

Serious Eats: New York

Meet & Eat: Arik Torren, Fidencio Mezcal

Posted by Laren Spierer, December 10, 2009

"Agave harvested during the new moon will have a more delicate expression in the mezcal."

Mezcal. For many of us the word brings to mind some harsh booze with a worm at the bottom of the bottle—or bad memories of Spring Break. But today's mezcal is something completely different, as evidenced by its increasing presence in NYC's cocktail dens, most notably [Mayahuel](#), which pushes it to the forefront of their menu.

Arik Torren, after a fateful trip to Oaxaca, is now the Chief Operating Officer of [Fidencio Mezcal](#). Arik tells us about some of Fidencio's distinctive qualities and shares two cocktail recipes to make at home or taste while you're out and about in the East Village.

Name: Arik Torren

Location: NYC

Occupation: Chief Operating Officer, Fidencio Mezcal

Website: fidenciomezcal.com (launching in a week)

Tell us a little about your background before you started Fidencio. My last job was as [Sushi Samba's](#) Corporate Beverage Director. Most of my work has been in restaurants in many front of the house positions. One of the most satisfying was launching the [Mermaid Inn](#) as the General Manager; the least satisfying was filling in as the coat check in Aspen's Campo di Fiori. (I think I brought the tip average down by 400%.)

How and why did you decide to make Mezcal? I was on vacation visiting my friends, now partners, Amy Hardy and Ed Mitchell. They own an amazing hotel on the Oaxacan coast. Amy and I took a trip to the city of Oaxaca to get into mezcal a bit more. Amy had been talking about doing a mezcal project for some time, and this was a chance for me to taste, learn and explore. A month later we went back to the city and were fortunate enough to get an introduction to Enrique Jimenez, Fidencio's producer. At that point I realized I had a chance to work with amazing people on an amazing product, and the decision to move forward was easy.

People have a lot of preconceived notions about Mezcal. Why do you think that is? Outside Mexico, Mezcal is not a ubiquitous spirit, so people only know about it from limited experience or from rumors. Some people talk about poor quality, getting blind drunk; some people just talk about the worm. But I'd rather people talk intensity and smoke.

Fidencio is slightly different in that it is produced sin humo, or without smoke, which is heavy in many Mezcal on the market. Tell us a little about the process. This was Enrique's idea. He is an amazing guy.

With three generations of experience passed on to him, a degree in Industrial Chemical Engineering, and a true love for mezcal, he had a



dream of producing a mezcal that would be a simple and pure expression of the Espadin Agave. After many years of producing mezcal in his family's traditional distillery he saved enough money to build his new distillery, where Fidencio is made. We were fortunate to meet him at this time and embark on Fidencio together.

The main difference in making Fidencio is the oven. The heat source is neutral and therefore the mezcal is "sin humo", without smoke. All of the other steps are very traditional, but choices are made that contribute to Fidencio's light and elegant style. The Agave is farmed biodynamic and harvested on the new moon. This is a stylistic preference; agave harvested during the new moon will have a more delicate expression in the mezcal. The Agua Miel, which is the juice of the agave, is fermented without the pieces of agave. Again, a stylistic choice leading to a smoother mezcal.

Mezcal seems to be an up and coming spirit these days. Any thoughts on why? I hope you're right! I think there are a number of factors—the general public is embracing their curiosity and new flavors. I also think the massive growth of tequila shines a brighter light on all things agave and Mexican spirits. And, I think there are more and more people bringing higher-quality mezcals to the masses, each with their own characteristics and styles.

Where can Serious Eaters taste Fidencio? And would you be willing to share a cocktail recipe with us? We've been fortunate to have been picked up by some of the city's great restaurants, including [Gotham Bar and Grill](#), [Perilla](#), [Dressler](#), [The Harrison](#), [Hearth](#), [Allen & Delancey](#) and [Alto](#) to name a few. Here are two of my favorites, from [Mercadito Grove](#) and from the [Mermaid Inn](#):

Papadencio at Mercadito Grove

2 oz Fidencio Joven
3 oz Passion Fruit Puree
1/2 oz Agave Nectar
1/2 oz Fresh Lime Juice
4-5 [Papalo Leaves](#)
1/6 Fresh Jalapeno

Salt and pepper the rim of the glass. Muddle the jalapeno and papalo, add all remaining ingredients, shake with ice and strain over ice into a pilsner glass.

Plata del Rey at The Mermaid Inn East Village

2 oz Fidencio Joven
3/4 oz Fresh Lemon Juice
1/2 oz Light Agave Nectar
1 Egg White
dash Angostura Bitters
Grated Nutmeg

Combine egg whites, agave, lemon juice and Fidencio, shake without ice. Then add ice and shake to chill and strain into a martini glass. Top with bitters and grated nutmeg.



Fidencio retails for \$44.99.

Printed from <http://newyork.seriousseats.com/2009/12/meet-eat-arik-torren-fidencio-mezcal.html>

© Serious Eats