glasses between each variety. Each pour should be about 1/2 ounce.

**The first step in tasting is to hold the glass to the light and make note of the color.**

Tequila blanco should be crystal clear, reposado a golden color and añejo can range between golden and amber.

**The next step is to experience the aromas in a three-part process.**

Swirl the tequila in the glass to release these aromas; then, holding the rim of the glass about 1/2 inch from your nose, give it a sniff. Sweet aromas should predominate (see chart on page 4).

Swirl the tequila again. This time, put your nose directly into the glass and sniff. The sweet aromas will still be detectable, but the alcohol vapors should be much more prominent.

Swirl once again, and this time, tilt the glass toward you and sniff near the rim on the far side of the glass. Note the addition of spice to the sweet aromas.

**Now, the actual tasting: take a sip of the tequila and hold it in your mouth for a moment, allowing it to coat your tongue.**

Swallow and then exhale through your mouth. Exhaling releases the alcohol vapors and mellows the "burn." The flavors you experience should include some of the aromas you've already noted, combined with hints of sweetness, bitterness, acidity and/or saltiness.

**The final step is to evaluate the texture and finish.**

Tequila can be smooth, mellow, full-bodied or light and flavors that linger on the palate are considered to be a long finish.

Serve some plain crackers to clear the palate in between tasting the different varieties and compare notes and opinions with your guests. Once you've tasted the different varieties, you may want to sample them again, this time paired with some food (see our recommendations on page 4).



# THE PERFECT MARGARITA

## *ingredients*

3 cups tequila blanco  
1 cup triple sec  
1 cup simple syrup  
1 cup freshly squeezed lime juice  
Kosher salt  
Ice  
Lime wheels for garnish

## *preparation*

Combine the tequila, triple sec, simple syrup and lime juice in a large pitcher and chill for at least 1 hour.

Pour salt into a shallow dish or small plate to a depth of about 1/4 inch. Moisten the rim of each glass with a wedge of lime, then invert the glass into the salt and twirl around until evenly coated. Add several ice cubes to each glass.

To serve, fill a cocktail shaker 2/3 full with ice. Pour one serving of margarita into the shaker and shake vigorously for 15 seconds. Strain into a prepared glass and garnish with a lime wheel. Repeat for additional servings, replacing the ice in the shaker as needed.

*makes a 48-ounce  
pitcher (8 servings)*

# TIPS FOR MAKING THE PERFECT MARGARITA

Choose a tequila made from 100% blue agave for the purest tequila flavor. There are a number of high-quality brands that are widely available as well as reasonably priced.

Make your own simple syrup by combining 1 cup of white sugar with 1 cup of water in a small saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil, and cook until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture is clear and syrupy, about 3 minutes. Allow to cool completely before using.

Squeeze your own lime juice for fresh flavor. You'll need to juice between 8 and 10 limes to make one cup of juice. To get the most juice from each fruit, be sure they're at room temperature, then roll the lime back and forth on a flat surface, applying pressure with the palm of your hand before juicing.

Use kosher or another coarse salt for rimming your glasses. Iodized table salt is too fine and can impart unwanted flavors.

Use large ice cubes (1" cubes are perfect) to ensure that they don't melt too quickly.

## *tissue paper flowers*

With just a few inexpensive materials, you can create fun & festive tissue paper flowers to make your tasting party burst with color!

You'll need tissue paper, scissors, floral wire (white or silver) and clear monofilament (if you plan to hang them).

Stack 6 to 8 sheets of tissue paper on top of each other. You can experiment with cutting the tissue to different sizes, but the standard size (about 20" by 30") creates a large flower.

Accordion fold the tissue paper, then slip a short folded piece of floral wire over the center of the stack and twist. Use the scissors to cut each end of the tissue paper into points or rounded edges.

Carefully fan out each side and separate the layers, pulling up and fluffing them out. You can leave the bottom flat for tabletop flowers; otherwise, fluff them into a pom pom, attach the monofilament to the wire and hang wherever you'd like a pop of color!



# SHRIMP & SCALLOP CEVICHE

## *ingredients*

3/4 lb small/medium shrimp, peeled, deveined & cut into bite-sized pieces  
3/4 lb bay scallops  
2 T extra-virgin olive oil  
1 large clove garlic, very finely chopped  
3/4 to 1 tsp salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 cup freshly squeezed lime juice (4 to 5 limes)  
1/4 cup tequila blanco  
1/2 cup red onion, chopped  
1 or 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded & chopped  
1/2 pint grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise  
2 navel oranges, peeled & cut into bite-sized pieces  
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

## *preparation*

Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil and fill a large bowl with ice water.

