



Tequila may be the country's liquid gold, but Mexico is rich with wine and vine treasures – and their roots run deeper than you might expect.

MEXICAN VINTAGE

For a country that doesn't quite seem to find a place in either Old World or New World wine region rankings, it often comes as a surprise to learn that Mexico is the oldest producer of wines in the Americas. It is also seen as the progenitor of the winemaking industries across the continent. And yet today it produces only a modest 20 million litres of wine per annum - a small glassful in comparison to the US's three billion.

Many may assume that Mexico is too close to the tropics for grape growing. It is, however, a country with many arid and high-altitude stretches. Cool and dry days with even cooler evenings are just the kind of conditions that grapes love, even if irrigation is almost always necessary. When the Spanish conquered the Aztecs in the 16th century they capitalised on the territory's vine-growing opportunities. They beat nearby Chile and Argentina by decades. In the beginning, the industry thrived. Spanish king Charles I even ordered thousands of vines to be shipped to 'New Spain'.

The tides turned in the late 17th century. French vineyards began to undercut European demand for Spanish wines. King Charles II wanted to protect his domestic industry, abolished all wine production in Spain's foreign territories. This could've

A Snapshot of the Regions:



CHIHUAHUA

Chihuahua's long history of fruit growing has recently transformed into vine cultivation due to the lower volume of water needed. Wine production is still young here, but as the few producers have focused on luxury, high-quality labels, it already enjoys a prestigious reputation.

BAJA CALIFORNIA

Mexico's largest wine producing region, Baja California excels in robust, full-bodied, ripe wines with an intense colour. The use of groundwater irrigation and the region's closeness to the ocean often give these wines a rich minerality.

ZACATECAS

This dry, challenging region saw a decline in production during the 1990s, but now has a promising future. A small number of producers are working on delicious red wines using Syrah, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon.

COAHUILA

Boasting the richest wine-making history in the country, Coahuila is also home to the oldest, continually-producing vineyard in Mexico. A mixture of whites, reds and dessert wines are produced here, particularly in Valle de Parras.

SAN LUIS POTOSI

An often-overlooked treasure trove, San Luis Potosi is home to several small-scale producers creating excellent wines. Of particular note are the Sauvignon Blancs, which blend a high-acidity profile with exciting tropical fruit notes.

been the death of Mexican wines, had there not been an allowance made for Catholic missions. They were given the right to continue winemaking on a small scale for purely sacramental purposes. The War of Reform removed the Spanish restrictions and a number of political movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries began to resuscitate the industry, originating from these missions.

High-end wine production began in the 1970s, with massive strides in quality being made year-on-year. The vast majority of fine wines are still crafted in northern Baja California, spreading slightly to other nearby territories around La Laguna. The climate here is startlingly similar to California's Napa Valley. There are also regions in Central Mexico, such as Aguascalientes, Zacatecas and Queretaro, that have a growing reputation for fine sparkling wines. The country's evolution is attracting attention from buyers and growers in Europe and the US. Foreign investment is on the rise. Wine blends remain very popular here, but they can differ wildly from European tradition.

For those seeking an immersion into Mexican wines, there's no better spot than Belmond Maroma Resort & Spa on the

pristine Riviera Maya. Not only does this soulful resort boast the country's third largest wine collection, it also has one of their most passionate sommeliers. Aaron Alvarez has pursued his love for oenology through Australia, New Zealand and Italy, finally settling back in his home country. Now the resort's champion for local labels, he has introduced a trio of wines made exclusively for Belmond Maroma. One of them was awarded the Gold Label in the Mexico Selection by Concours Mondial de Bruxelles 2019.

In a tasting class, held in the resort's evocative wine room, Aaron will guide you through Mexico's wine history, regions and producers. He's also on hand to help you find the perfect pairing for every dish. His one piece of advice? "Leave the saving mindset at the door. A good wine is a pampering luxury. When you've worked for something in life, make sure to savour it."

That's something we can raise a glass to.

Discover Mexico in style at belmond.com/mexico