

## Pisco and Cachaca Seminar

If [2007 Tales of the Cocktail](#) attendees at the South American Spirits Seminar on **pisco** and **cachaça** only learned one thing; it would be that these spirits are the new cocktail darlings.

Of course, with Master Mixologist Junior Merino aka "[The Liquid Chef](#)" discussing pisco, and the both of us discussing cachaça, the seminar was anything but dull. Junior opened the July 20, 2007 seminar telling the audience that all things Latin are red-hot, and then smiled and pointed to himself, which had the audience agreeing and laughing with him. It was the perfect opening and icebreaker to really set the tone of the seminar, where our goals were to inform and educate the audience, and most of all to have fun, which is also the goal of the Tales of the Cocktail.



Junior began the seminar by explaining that pisco is a clear grape spirit, is an unaged brandy, and that brandies do not have to be brown spirits. Pisco is the oldest distilled spirit in the American Continent. The difference between grappa and pisco is that unlike grappa, pisco is made from the fresh must separated from the skins, and that only the first press is fermented into the wine.

The only countries allowed to produce and use the name pisco are Chile and Peru, although there are many differences in how the two countries make pisco, a few of which are listed below.

### **Chile**

#### **Peru**

Rectified in continuous stills

Made in a single batch in copper stills

Only makes aromatic pisco

2 types of Pisco: non-aromatic (Quebranta) and aromatic (Acholado)

Types of aromatic grapes used:

Pedro Jimenez

Torontel

Moscatel (10 types of grapes)

Types of aromatic grapes used:

Italia

Torontel

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

Moscatel  
Albilla

Types of non-aromatic grapes used:

Quebranta  
Negra Criolla  
Mollar  
Uvina

3-5 kilos grapes produces 1 liter

7-8 kilos of grapes produces 1 liter

After distillation: high alcohol (55-75%), distilled water added to reduce alcohol to 40% (30-50%)

Distilled to proof, nothing added. After distillation alcohol is 40% (38-46%).

Aged in wood

Not aged in wood, rested in inert vats



The most famous of the pisco cocktails are the Pisco Sour and the Pisco Punch made famous in San Francisco, California in 1854. The Pisco Sour is made with egg whites, and Junior advised the audience to use organic egg whites, and whenever possible to use organic products to help preserve the future of our children.

Tasting is an integral part of a spirits seminar, and the audience had the opportunity to sample both the classic Pisco Sour and La Rayuela, a pisco punch, before moving on to the other often-overlooked and underutilized South American spirit, although rapidly gaining in popularity, cachaça from Brazil.



Debra having lived in Rio de Janeiro and the state of São Paulo, Brazil, as well as both Edward and Debra

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

being avid supporters of all things Brazilian including cachaça for over 20 years, when Ann Rogers, founder of the [Tales of the Cocktail](#) approached us about doing a seminar with Junior Merino on South American Spirits we immediately jumped onboard.

Cachaça (pronounced kah-shah-suh), the national spirit, has been in Brazil since the mid-1500s, and is sometimes called aguardente, pinga, cana, and our all time favorite "agua que passarinho não bebe" (water that birds won't drink). It is made much like Martinique rum agricole, using distilled



unrefined sugar cane juice rather than molasses like most typical rums. The sugar cane is crushed, and is first fermented in wood or copper, and then processed up to three times to distill it in a copper pot still (for artisanal makers) or a column still (industrial producers). The process can be as short as 24 hours to several years, depending on the aging of the product.



Without aging cachaça is a clear white spirit. Aged varieties must be aged for at least one year, and are usually a golden amber color due to the type of wood barrels used, which varies from producer to producer, although some of the gold cachaças are not actually aged, but have caramel or wood extracts added to round out the flavor. Aging is done in Brazilian cedar, freijó, jequitibá, umburana, as well as American or French oak casks, which impart each brand with a unique color and flavor.

Tasting notes for white cachaça include sweet, fresh sugar cane juice, fresh cut grass, and a hint of vanilla on the nose, with sweet, fresh sugar cane juice, creaminess, and a lasting finish on the palate.



Brazil has over 4,000 (and growing) brands of cachaça, which are produced throughout the country with the majority of cachaça made in the state of Minas Gerais, although the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Santa Catarina also produce cachaça. Due to the relative ease to grow sugar cane and produce

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

cachaça, not only is it made in factories, but also by artisanal producers and is also sometimes made at home.

