

ESPÒLON: *Tequila, Art, and Folk Tales*

Decades ago, Master Distiller Cirilo Oropeza set out to make exceptional tequila that everyone could enjoy, studying the science behind the spirit while applying a hands-on approach to its production. After years of research, his efforts came to fruition in 1998 with the inception of Espòlon Tequila.

Espòlon is made from 100% Blue Weber agave that's cooked for twice as long as the industry standard. It's then double-distilled in both a column and pot still to yield four expressions. The Blanco has a soft mouthfeel and a bright agave flavor with a note of charred pineapple, while the Reposado and Añejo, according to Senior Category Director of White Spirits Bernadette Knight, "are aged in smaller 200-liter oak barrels, giving [them] more complexity." The Reposado rests for three to five months and the Añejo for 12 months, the latter making for a copper-hued sipping tequila with hints of caramel, dried fruit, and dark chocolate. Espòlon also makes a limited-edition Añejo X, which matures for six years in American oak.

But the story doesn't stop with the spirit, says Knight: "Espòlon has a powerful combination—striking package, high-quality liquid that is incredibly popular with bartenders, and an approachable price point." While the brand logo alludes to the potent symbolism of the rooster in Mexican folklore, the bottles bear illustrations that honor one of Mexico's great artists. As Knight explains, "The unique label artwork pays tribute to 19th-century artist and printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, who made rebellious yet witty commentary on the social injustices of his time through his art." The images denote everything from the Mexican Revolution to fellowship in the marketplace to a protest dance—which Espòlon will provide plenty of courage for reenacting. With its delicious liquid, brilliant bottle design, and fair price point, it's easy to see why Espòlon is one of the fastest-growing premium tequila brands in the United States. —Eric Marsh



Espòlon Añejo Tequila

(\$35) is finished in Wild Turkey bourbon barrels and is marked by scents of sweet toffee, lemon chiffon, and candied pineapple. Spiced celery root, grapefruit zest, chamomile, and mature agave notes come through on first sip, layered with a minerality that tastes salty on the palate. Lemon blossom keeps the perfume steady on the tongue for an exquisite finish. **95** —M.M.

