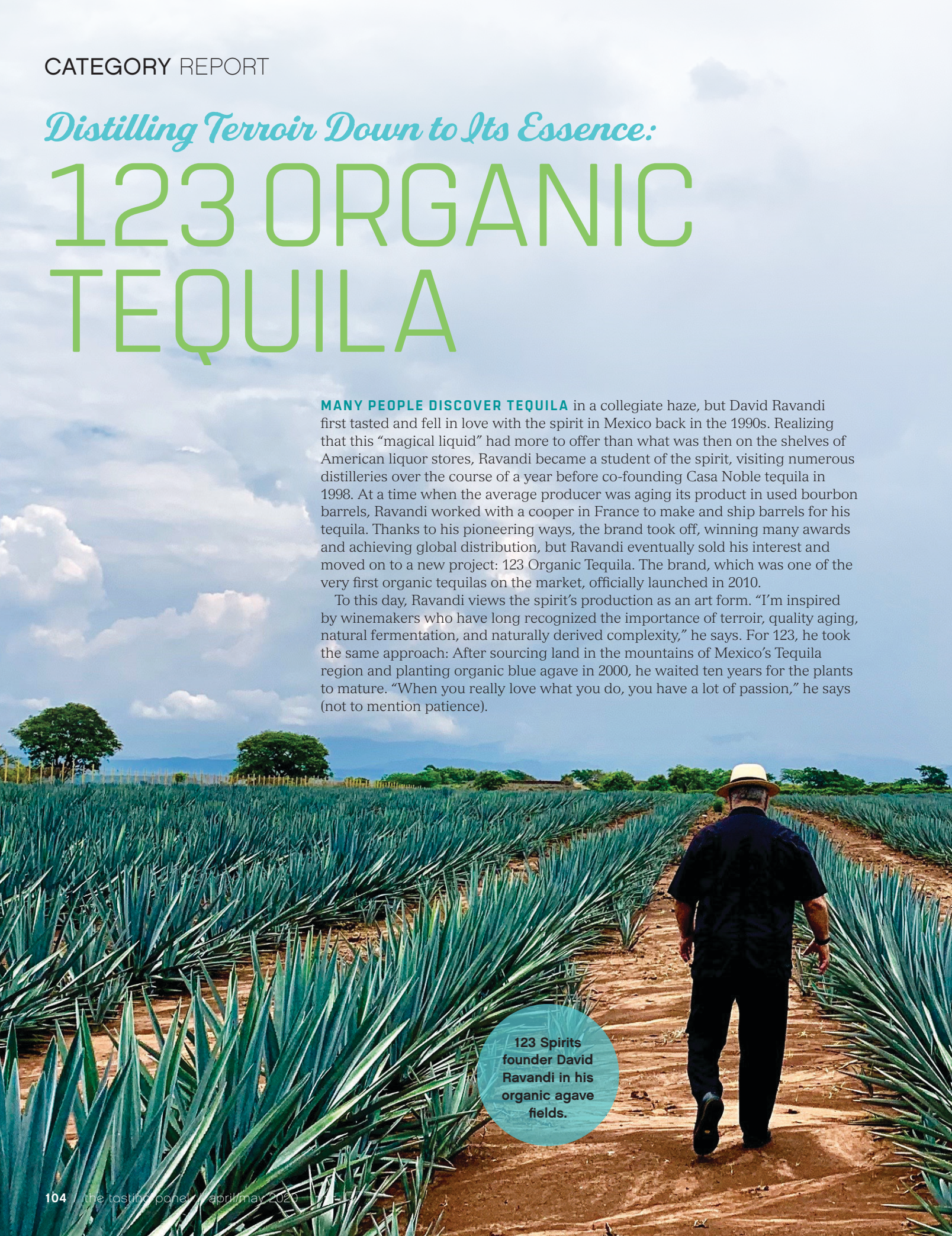


*Distilling Terroir Down to Its Essence:*

# 123 ORGANIC TEQUILA

**MANY PEOPLE DISCOVER TEQUILA** in a collegiate haze, but David Ravandi first tasted and fell in love with the spirit in Mexico back in the 1990s. Realizing that this “magical liquid” had more to offer than what was then on the shelves of American liquor stores, Ravandi became a student of the spirit, visiting numerous distilleries over the course of a year before co-founding Casa Noble tequila in 1998. At a time when the average producer was aging its product in used bourbon barrels, Ravandi worked with a cooper in France to make and ship barrels for his tequila. Thanks to his pioneering ways, the brand took off, winning many awards and achieving global distribution, but Ravandi eventually sold his interest and moved on to a new project: 123 Organic Tequila. The brand, which was one of the very first organic tequilas on the market, officially launched in 2010.

To this day, Ravandi views the spirit’s production as an art form. “I’m inspired by winemakers who have long recognized the importance of terroir, quality aging, natural fermentation, and naturally derived complexity,” he says. For 123, he took the same approach: After sourcing land in the mountains of Mexico’s Tequila region and planting organic blue agave in 2000, he waited ten years for the plants to mature. “When you really love what you do, you have a lot of passion,” he says (not to mention patience).



123 Spirits  
founder David  
Ravandi in his  
organic agave  
fields.





The brand differentiates itself from the rest of the market in multiple ways. First and foremost, the organic process is discernible on the palate. “The juice has a cleaner and truer identity,” Ravandi says. “Chemicals and spraying, as well as additional sugar or yeast during fermentation, change the flavor profile.” And with agave as inherently beautiful as that which he grows on his estate, Ravandi’s sole goal is to champion it.

Ravandi’s plants, which are both

USDA- and EU-certified, grow at elevations of 4,200–6,000 feet, where they’re highly stressed: The higher the altitude, the more dramatic the weather and temperature swings. “This keeps the plant on its tiptoes,” Ravandi says. “It has to work hard to reach for water.” And the harder the plant has to work, the more fibrous its heart, or *piña*, will be and the more character it will have. Once harvested, the piñas are roasted on a pit fire; the mashed and pressed agave juices then ferment

in oak tanks and eventually undergo double distillation.

Ravandi’s dedication to the production process has paid off: Every single case of 123 Organic Tequila made annually is pre-allocated per market. In 2014, at the urging of a friend, Ravandi also began releasing Diablito, an extra añejo expression he originally created not for sale but for personally enjoying with cigars. Now he produces 2,500 bottles a year, and tequila fans clamor for the elixir, which has a creamy body and long-lasting finish after aging for 40 months in French Limousin oak barrels.

Ravandi’s belief in the concept of tequila as an art form doesn’t stop at the juice: 123 Organic Tequila comes in hand-blown recycled-glass bottles—no two are the same—affixed with recycled-paper labels printed with soy ink. The labels, which celebrate Mexican folklore and heritage through intricate line drawings, extend to the whole lineup of Blanco, Reposado, Añejo, and Extra Añejo. In each sip of 123—which shows nuances ranging from almond and honey to lemon peel and anise—Ravandi tells the story of a passionate tequilero who believed the world deserved a line of tequilas that could speak in turn to dedicated craftsmanship and a sense of place. —*Amanda M. Faison*

