

## OTHER ACTS

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**Publication of an application pursuant to Article 17(6) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89**

(2016/C 255/05)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 17(7) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(1)</sup>.

## SUMMARY SHEET

## TEQUILA

EU No: PGI-MX-01851 — 3.1.2013

## 1. Name

Tequila

## 2. Category of spirit drink

'Other spirit drinks' category of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008.

## 3. Description

Tequila is an alcoholic beverage obtained by distilling the juices extracted directly from the heart of the blue agave (*Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber), previously or subsequently hydrolysed or cooked, and fermented using yeast (cultured or otherwise). The juices may be enriched and blended with other sugars, provided that these account for no more than 49 % of total reducing sugars expressed in units of mass. As a result, there are two categories of tequila, depending on whether or not the juice is enriched and blended with other sugars: 100 % agave tequila (in which the entire sugar content is obtained from the raw material) and tequila (blend containing up to 49 % sugars from other sources).

Each of these categories is divided into five types:

*Tequila blanco* (white tequila): The marketed alcohol content of this product must be diluted with water where necessary.

*Tequila joven/oro* (gold tequila): The taste of this product may be smoothed with the use of additives. Its marketed alcohol content must be diluted with water where necessary. Any blend of white tequila with aged and/or extra-aged and/or ultra-aged tequilas is considered to be gold tequila.

*Tequila reposado* (aged tequila): The taste of this product may be smoothed. It is matured in common oak or holm oak barrels for at least two months. Its marketed alcohol content must be diluted with water where necessary.

*Tequila añejo* (extra-aged tequila): The taste of this product may be smoothed. It is matured in common oak or holm oak barrels with a maximum capacity of 600 litres for at least a year. Its marketed alcohol content must be diluted with water where necessary. Any blend of extra-aged tequila and ultra-aged tequila is considered to be extra-aged Tequila.

*Tequila extra añejo* (ultra-aged tequila): The taste of this product may be smoothed. It is matured for at least three years in direct contact with the wood of common oak or holm oak barrels with a maximum capacity of 600 litres. Its marketed alcohol content must be diluted with water where necessary.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 39, 13.2.2008, p. 16.

#### 4. Organoleptic characteristics

*Appearance:* Light-, medium- or full-bodied, depending on how long the tequila clings to the glass, creating 'tears' or 'legs'.

*Colour:* White tequila is crystal-clear and transparent, with hints of silver. The colour of other tequilas, which may be smoothened, ranges from straw to dark straw, with golden-to-reddish or ochre hues; these other tequilas are aged in direct contact with the wood of common oak or holm oak barrels.

*Aroma:*

- White tequila: hints of fruity and floral citrus notes.
- Young tequila: wood aroma.
- Aged tequila: spicy aromas; slightly sweet, vanilla- and butter-tinged tone.
- Extra-aged and ultra-aged tequilas: floral and fruity aromas.

*Flavour:*

- White tequila: cooked agave and pronounced herbal notes.
- Young tequila: presence of herbs, cooked agave, raw agave, hints of wood.
- Aged tequila: soft, slightly sweet and fruity flavours; slight bitterness and a slight-to-moderate impact from the alcohol.
- Extra-aged and ultra-aged tequilas: dried fruit, spices, vanilla, wood, caramel and smoke, with astringency.

#### 5. Physical and chemical characteristics

Alcoholic strength at 20 °C (% ABV): 35 to 55

Dry extract (g/l): 0 to 0,30 for white; 0 to 5 for gold, aged, extra-aged and ultra-aged.

Higher alcohols or fusel oil, i.e. alcohols with a molecular weight higher than that of ethanol, such as amyl alcohols (in mg/100 ml of anhydrous alcohol): 20 to 500

Furfural (in mg/100 ml of anhydrous alcohol): 0 to 4

Methanol <sup>(1)</sup> (in mg/100 ml of anhydrous alcohol): 30 to 300

Aldehydes (such as acetaldehyde) (in mg/100 ml of anhydrous alcohol): 0 to 40

Esters, such as ethyl acetate (in mg/100 ml of anhydrous alcohol):

- 2 to 200 for white and gold.
- 2 to 250 for aged, extra-aged and ultra-aged.