Working in batches, add half the shrimp to the boiling water and cook for 1 minute. Using a

large slotted spoon, remove and immediately plunge the shrimp into the ice bath for 1 minute. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels to drain. Repeat with the remaining shrimp and scallops, adding more ice to the water as needed.

Place the parboiled shrimp and scallops in a shallow, non-reactive bowl. Add the olive oil, garlic, salt and a few grinds of black pepper and toss.

Add the lime juice, tequila and red onion, combine well, cover and place in the refrigerator to marinate for 4 to 8 hours.

You'll know the seafood is done when it is white and opaque. Drain off the marinade and add the jalapeño and grape tomatoes. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper as needed.

Cover and return to the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Just before serving, add in the oranges and cilantro. Serve in a martini glass along with warm tortilla chips if desired.

*makes 6-8 servings*





## *our favorite guacamole*

- 3 ripe Hass avocados, mashed
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 clove garlic, very finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons sweet onion, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 teaspoons jalapeño pepper sauce
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne

Combine the avocado, lime juice, garlic, onion, jalapeño, tomato, cilantro and jalapeño pepper sauce in a bowl. Mix well and stir in 1/4 teaspoon sea salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Cover and allow to stand for about 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the salt, pepper and cayenne to suit your preference.

For maximum flavor, cover tightly and let stand at room temperature for about 20 minutes before serving. Serve with tortilla chips.



## *molcajete*

for an authentic look, try serving your guacamole in a traditional molcajete - the mexican version of a mortar & pestle.



*makes about 18*

# CRAB CAKES

## *ingredients*

1 lb cooked crabmeat, very well drained  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1-1/2 tablespoons mayonnaise  
1 chipotle chili in adobo sauce, puréed (about 1-1/2 tablespoons)  
2 scallions, trimmed and finely chopped  
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 to 2-1/2 cups panko crumbs  
2 to 4 tablespoons vegetable oil

## *preparation*

Place the crabmeat in a large mixing bowl. Add the eggs, mayonnaise, chipotle purée, scallions, cilantro,

lime juice and salt. Combine thoroughly, then add the panko crumbs in 1/2 cup increments until the mixture reaches a consistency that will hold together when formed into patties.

Gently pack some of the mixture into a 1/4 cup measure that has been sprayed with nonstick coating. Turn it upside down and tap gently until the formed crab cake comes out; then, using your hands, gently firm the patty and place on a tray. Repeat with the remaining crab mixture and refrigerate the formed patties for a minimum of one hour. While the crab cakes are chilling, make the Jalapeño-Honey Mayo.

To fry the crab cakes, heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add a single layer of the cakes and cook until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a serving platter and keep warm while cooking the remaining crab cakes.

## JALAPEÑO HONEY MAYO

### *ingredients*

1/3 cup mayonnaise  
1 jalapeño  
2 tablespoons onion, chopped  
1 clove garlic  
1/2 tablespoon honey  
1 teaspoon lime zest  
1/4 teaspoon salt

### *preparation*

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender and process until smooth. Transfer to a serving bowl, cover and chill.

Serve with crab cakes.

## TANGY BLUE CHEESE DIPPING SAUCE

### *ingredients*

1/2 clove garlic, very finely chopped  
1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1-1/2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1/2 tablespoon jalapeño pepper sauce

### *preparation*

Combine all ingredients and chill for at least an hour.

Serve with chicken wings.

# TEQUILA-MARINATED WINGS

## *ingredients*

1-1/2 lbs chicken wings  
1/3 cup tequila  
1/3 cup lime juice  
2 tablespoons sugar (or agave nectar)  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon jalapeño pepper sauce  
2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped  
Vegetable oil

## *preparation*

Trim the wing tips and discard, then separate the wings into two pieces, cutting through the joint. Combine the tequila and lime juice in a glass measure. Add the sugar and stir until completely dissolved. Whisk in the olive oil, jalapeño pepper

sauce and garlic. Place the chicken wings in a shallow dish or heavy zip-top bag and cover with the marinade. Refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours, turning once.

Heat about 1/8-inch of vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add half the wings and cook, turning frequently, until golden brown on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes.

Transfer to a plate, add a little more oil and repeat with the remaining wings. Wipe out the pan and add the leftover marinade. Bring to a boil and cook, stirring frequently, until thickened to a glaze consistency (for safety reasons, cook for a minimum of 5 minutes). Return the wings to the pan, turn to coat with glaze and serve with Tangy Blue Cheese Dipping Sauce.

