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Designing Tequila

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by Christine Heller

We know that staggering sums of money are spent by brand owners of all consumer product categories with the aim of influencing our purchasing decisions. Distilled spirits producers have most definitely embraced the aspect of eye-catching packaging as a means of attracting their target customers. When I think about my favorite bar, I am moved by the beautiful artistic display of hundreds of bottles of spirits arranged in blocks of color from the lightest clear spirits to the deepest amber rums and whiskies. The shapes and colors and designs are captivating. While wines and beers traditionally utilize paper, screening and etching for their products packaging, distilled spirits have set themselves apart through uniquely-inspired bottle designs.



Vodkas, Gins, Whiskies, Rums and many of the wonderful distilled products available for tipping can claim beautiful packaging. However, for the simple sensory pleasure of viewing, Tequilas have reached new heights with their aesthetic bottle designs. The muse behind some of these designs is curious and interesting, especially considering that the Tequila business has transformed Tequila from a rough, unsophisticated liquor into a refined sipping spirit, in little more than a decade.

Color. Shape. Design. These three defining visual cues, being used with ever more unusual and stunning results, are capturing new users and adopters.

What is true for most of the Tequilas represented in this article is that the revelation for the bottle designs is realized from the splendid beauty of the terroir, the agave plants and the finished liquid. Others take their ideas from the intriguing ancient Mexican culture.

COLOR, SHAPE AND DESIGN



Color, according to some psychologists, may be the most important factor in creating packaging that will appeal to consumers. For Tequila, there seems to be more to this concept. Shape and design, both unusual and sensual, seem to define the super and ultra premium Tequila brands.

For example, Inaki Orozco found inspiration in the blue weber agave growing on the property with a winding river, and used it in his RIAZUL® Tequila. Inaki thanks David Moritz from Mode Design for creating the seductive package design. Riazul Plata has a calming, blue-toned package that reflects the method of bottling direct from distillation without barrel aging, which produces a spirit of unmasked agave character. Reposado's comforting yellow and orange hues speak to a flavor that whispers honey, pear and lemon. The Anejo bottle uses warm golden and amber tones to mirror the rich caramel color of the liquid inside the bottle.

RIAZUL Tequila's unique bottle, like the package coloring, takes inspiration from the river running through their Jalisco highlands property. The bottle shape complements the name and borrows from its surroundings of rich mineral soil, microclimate and river water source.



Don Julio 1942® is a Tequila that pays tribute to the year that Don Julio González began his Tequila-making journey. Based upon color alone, how could one pass up an opportunity to try this product? Brilliant golden hues of caramel, toffee and butterscotch invite one to experience this special Anejo.



Maestro DOBEL® Tequila uses clear etched-glass packaging that matches the crystal clear liquid, which is the result of a unique process of blending multi-aged Tequilas that are then diamond-filtered. The black capsule, neckband and label give this subtle packaging an elegant, top-premium look that complements the small batch production. Highlighting the craft nature of “the world’s first crystal-clear Tequila,” the estate of origin for the bottle is listed on bottle’s neck, along with the signatures of Señor Dobel and his master blender, and the date of bottling.

“Avant-garde aesthetics” is how the brand describes the design for DOBEL. Maestro Dobel is housed in a bottle that is equal parts modern, with an embossed bottle, and nostalgic, paying homage to vintage apothecary-style bottles.

Danny Schneeweiss, one of the brand creators of Milagro Tequilas, speaks about the importance of color, saying, “The colors of the bottles in the Milagro Core line are as follows: Milagro Silver in a blue bottle, was in honor of the blue agave, which is the key to the Milagro liquid and unique to Tequila. Milagro Reposado and Anejo represent the aging of the Tequilas.”

Inspiration for the shape and design of the Milagro Core line, according to Danny, “was the blending of old and new Mexico. Respecting the traditions, handcrafting and pride of the country while bringing the modern Mexico to life – where it’s headed, the modern feel and the progress.” He further explained, “The glass is special not because it is a certain type of glass, but because of how it comes to be a finished product. Each bottle is handcrafted by Mexican hands, whether it is hand-painted, hand-screened or hand-blown. The people add something very special to Milagro, a passion. You will never find two Milagro bottles exactly the same!”



