

## **WRITING SAMPLE #4 – Press Release for Industry-Specific Media**

### **Consumers Drive Tequila Producers, Distributors and Regulators to Push Industry Growth**

The growth and success of the tequila industry seen in the past few years has been driven by consumers and their growing knowledge of what the spirit represents, consists of and their evolving palate for quality products.

This was according to some of the spirit industry's top leaders and specialists who gathered for the first-ever Tequila Think Tank: Beyond the Margarita Glass presented by Casa Sauza in conjunction with the Spirits of Mexico Festival on July 11 at Zocalo Restaurant and Tequila Bar in Chicago. The interactive panel discussion covered the emerging success of the tequila industry, delved into what has fueled growth in Mexican spirit popularity and the actions needed to continue expanding the market.

"We have almost tripled the sales of tequila in the past 15 years," said Ignacio del Real, manager of agricultural research and development for the tequila brand Casa Sauza.

Jack Robertiello, lead judge at the Spirits of Mexico Festival, North America's largest and most comprehensive forum and celebration for agave-based and other Mexican spirits, and renowned spirits, mixology and cuisine writer, stated with quick and confident insight, "One hundred percent agave is selling. Experimental expressions are selling as well."

Carlos Camarena, master distiller of El Tesoro de Don Felipe Tequila, offered a second positive outlook on the industry's health.

"There has been growth in the tequila industry in every direction," said Camarena. "From state-of-the-art to small batch producers, these brands try to make themselves different which is good."

A third generation master distiller, Camarena carries more than 200 years of tradition with him, overseeing the entire tequila making process from selecting only the ripest plants and using equipment from the family's original distillery.

"The essence is not to lose the agave," he continued. "The producers are willing to spend extra time and the consumers are happy. Don't lose the essence. You are tequila. Keep the agave."

Keeping tequila production regulated has also helped build the reputation of the industry, which in turn has kept consumer expectations high.

According to panelist, Daniela Solis of the Consejo Regulador del Tequila (Tequila Regulatory Council), "There are a lot of rules distilleries must follow. The biggest challenge is to keep protecting tequila. In countries other than Mexico, they are making what they call 'tequila' where there is no agave."

With the CRT overseeing and creating a strong foundation for tequila certification, informing consumers about quality tequila and supplying the best products is made possible.

"First we have to make the world know what tequila is about including the years of aging it takes to produce," said del Real. "The challenge is to make the world understand and place it on the table to enjoy it."

Clayton Szczech, founder of Experience Tequila, which provides formal educational tastings, special events and industry training about tequila throughout the United States, has been at the forefront of the growing appreciation for tasting tequila and its flavor notes.

"Consumers are drinking tequila in a more refined manner and not as shots," he explained. "And this raises the bar for everyone- the producers, the bars and restaurants."

The informed tequila consumer has supplemented the trend to buy organic in the overall U.S. economy. Robertiello credits establishments such as Whole Foods for taking a ground-breaking position to sell organic wine and presenting a new concept for the rest of distributors and producers to follow. Casa Sauza is one of the pioneers to introduce organic expressions of tequila in its production line, which requires an extremely strict certification process that monitors all steps from fertilization to the quality of water used to distill the tequila.

“Organic tequila opens up a conversation of ‘what is tequila?’,” said Szczech.

This rise in organic tequila is just the start and highlights the need for new methods of sustainability for the entire industry. Del Real, passionate about educating and creating new ways of sustainability explained, “The things that are for the common good – let’s share those.”

The consensus from the expert panel was it will take everyone from consumers and producers to regulators to continue to push industry growth. So long as consumers continue to drive the market with demand for quality tequila and producers strive to find new ways to bring sustainability into the business, the traditions of tequila should be sound for generations and generations to come.

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### **Roundtable Participants**

**Carlos Camarena**, Master Distiller *El Tesoro de Don Felipe Tequila*

**Ignacio del Real**, Manager of Agricultural Research/Development *Casa Sauza*

**Jack Robertiello**, Judge *Spirits of Mexico Festival*; Spirits and Mixology Writer *Mix, Beverage Media, Beverage Dynamics*, and *Flavor and the Menu*

**Daniela Solis**, Representative for USA and Canada *Consejo Regulador del Tequila (Tequila Regulatory Council)*

**Clayton Szczech**, Founder & Owner-Operator *Experience Tequila*