

The Tequila Lunch at the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival: A Walt Disney World Special Event Review

by Kim Roe, PassPorter Guest Contributor

How does a Tequila Lunch sound?

□ My husband and I spent the first week of September 2017 at Walt Disney World to celebrate my 50th birthday. This was our fourth visit during the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival. During our previous visits, we spent a few hours here and there sampling some of the food and beverages at the kiosks located around World Showcase. This year we decided to try some of the other offerings during the Festival. We attended a beverage seminar in the Festival Center featuring French Champagne, which we really enjoyed. But we were most excited about the Mexican Tequila Lunch we had scheduled!

The Mexican Tequila Lunch takes place at La Hacienda de San Angel, which is the restaurant directly across from the Mexican pavilion in World Showcase. The lunch is offered on select Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays during the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival from Noon to 1:30pm. The price for the lunch, which includes gratuity, is \$85 per person. To book the lunch you must call Disney directly at 407-939-3378.

□ We attended the lunch on Thursday, September 7th, 2017. As the temperature was in the 90s and the humidity was way up there, we were happy to go inside an air conditioned restaurant and get off our feet for a while. And since we love Mexican food and margaritas, we were really excited to see what was for lunch!

□ The hostess started checking us in at Noon, and as we entered the restaurant everybody was handed a cucumber margarita on the rocks. It was very refreshing after being outside in the heat! We were shown to our table, which was all set up for our lunch.

As we sipped on our margaritas, we were introduced to Hilda Castillo who would be leading our tequila education that day. If you've ever been to La Cava de Tequila downstairs in the Mexican pavilion, you may have already met Hilda. You will find her managing La Cava most evenings starting at 3pm. If you have not been to La Cava before, make sure to check it out on your next visit to Epcot (and try an avocado margarita)! You can get margaritas to go, or you can have a seat and enjoy some

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cocktails along with great chips, guacamole, etc. But I digress, back to the lunch!

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□Hilda told us a little bit about her background being from Tequila, Mexico, a town in Mexico's western state of Jalisco. Here are some of the interesting facts that she shared with us:

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□• In Mexico they drink their tequila neat -- no lime or salt.

□• There are only 5 states in Mexico that are allowed to produce tequila: Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Guanajuato.

□• There are five types of tequila: blanco, reposado, anejo, extra anejo, and joven.

□• Tequila is distilled from the blue agave plant; each plant produces about 5 glasses of tequila.

□• Some of the tequila blanco is put into oak barrels and aged, or rested for at least two months which produces tequila reposado.

□• Tequila which is aged at least one year in oak barrels is called tequila anejo.

□• Extra anejo tequila is aged a minimum of three years in oak barrels.

□• Joven is unaged tequila blanco that may be flavored with a coloring or syrup, or blended with an aged tequila.

□• Some tequila brands, like Jose Cuervo, are a blend of 51% blue agave spirit mixed with sugarcane spirit, which is cheaper to produce.

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□Hilda had us start the tasting by drinking a sip of vodka to cleanse our palate.

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□We started with Tequila Milagro Select Barrel Blanco which was clear in color. Each of the tequilas was served in a tall tequila glass which resembled a champagne flute.

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□We first took the lime peel between our fingers and smelled it. Then Hilda told us to swirl the tequila in our glass and then smell the tequila three ways: first by putting the tip of your nose up to the outside of the glass, then putting your nose inside the glass, then smelling over the outside edge of the glass. You could smell different components of the tequila each way, including the citrus notes.

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□Hilda told us that we should then take a sip of the tequila and count to four while moving the tequila in our mouth from one side to the other before swallowing. By sipping the tequila this way, you could really taste all of the different flavors in it.

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□We were then served our first course which was a Heart of Palm Salad (Mache lettuce, baby arugula, roasted pineapple, pine nuts and Mezcal

vinaigrette). The citrus of the salad paired well with the tequila blanco.

□ The next tequila we tried was Tequila Casa Noble Cava Select Reposado, which was a light gold color. This tequila had a slight caramel smell and I think it was my favorite.

□ Our second course was grilled octopus (marinated in ancho paste, served with black mole, butternut squash puree and grilled cactus leaves). The richness of the mole sauce paired well with the caramel notes of the tequila reposado.

□ Next we put a cinnamon stick and some coffee beans in our palm and smelled it. We then tried Tequila Ambhar Anejo, which was even more golden in color.

□ The next course was beef tenderloin (topped with Poblano cream sauce, plantain puree and fingerling chips). This was my favorite course of the day; the beef was extremely tender and the sauce and potatoes were delicious. And it went very well with the aged tequila.

□ Next Hilda introduced us to Mezcal, which a lot of people confuse with tequila. She had us take a sip of the Mezcal and we could really taste the difference between it and the tequila. Mezcal has a very smoky flavor. Mezcal sometimes has a worm or scorpion in the bottle.

□ We then tasted Avion Espresso Tequila Liquor which was a dark brown color. It had a strong coffee taste and paired well the dessert, which was Mamey Flan (creamy flan topped with blackberry coulis and almond dust).

□ Each food course was prepared beautifully and really paired well with the different tequilas we tasted.

□ Overall, I would highly recommend this lunch. Hilda was very entertaining and informative, and is a very nice person. The food was extremely high quality, and we were introduced to the chefs who prepared the food at the end of the lunch. The wait service was fantastic and they were so quick to serve us our food and clear away empty glasses and dishes. It was also very nice to have a break from the heat and humidity. My husband and I would definitely attend this lunch again, and we look forward to trying even more events at a future Epcot International Food & Wine Festival!

About The Author: Kim Roe lives in Roanoke, Virginia and has been a Disney fan all her life. Her dream is to work for the Disney company one day.

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