#### 6. Geographical area

The source of the raw material used to make tequila and the place of production must be located in the geographical area protected by the designation of origin, which comprises 181 municipalities in Mexico: all of Jalisco state (particularly the municipality of Tequila, which gives the name to this geographical indication), eight municipalities in Nayarit state (Ahuacatlán, Amatlán de Cañas, Ixtlán del Río, Jala, Xalisco, San Pedro de Lagunillas, Santa María del Oro and Tepic), seven in Guanajuato state (Abasolo, Ciudad Manuel Doblado, Cuerámara, Huanimaro, Pénjamo, Purísima del Rincón and Romita), 11 in Tamaulipas state (Aldama, Altamira, Antigua Morelos, Gómez Farías, González, Llera, Mante, Nuevo Morelos, Ocampo, Tula and Xicoténcatl) and 30 in Michoacán state (Briseñas de Matamoros, Chavinda, Chilchota, Churintzio, Cotija, Ecuandureo, Jacona, Jiquilpan, Marcos Castellanos, Maravatío, Nuevo Parangaricutiro, Numanán, Pajacuarán, Peribán, La Piedad, Los Reyes, Regules, Sahuayo, Tancitaro, Tangamandapio, Tangancicuaro, Tanhuato, Tingüindin, Tocombo, Venustiano Carranza, Villamar, Vista hermosa, Yurécuaro, Zamora and Zináparo).

<sup>(1)</sup> The minimum value may be reduced if the tequila manufacturer demonstrates to the Tequila Regulatory Board (the competent control authority in accordance with point 11 of this summary) that the methanol content can feasibly be reduced using a different process.

## 7. Method for obtaining the spirit drink

*Agave growing and leaf removal:* The shoots of the *Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber must reach approximately 50 cm. The plant has a growth cycle of around 10 years. The leaves are cut back to the base, leaving just the heart of the plant (a process known as the '*jima*').

*Cooking and crushing:* The agave is cooked using pressurised steam, either in traditional brick ovens or in autoclaves. Once cooked, the agave is transported to mills, where it is chopped into small pieces and crushed.

*Juice and pulp extraction:* The pulp is sprayed with pressurised water and then pressed. The juices are separated so that the industrial process can continue.

*Blending:* Agave juices (minimum 51 %) can be blended with a preparation of other syrups (no more than 49 %) for subsequent fermentation.

*Fermentation:* The juices are poured into large vats. At this point, water, yeasts (cultured or otherwise) and nutrients are added for alcoholic fermentation.

*Distillation:* The products of fermentation are separated using heat and pressure into alcohol-rich products (tequila) and dregs. High temperatures are then applied. Two distillations are required; the first is known as the '*destroza-miento*' (destruction) and the second is the '*rectificación*' (rectification).

*Ageing:* Aged tequila must mature for at least two months, extra-aged tequila for at least a year, and ultra-aged tequila for at least three years in direct contact with the wood of common oak or holm oak barrels.

*Bottling:* The requirement that the tequila be bottled at a plant managed by the same authorised producer and located within the protected geographical area only applies to the '100 % agave tequila' category. In the production of '100 % agave tequila', the juices are not enriched with any other sugars than those obtained from *Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber. This gives the product greater organoleptic complexity, which could be jeopardised by bulk transportation to outside the protected area. Requiring that the product be bottled in the area of origin by the authorised producers themselves ensures that the specific aromas and flavours are maintained. There is a long-standing tradition of requiring that '100 % agave tequila' be bottled in the production area (dating back even prior to tequila's recognition as a designation of origin) in the interests of preserving the quality and, as a result, the reputation of the product. All inspections in the protected area of '100 % agave tequila' are carried out on site by the Tequila Regulatory Board.

## 8. Geographical link

Tequila is named after the municipality of the same name in the state of Jalisco.

Tequila is made from the blue agave (*Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber), which is endemic in the Tequila volcano region.

