

Holy Aztec Cactus Potion! 🌵 🍷

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Mon, May 1, 2017 at 2:33 PM

"Don't look up. Look down - where the emeralds are."

MEXICO'S ANCESTRAL LIBATION

Holy Nectar

DEAR GOOD PEOPLE

Go back far enough, and Cinco de Mayo began in a 16th-century bishop's dream. When Fray Julian Garcés woke up with a vision of a city built by angels, he founded *Puebla de los Angeles* (City of the Angels, Puebla for short) on the road to the sea from Mexico City.

In 1862, on the fifth of May, celestial powers may well have aided a scrubby army that defended Puebla from French invaders and made Mexico's resilience clear. The anniversary's become a day for tequila or beer toasts aplenty, but there's a more sacred Mexican drink, concocted by the Aztecs and perhaps favored by the very angels in that old bishop's dream—*pulque*.

*Know ye not pulque,
That liquor divine?
Angels in heaven,
prefer it to wine.*

- *via* Frederick Ober, American explorer

Pulque's roots touch Mexico's spiritual origin. Many credit the fertility goddess Mayahuel, who had 400 breasts, with the cactus-like maguey plant of the Mexican heartland whose sap provides pulque's essence. In Aztec lore, 400 rabbits fed on this milk of Mayahuel and became the

gods of drunkenness. Pulque is also linked to the hunting god Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, said to have created (then sun-sacrificed) Central Mexico's first inhabitants.

The fermented cactus potion can be challenging to consume. During a recent trip to Mexico City, at least one of us lacked the celestial fortitude when we tasted its syrupy, lukewarm milky-fizz (more capital drink picks below). But experiencing the "gods' beverage" in a form that's barely changed for a thousand years is worth a toast, at least once.

Treasures

REFRESHING FORAYS

La Hermosa Hortensia

They're **trying** to can and ship it, but true pulque is served unpasteurized in Mexico, and close to the source. You can't do much better than the 80-year-old family pulqueria in Garibaldi Square pictured above. Go for the tamarind flavor on the right.

Bar Montejo Cantina

For a few reasons, we don't recommend a Mayahuel's milk-only diet, particularly in Mexico City's gastronomic zones. Change gears at this classic of the District Federal's unpretentious cafe / watering hole hybrids. After a couple **carajillo** cocktails, made by pouring espresso over iced Licor 43 right at the table, you'll feel the vibrant Condesa neighborhood's call.

Páramo

Reflect and unwind over the house mezcal and cocktail variations (toronja tonic, perhaps?) at this bar and restaurant tucked away in an old colonial home above the lively brunch spot **El Parnita**.

The Design Cafe

Don't always opt for alcohol - the chic cafe here offers an urban refuge and a choice selection of *jugos naturales*, *toritos* (milk and fruit) and other restorative elixirs that are sold all over the city. Anything *fresas* (strawberries) and you'll be set.

THIRSTY CITY SUPPLIES

[👉 Maguey Sweet Sap](#)

Sweeten your cocktails and much more with this organic, natural syrupy extract from the *pulque* mother plant.

[👉 Agave Straw Lasso](#)

Hone your technique and maintain order with 50 feet of rope handmade from dried maguey in Mexico.

[👉 The Labyrinth of Solitude](#)

It is hard to beat this Octavio Paz masterpiece as a companion for a thoughtful drink, whether in Mexico or elsewhere.

[👉 Five Maguey Planting Seeds](#)

It takes over a decade for the maguey to produce pulque-ready sap. Try your luck, seek the gods' blessing.

[👉 60 'Chinicuiles' Red Worms](#)

These worms subsist only on the roots of the maguey until harvested as a mystical and tasty delicacy.

[👉 'Mayahuel' Instrumental](#)

The artist Huehuecuicatl offers this epic meditation named for the 400-breasted Aztec god.

P.S.

Been to the D.F. yourself recently? What'd we miss on our boozy journey? Let us know, and we'll update our fellow travelers here—and send a toast your way.

Salud!

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