Danny also explains, “The Milagro Core line is inspired by the leaf of the agave plant – long and thin – again, to pay homage to the blue agave plant. The hand-blown Select Barrel bottles have the agave plant inside the bottle. This was a huge challenge when designing, but we persevered and achieved a work of art.” Because each range has a different liquid, the bottle needed to represent this. The Milagro Core line has broad appeal and is approachable. The Select Barrel line adds more sophistication and elegance to match the liquid. Milagro Unico needed to be very unique to match what was inside the bottle; its package shape is a tall, slender, sleek hand-blown glass bottle that showcases its joven blend of the rarest silver Tequila reserves.

Bottle designs for all of the Milagro brands of Tequila are creations by Danny, who together with his college friend, Moy Guindi, shared a passionate dream to produce a product that would better represent the evolution of their beloved country, Mexico. Tradition and modernism live side by side in this land of their birth, yet these entrepreneurs had difficulty finding sophisticated premium Tequilas worthy of a refined palate. And so, a vision was born to produce a product of origin that would become a brand ambassador for their proud traditional and modern Mexico. Before the early 1990s, Tequilas were strong-tasting, hard liquor and were sold in squatty, unattractive bottles. Like Danny and Moy, a few other Tequila producers had begun to recognize the potential for this iconic spirit. Based on the fact that Whiskies, Vodkas and other distilled spirits had evolved into products worthy of a premium distinction, a small but growing Tequila revolution was begun. As the liquid became more refined, so too the packaging transformed to match this new modern distillate.



CRUZ® Tequila's prominent sloping, triangular-shaped bottle evokes thoughts of ancient civilizations. The Spanish name "Cruz" means "cross." Todd Nelson, one of the three brothers who created this brand commented, "We wanted a bottle that was unique and captured the essence of Mexico. It resembles the shape of a cathedral because every little town in Mexico has at least one church and oftentimes a cross on top of it." The bottle represents the brothers' birth and early childhood in Jalisco.

Design leads the consumer to want an experience with the brand. CRUZ Tequila is bottled in hand-numbered, artisan-blown glass with a striking solid metal cross on the face and a metal raised-profile cross cap. The three men who collaboratively designed the bottle started first with modeling clay, at one of their homes in 2005. They ultimately found a glass blower in Guadalajara to produce the unique hand-blown bottle. Made in Mexico and hand-numbered, no two are the exactly the same. Sustainability was always at the forefront of the bottle design, so it is crafted from 100 percent recycled glass and aluminum, and packaged with 100 percent recycled materials. While the CRUZ package has won awards for its design, the trio hopes that it encourages people to discover the award-winning spirit inside each bottle.



1800® Tequila's bottle shape was inspired by the Mayan pyramids in Mexico. The front label depicts the 1800 shield, which displays a Mayan pyramid. The new limited edition bottle launching this spring, created by artist Gary Baseman for the 1800® Tequila Essential Artists Series, is a brilliant piece of art not unlike sculpture. 1800 released a special limited edition Essential Artist Series in 2008, featuring 12 unique bottle designs by up-and-coming artists. Using the 1800 bottle as their canvas, artists created diverse designs inspired by Mayan culture, Aztec mythology and Mexican heritage. The limited edition collectable bottle series is now in its fifth year, becoming a tradition for the brand.

Jose Cuervo Platinio ultra-premium Tequila is bottled in hand-blown clear glass replicated from historic bottles, with an impressive multi-scene label, and cork finished. Each bottle is then sealed by being hand-dipped in wax and individually numbered. A handcrafted wooden box completes this impressive package, which is befitting for this Tequila that was once reserved for the Cuervo family's private enjoyment.

Tequila benefits from its country of origin in tangible ways through the colors, shapes and designs that borrow from the vibrant diversity of this land, which is steeped in myths and legends. We look forward to evermore innovative expressions of this elixir of Mexico.

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