The existence of blue agave and its different uses can be traced back to the pre-Colombian era. Various codices (Nuttall and Tonatlanahuatl) described how the Mexicas ('those who live on *mezcali* (a spirit drink)', named in honour of their ancient god Mexitli, which means 'navel of the agave'), learned to collect mescal (*metl*) hearts, bake them in underground ovens and thus obtain *mezcali*.

The word 'Tequila' is derived from the Nahuatl terms *tequi* and *tlán*, meaning 'cutting place' or 'place of paying tax'.

The area protected by the Geographical Indication enjoys a temperate to mild climate, with temperatures of between 15 °C and 29,9 °C, ideal for growing *Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber. The agave must be grown at between 1 600 and 2 000 metres above sea level, where temperatures are optimum and annual rainfall of around 1 073 to 1 440 mm can be guaranteed. Under controlled conditions *Agave tequilana* F.A.C. Weber has been shown to have limited resistance to low temperatures.

Tequila was first produced over four centuries ago. Its customs and traditions have been passed down through the generations, becoming a way of life for the more than 50 000 families that inhabit the regions where the beverage is produced. Traditional methods are still used in the production process, such as agave growing and '*jima*' (cutting back leaves to the base of the plant), cooking and crushing the agave hearts, extracting the juice and pulp, blending, fermenting, distilling and maturing.

Tequila is Mexico's most famous and emblematic drink, and forms part of its global identity, reflecting tradition, quality and excellence. A whole range of high-quality services and products has grown up around Tequila culture, making the region a crossroads of history and tradition known for, among other things, the Tequila volcano and the Agave Landscape and Ancient Industrial Facilities of Tequila (a Unesco World Heritage Site since 2006).

## 9. Requirements under domestic legislation

- General Declaration of Protection of the Designation of Origin 'Tequila' by the Ministry of Heritage and Industry, published in the *Gazette of the Mexican Federation* on 9 December 1974.
- Official Standard NOM-006-SCFI-2012 (alcoholic beverages — Tequila — specifications).

Official Standard NOM-006-SCFI-2012 lays down the mandatory specifications for marketing and health information to be provided on all tequila labels. Marketing information must be free of any text, images or descriptions liable to mislead or confuse consumers as a result of inaccuracy, such as '100 % natural', '100 % Mexican', '100 % natural product', '100 % aged' or similar, as these descriptions can be confused with the '100 % agave' category or give producers that use them an unfair advantage over those that do not.

For tequila intended for export, Standard NOM-006-SCFI-2012 requires that at least the following information be displayed in the main part of the label: the word 'Tequila'; the category and type; added flavours, aromas and colours where applicable; and the registered trademark or other distinctive sign under the joint responsibility agreement filed with the Mexican Patents and Trademarks Office. The following information is mandatory but may be placed on any part of the label or package: the words '*Hecho en México*', '*Producto de México*', '*Elaborado en México*' ('made in Mexico', 'product of Mexico'), or similar; the authorised producer's official code and registration number; and the batch number.

The following may be translated into other languages: details of the type of tequila; added flavours, aromas and colours where applicable; and the words '*Hecho en México*', '*Producto de México*', '*Elaborado en México*' ('made in Mexico', 'product of Mexico'), or similar. Any other information that may or must be included by the legislation of the country to which the tequila is exported may be stated in the relevant language.

The Spanish terms for the different types of tequila may be replaced by the translation into the relevant language in accordance with the legislation of the country or place of sale, or by the following: 'silver' for *blanco* or *plata*; 'gold' for *joven* or *oro*; 'aged' for *reposado*; 'extra-aged' for *añejo*, and 'ultra-aged' for *extra añejo*.

The duration of ageing may not appear on the label of ultra-aged tequila.

10. **Requester:** Consejo Regulador Del Tequila, A.C., with registered offices at Avenida Patria 723, Col. Jardines de Guadalupe, in Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico.
  11. **Supervisory authority:** Consejo Regulador Del Tequila, A.C. (Tequila Regulatory Board) is the competent body responsible for verifying, monitoring and certifying Tequila. It has been duly accredited by the Mexican Accreditation Board under the ISO/IEC 065 standard and approved by the Directorate-General for Standards of the Office of the Secretary for the Economy. The certification unit has full autonomy and independence in its technical certification-related decisions.
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