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Sands

A PLACE
IN THE SUN

TONY ABOU-GANIM
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"ET" TECOSKY
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Mexico's

"New Distillate"

EXPLORING
AVILA,
A NEW CATEGORY
PIONEERED BY
REVEL SPIRITS

*by Mary Thompson
photos by Cal Bingham*

Mary Thompson, General Manager at beachside Mexican eatery Tallula's in Santa Monica, CA, highlights the unique flavor profile of Revel Avila Blanco in her riff on a blood-orange Paloma.

Back in 2011, Micah McFarlane and Jacqui Thompson set out to produce great tequila. Fate soon intervened, however, when they were introduced to the Mexican state of Morelos through Minneapolis chef and restaurateur Héctor Ruiz, who grew up there. After Ruiz sang the praises of Morelos' distilled agave, McFarlane and Thompson decided they had to visit to experience the region firsthand and quickly fell in love with the spirit, the land, and the people.

Before they joined the spirits business, McFarlane and Thompson's relationship was rooted in another mutual passion: music (in their lengthy experience in artist development and tour managing, they've worked with industry legends like Prince). With that shared background, the pair decided to bring their successful music-testing methods to the agave world with help



Revel Spirits Co-Founders Micah McFarlane and Jacqui Thompson enjoy colorful Revel-based cocktails at Tallula's.



Revel Spirits produces the world's first Avila, a new agave-based spirits category which combines the piña-roasting methods of traditional mezcal production with the modernized steaming techniques of tequila.

Revel Reposado is an easy-sipper reminiscent of a lightly smoked mezcal with the structured aging of a whiskey, but the spirit can easily play a role in a boozy or even savory cocktail.

AGAVE SPIRITS



The smoky Revel Reposado enhances the flavor profile and texture of a Tallula's original cocktail with fresh lime, mint, and cinnamon syrup.

from partner Susan Clausen.

After their visit to Morelos, they brought samples of its characteristic agave distillate back to Minneapolis and shared it widely as they sought feedback.

The triple-distilled finished product, Revel, has a higher alcohol content and less smoky qualities than those original samples. Under the Revel name, McFarlane and Thompson currently have two products on the market: Blanco and Reposado, with an Añejo expression set for release this fall. Made from blue weber agave, Revel contains no additives or added sugars and is the first official release of "Avila": a new agave-based spirits category which combines the modernized steaming process of tequila with the roasting process of mezcal.

The Revel Spirits team is currently collaborating with a group of 17 farmers in the area to create these three expressions, the first two of which have already landed at establishments like the beachside Mexican eatery Tallula's in Santa Monica, California. The 80-proof, unaged Revel Blanco exhibits hints of citrus and juniper with a clean agave finish, providing a complex sipping spirit or the multi-faceted base of an innovative cocktail.

Revel Reposado, also 80 proof, ages in American oak whiskey barrels for 12 months and features hints of smoky oak and vanilla with a rich texture. It's an easy-sipper reminiscent of a lightly

smoked mezcal with the structured aging of a whiskey, but the spirit can easily play a role in a boozy or even savory cocktail.

By founding Revel, McFarlane and Thompson sought to highlight the native spirits being made in Morelos and spearheaded an effort to establish Avila as its own distinct category—a spirit that derives its character from the area's mineral-rich, volcanic soils.

With this in mind, the pair are working closely with their farmer partners, as well as distillers and the regional government, to promote Morelos' distillates to the broader market. In the future, McFarlane says Avila will reach beyond the use of blue weber agave and the methods currently employed by Revel to instead be more broad and inclusive with one common thread: the land that captivated them on that very first visit. ■■



Mary Thompson curates the bar menu at Tallula's, which focuses on local produce and high-end agave-based spirits.

MORELOS: A BRIEF HISTORY

Evidence shows that nomadic tribes lived in what's now the Mexican state of Morelos, located northwest of Oaxaca near Mexico City, as early as 6,000 B.C. Due to Morelos' persistently warm climate, the farming of maize and cotton has occurred there since roughly 1,500 B.C.

Established in 1868, the state was named after priest and Mexican independence leader José María Teclo Morelos Pérez y Pavón. At one point in the mid-1800s, the state's capital, Cuernavaca, briefly served as the capital of Mexico. Morelos is the second-smallest Mexican state and is home to active volcano Popocatepetl, traditionally dressed Chinelo dancers, several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and Lagunas de Zempoala, one of Mexico's largest national parks.