



# MOVING BEYOND **THE** MARGARITA

**CORRALEJO TEQUILA  
CONQUERS THE WORLD  
OF COCKTAILS**

BY ÉVA PELCZER / PHOTOS BY MARGARET SOSS

California has a love affair with tequila. Californians know it, and Raffaele Berardi knows it—as he should, being the Head of Global Exporting and Travel on behalf of Corralejo, one of the cocktail industry’s favorite brands of tequila in the state.

“California is the biggest tequila market in the world!” he exclaims excitedly. “And we’re on an education push to make sure people *everywhere* experience Corralejo and learn more about tequila itself.”

enthusiasts will already be familiar with the Last Word—a gin, green Chartreuse and Maraschino concoction that becomes a refreshingly vegetal, herbaceous Margarita deviation with tequila. And try dipping a toe in the realm of the stirred tequila drink, like the La Rosita. It’s a delicious tequila variant of the classic Negroni, with Campari, vermouths and a dash of Angostura. (Check out the recipes below, and thank us later!)

Berardi sees all of this firsthand: Corralejo is often what bartenders reach for as their tequila of choice, and with it, they’re creating a huge range of innovative alternatives to the classic Margarita. The most notable ones combine new ideas with an homage to tequila’s deep historical and traditional roots, much like Corralejo itself.

Established in the mid-1700s by a Spanish conquistador, Hacienda Corralejo is a family-operated distillery rebuilt according to historical sources from the early 20th century. It operates according to deeply traditional practices, boasting copper Charentais pot stills, originally developed by the French to make Cognac. Corralejo even uses a house-cultivated agave yeast strain in their fermentation process, which consistently gives the spirit its distinctive note.

“Everything that can be done by hand is done by hand,” notes Berardi, “while incorporating technical advancements as we can. The flavors really come from the technique we use, the alembic pot stills and the combination Mexican and French oak barrels used in aging. Cognacs are made like this.”

In fact, echoing a Cognac’s VSOP line, Corralejo is releasing a limited-edition añejo: 99000 Horas, named for the 11 years it takes to make and age the spirit, from the growth of the agave to the end of the tequila’s aging process.



**At Sol Cocina in Newport Beach, CA, Colin Pflugradt plays with Corralejo in a variety of unique cocktails.**

It’s a pretty exciting time to be an agave enthusiast. As the craft cocktail realm catches fire in even more parts of the U.S., mixologists and bartenders are looking at tequila in a new light and applying it in completely new ways, with tequila cocktails going far beyond the classic Margarita.

Because gin and tequila share some vegetal and savory notes, many of the newly popular Prohibition-era cocktails that call for gin are fantastic when made with tequila. Cocktail



**Corralejo lends itself to stirred cocktails as easily as shaken ones, to creamy creations as readily as fruit-forward frappés.**

In this and all of their aged tequilas, like triple-distilled Corralejo Reposado and premium Corralejo Añejo, “there’s a softness and richness that is unparalleled,” Berardi explains. “Our silver is a base for all of our aged tequilas, and the beautiful agave flavors in that silver really do transpose through other expressions we have.”

Just ask Colin Pflugrad, Bar Manager of Sol Cocina in Newport Beach, a Baja restaurant that has featured Corralejo on their menu since opening in 2009. “I love working with Corralejo Blanco in cocktails—it’s agave in its purest form, and it has a subtle peppery note while still being incredibly smooth.” For a twist, Pflugrad recommends opting for a Corralejo Horchata Martini; he infuses the tequila with chai tea overnight and shakes it up with a cinnamon rice milk that he makes in-house.

And how would Pflugrad himself take his tequila? “Hands down, pairing Corralejo Reposado with a house-made sangrita!” Sangrita is a traditional Mexican way of serving tequila: It’s a shot of a fiery house-made tomato-based drink that you’re meant to interchange with sips of tequila. “I run sangrita specials all the time, in addition to our everyday house recipe. It can be basil sangrita, tomatillo sangrita. Every sipping tequila you get at my bar comes with a sangrita on the side. It was a little ahead of its time when we first opened, but it’s such a great education tool and people really seem to appreciate it.”

Berardi agrees—and then lets out a big laugh. “We serve sangrita with

tequila when we bring Corralejo all over the world! And we will improvise with nearly anything. When I was in South Africa, we sliced a cherry tomato in half, topped it with salt and Tabasco and ate it with our Blanco!”

That reverence for tradition, combined with creativity and congeniality, exemplifies the spirit inside the Corralejo bottle. It’s also the driving force behind Berardi’s next project, launching in October: the development of a tonic soda specifically meant to be paired with tequila. Inspired by the gin and tonic bars of Barcelona, he’s

aiming to make Corralejo the pioneer of the tequila highball as the go-to for a refreshing agave cocktail.

“There’s no other spirit like tequila,” Berardi says emphatically. “No other spirit takes at least seven years to form! There is something very special going on in that glass. Just add some tonic soda and maybe a splash of fresh juice—that is a beautiful thing.” ■

*Tequila Corralejo is imported by Infinium Spirits in the U.S. Contact your local sales rep or visit [www.infiniumspirits.com](http://www.infiniumspirits.com) for more.*

### TEQUILA LAST WORD

- ▶ ¾ oz. Corralejo Blanco
- ▶ ¾ oz. green Chartreuse
- ▶ ¾ oz. Luxardo Maraschino
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lime juice
- ▶ Shake with ice and strain into coupe.

### LA ROSITA

- ▶ 2 oz. Corralejo Reposado
- ▶ ½ oz. Campari
- ▶ ½ oz. sweet vermouth
- ▶ ½ oz. dry vermouth
- ▶ 1 dash Angostura Bitters
- ▶ Stir with ice, strain into coupe and garnish with orange twist.

### TEQUILA AND SANGRITA

- ▶ 2 oz. Corralejo Añejo or Reposado
- ▶ 2 oz. sangrita (Sol Cocina recipe: 1:1 tomato and orange juice; add lime, salt and hot sauce to taste)
- ▶ Serve tequila and sangrita neat in two separate shot glasses.

### TEQUILA AND TONIC

- ▶ 2 oz. Corralejo Blanco or Reposado
- ▶ 5 oz. tonic soda
- ▶ ¼ oz. lime juice
- ▶ Fill a highball with ice and pour in all ingredients. Garnish with lime wedge and a cool summer breeze.

### HORCHATA MARTINI

- ▶ 2 oz. Corralejo Blanco (infused with chai tea overnight)
- ▶ ½ oz. 1921 Crema de Tequila
- ▶ 2 oz. horchata mix (rice blended with water, vanilla and cinnamon)
- ▶ Shake with ice, strain into Martini glass and dust with cinnamon.



**The lineup of Corralejo cocktails at Sol Cocina in Newport Beach, CA demonstrates the tequila’s versatility.**