

This was done for a magazine article aimed at bar professionals

Interview with Andres Masso

Tomas: Dre, this is going to be about tequila but first a bit about you. You are in the bar trade and hold a respected place there; how did you get into the business?

Dre: Mom was always in the business. My earliest memory was in the restaurant my Mom worked in. She was a single parent and did restaurant work to support us. I studied photography in college and needed money to live on. I had started at the bottom at 15 years old and at 18 went on to bar work in South London. The last eight years I've been working in Central London in Soho.

Tomas: What's the appeal of bar work for you?

Dre: Creativity, meeting people, sociability, the business side of it, making money and managing. All the angles interest me and plus it involves something I'm passionate about, booze.

Tomas: What the deal with tequila with you?

Dre: Well it all started with Danny Smith taking me to Pacifico. We had met at a bar event. I was impressed by the selection at Pacifico and we sampled lots of different ones and enjoyed them. I like especially the great buzz it gives. I started drinking tequila of poor quality...

Tomas: Like everyone else, me included.

Dre: Then right away took to the flavour of good quality tequila. I remember especially Herradura Silver.

Tomas: What's the appeal of tequila?

Dre: It's got a massive association with being a party time drink, as in shooters.

Tomas: You've been working in the U.S., in San Francisco, recently. What about selling and up-selling tequila in the U.S.?

Dre: I've been working and hanging out at Tommy's in San Francisco. You know the place, and Julio, he's promoting over 200 choices of 100% agave tequila.

Tomas: I know Julio all right, he is the Ambassador from Tequila to the U.S. and I am the same to Europe. We're the only two with that title. No one else has drunk and served as much tequila as the two of us.

- Dre: He promotes tequila by having seminars as you do in Pacifico and La Perla which educate, inform and impassion.
- Tomas: To me the latter is the key, getting people, like yourself, turned on, excited about tequila. It is passion, as in fascination, that makes the difference between something being flat, mundane and being a buzz, a thrill.
- Dre: Julio educates his clientele about 100% agave tequila. He does this by talking to people at the bar and explaining and showing the differences in one tequila to another. He also does this with his Agave Club. He has 6,000 members. It works this way, the person joins the Club by paying \$10 and gets a card with 69 tequilas on it. When the member has tried 35 tequilas they can take a written test and get a diploma and t-shirt which show what they've done. This focuses attention on tequila and brings customers back in. The tequilas consumed for the Club can be done neat or in a margarita. The margarita is enormous in promoting tequila. The margarita is a giant, popular drink in the U.S. Julio has raised the standard for margaritas in the San Francisco area.
- Tomas: I am sure you're right. The margarita has done the most in bringing tequilas to the masses.
- Dre: A good way of proving that tequila is a grand spirit is to mix it in a traditional cocktail instead of the original spirit. Examples are: Martini, use a light, citrus-y tequila; Daiquiri; Manhattan, use a darker tequila; Mexican Mule, instead of Moscow Mule; Old Fashioned.
- Tomas: A tequilero (tequila producer) told me that tequila and tonic was a unique alternative to gin and tonic. I tried it with Silver tequila and was surprised, it was a refreshing, exciting drink.
- Dre: Another way to sell tequila is with the sipping tequilas which are becoming more prevalent today. It helps to have the right glass and to have the bartender suggest what to try and explain the background, where it is from and its taste and appeal.
- Tomas: I agree, this sector for tequila is growing and gives a totally new image and selling market for it. Makes me thirsty talking about it and looking at the selection of bottles behind the bar at La Perla where we are.
- Dre: Me, too!