*makes 18 to 20 pieces*





### *mole-style dipping sauce*

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 cup tomato purée
- 1 ounce bittersweet chocolate

Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes (do not brown). Season with oregano, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne, salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Cook for an additional minute or two, until the spices are fragrant. Add the tomato purée and continue cooking, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes longer. Remove from the heat, add the chocolate and stir until melted. Keep warm until served.

# MEXICAN-SPICED COCKTAIL MEATBALLS

## *ingredients*

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 clove garlic, very finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Zest of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 scallion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

## *preparation*

Place all the ingredients in a large bowl. Combine thoroughly and roll into 1-inch meatballs. Heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a heavy skillet, add meatballs in a single layer and fry until lightly browned on all sides.

Cook, turning frequently, until no longer pink in the middle, 4 to 5 minutes. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate and serve with Mole-Style Dipping Sauce.

*makes about 24*

# MINI MASCARPONE FRUIT TARTS

## *ingredients*

8 frozen puff pastry shells  
1 8-oz container of mascarpone cheese  
1/3 cup heavy cream  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 tablespoon triple sec  
Fresh raspberries  
1 kiwi, peeled & sliced

## *preparation*

Prepare the frozen puff pastry shells according to the package directions. After they have baked, set them

aside to cool on a wire rack.

In a medium bowl, beat the mascarpone, cream, sugar and triple sec until smooth.

Fill each cooled pastry shell with the mascarpone mixture - you can use a pastry bag or a spoon.

To top the pastry shells, take a kiwi slice and cut it into quarters. Arrange the pieces in a pinwheel pattern and place a fresh raspberry in the center.

Garnish with fresh mint and serve immediately or chill slightly in the refrigerator.

*makes 8*

## *tequila añejo & dessert pairing ideas*



Tequila añejo is a lovely alternative to more traditional after-dinner drink choices like dessert wines & brandies.

Aging in wood barrels mellows the herbal qualities of the tequila and adds subtle hints of flavors like vanilla, caramel, chocolate, butterscotch and cinnamon. This profile makes it a wonderful match for creamy desserts like our fruit tarts.

Enjoy by alternating sips of añejo with bites of the dessert.

### *Other Pairing Ideas*

Flan  
Creme brûlée  
Bananas Foster  
Dark Chocolate  
Chocolate Mousse  
Panna Cotta  
Vanilla Ice Cream



## *what is mascarpone?*

mascarpone is the Italian version of cream cheese  
~ buttery, smooth & delicious! you can find it in  
the specialty cheese section of most grocers.



# here's how to plan it

## The day before

1. Prepare the simple syrup and juice the limes for the Perfect Margarita. Refrigerate. (recipe p. 6 & 7)
2. Prepare and refrigerate the Jalapeño Honey Mayo and the Bleu Cheese Dipping Sauce. (recipes p. 11)
3. Prepare the Cocktail Meatballs and drain on paper towels. Tightly wrap in a single layer in aluminum foil and refrigerate. (recipe p. 13)

## The morning of


1. Marinate and refrigerate the Tequila-Marinated Chicken Wings. (recipe p. 12)
2. Marinate and refrigerate the Shrimp and Scallop Ceviche. (recipe p. 8)
3. Prepare Our Favorite Guacamole and refrigerate, very tightly covered. (recipe p. 9)
4. Prepare the Crab Cake mixture, form the cakes, cover and refrigerate on trays. (recipe p. 11)
5. Mix up the Perfect Margarita (recipe p. 6 & 7) in the serving pitcher and refrigerate.
6. Prepare the Mini Mascarpone Fruit Tarts, cover loosely and refrigerate. (recipe p. 14)

## One hour ahead

1. Preheat the oven to 275°F.
2. Cook the Tequila-Marinated Wings as directed, arrange on a baking sheet in a single layer. Cover loosely and keep warm up to 30 minutes.
3. Reheat the foil wrapped meatballs for 30 to 35 minutes.
4. Cook Crab Cakes as directed, arrange on a baking sheet and keep warm up to 20 minutes.
5. Prepare the Mole-Style Dipping Sauce and keep warm, stirring occasionally.

## Party time

1. Start with the Tequila Tasting. (instructions p. 4 & 5)
2. Serve Our Favorite Guacamole with store-bought tortilla chips.
4. Drain the Shrimp and Scallop Ceviche, add cilantro and oranges and serve.
3. Cut lime slices, rim margarita glasses with salt, pour margaritas and serve.
5. Serve the Tequila-Marinated Wings with Blue Cheese Dipping Sauce.
6. Serve the Crab Cakes with Jalapeño-Honey Mayo.
7. Serve the Mexican-Spiced Meatballs with the Mole-Style Dipping Sauce.
8. Serve the Mini Mascarpone Fruit Tarts paired with a tequila añejo if desired. (see p. 14)



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