

# Tequila, the Comeback Kid

The craft-cocktail movement has redefined this college shooter.

**Tequila has a bad rap** (“t’kill ya,” anyone?). But thanks to the national obsession with cocktails, this agave spirit is overcoming its sophomore stigma. While bars in Los Angeles and New York City have dedicated their menus to the liquor, the trend has gone a step further in Denver. A handful of local companies are making and importing their own tequila and mescal (tequila’s sister)—and bartenders are paying attention. Look for the sweet and approachable Muchote tequila behind the bar, and head to the following four spots to taste the local sips—crisp, clean Tequila Proximus, floral Republic Tequila, and slightly smoky Sombra mescal—in cocktail form.

—KAZIA JANKOWSKI



## Squeaky Bean

Grab a patio seat and order the Oompa Loompa—a trip to Wonka-land via Mexico and Italy. This whimsical cocktail blends Republic’s clear, silver pour with Italy’s bittersweet, orange-accented Aperol liqueur, lemon juice, soda water, and 7Up. It’s served over ice in a glass rimmed with crushed root beer-candy and salt. 3301 Tejon St., 303-284-0053, [www.thesqueakybean.net](http://www.thesqueakybean.net)



## Bitter Bar

Cigar smokers, black coffee purists, Mad Men (and women)—mixologist James Lee has a cocktail for you: El Humidor. The heady drink begs for a smoking chair and clings to the tongue with its blend of robust Sombra mescal, tangy plum wine, and Qi smoked black tea liquor. 835 Walnut St., Boulder, 303-442-3050, [www.happynoodle-house.com](http://www.happynoodle-house.com)



## Rackhouse Pub

Along Santa Fe Drive, owner Chris Rippe makes an all-local version of Mexico’s popular Squirrt-tequila paloma cocktail. He blends Proximus’ smooth silver tequila with Oogave grapefruit soda and lots of lime juice. The result is an impressively refreshing, not overly sweet, summer sip. 208 S. Kalamath St., 720-570-7824, [www.rackhousepub.com](http://www.rackhousepub.com)



## Colt & Gray

This plush spot in Commons Park riffs on the Moscow Mule. Instead of vodka, lime juice, and ginger beer, the icy Burro y Rosso layers orange marmalade, house-made ginger beer, and bright Proximus. This refined (not to mention potent) sip reminds you not to let summer slip by. 1553 Platte St., 303-477-1447, [www.coltand-gray.com](http://www.coltand-gray.com)



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## CHEAT SHEET

### TEQUILA VS. MESCAL

The difference between tequila and mescal is far from clear-cut. But a couple of rules generally apply: Tequila, by law, is made only in the state of Jalisco and four surrounding regions, and the blue agave for tequila is steam-cooked, whereas agave (not necessarily blue agave) for mescal is usually roasted. Learn more by taking a class at Lola, Zolo, or Tambien.