We have visited many of the artisanal cachaça producers in the states of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, and at present have more than 30 bottles of cachaça in our collection including homemade cachaça to assist in our continual research on this interesting spirit.



Cachaça may vary in alcohol by volume (ABV) from producer to producer especially from artisanal producers and range from 28.5% to 46.5% volume, with the majority of cachaça falling into the 40% ABV.

Unlike the current trend of flavored rums and vodkas, there are only a handful of flavored cachaças on the market. A few of the flavored cachaças that we have encountered in Brazil include coconut, banana, chocolate mint, coffee, and tangerine leaf.

Although cachaça may be served neat, it is usually made into a variety of cocktails called batidas (bah-chee-dahs), the most famous being the traditional cocktail, the Caipirinha, (kai-peer-eeen-yah), made with cachaça, and muddled limes and sugar. As with other rum drinks, batidas usually feature fruit juices as one of the main ingredients, and in Brazil also use condensed milk. Another popular cachaça drink is Quentão that is served hot for Saint John's Day on June 24th, and is made with mulled wine, cachaça, ginger, cloves, and a cinnamon stick, which is perfect drink for autumn and winter.

Once we concluded the informational part on cachaça, it was time for the fun to begin - tasting cachaça and the Saude cocktail, and then having the attendees create their own Caipirinhas. When you have a room full of people muddling limes and sugar to the lively music of Brazilian rock band, Skank, you know that it was a fun event, and the caipirinha was a big hit.





### Muddling and Shaking

We have found the Caipirinha on trendy bar menus throughout the world, which is really no surprise as all things Brazilian become ever hotter each year, however what we really would like to point out, is that both pisco and cachaça are very versatile spirits that lend themselves to a variety of cocktails other than just the classic cocktails, Pisco Sour, Pisco Punch, and Caipirinha.

So, the next time that you visit a bar or your favorite liquor store, instead of requesting your usual brandy or rum, why not give pisco and cachaça a try; we know that you will be pleasantly surprised.



### Prepping Ingredients for the Seminar's Cocktails

#### Pisco Sour

2 ounces Pisco  
1¾ ounce Simple syrup  
1 ounce fresh Lime Juice  
½ ounce Pasteurized egg whites  
5 drops Angostura Bitters

Mix in a shaker glass with ice. Strain into a Highball glass filled with fresh ice.

#### La Rayuela

1¾ ounces Pisco  
¼ ounce Damiana Liqueur  
½ ounce Aloe Vera juice  
½ ounce Quince Syrup  
½ fresh Lime Juice

Pour ingredients in a mixing glass with ice, and shake in a shaker can. Strain into a chilled Martini glass.

#### Caipirinha

2 ounces Cachaça

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

1 tablespoon Sugar  
½ lime, cut into small cubes

In a mixing glass, add the limes and the sugar and muddle to dissolve the sugar in the lime juice. Add the cachaça and stir well. Add ice, and shake until the can is frosty to finish dissolving the sugar. Pour into a rocks glass with fresh ice. Garnish with lime wedge.

**Saude (means "Health" in Portuguese)**

1½ ounces Cachaça  
1 ounce Açai Juice  
½ ounce Chambord  
½ Lime Juice  
½ ounce Ginger Beer or Ginger Ale  
4 Blackberries for garnish

Mix all ingredients in a mixing glass. Strain into a rocks glass filled with ice. Garnish with blackberries.

Product contributors and sponsors for the South American Spirits Seminar included **BarSol Pisco**, **Boca Loca Cachaça**, and **Sambazon Açai Juice**.

Read other articles on cachaça and additional cocktail and culinary cachaça recipes in the [Liquor Cabinet](#), and other articles on the **Tales of the Cocktail** in the [Liquor Cabinet](#), [Restaurants](#), and [Chefs' Recipes](#) sections.

For information on the 2008 **Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans**, please visit: [www.TalesoftheCocktail.com](http://www.TalesoftheCocktail.com). For information on New Orleans, please visit: **New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.** at: [www.NewOrleansCVB.com](http://www.NewOrleansCVB.com).

© August 2007. Luxury Experience. [www.LuxuryExperience.com](http://www.LuxuryExperience.com) All rights reserved.