

Guadalajara Punch Is Built to Please

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Sometimes known as the Cazuela or Cazuela Voladora ("Flying Casserole"), the tequila-based cocktail is a cantina staple throughout the city.

Jalisco, Mexico's favorite regional cocktail was hardly designed to become canon. Simply called Guadalajara Punch or Cazuela—a reference to the traditional wide-mouthed earthenware vessel in which it's served—the concoction went from a happy accident to instant cantina classic after its creation more than three decades ago. Stateside, however, the large-format crowd-pleaser remains waiting in the wings to assume its rightful role on the roster of warm-weather standbys.

"The creation of the Cazuela happened by chance—it is said that its creator prepared it to have something to offer his guests," says chef Karla Castro, of La Cueva de Don Cenobio, a popular restaurant in Tequila. "Not having anything more, he created a mixture of orange, lime, grapefruit, lemon, soda, liquor and salt."

Despite the Cazuela's inception over 30 years ago in a kitchen in La Barca, an hour's drive from Guadalajara, it was there that the drink found its legs, served en masse to thirsty patrons at bustling cantinas, and regularly prepared by families in their own backyards to beat the heat. Typically, a large batch will be composed in a communal bowl or pitcher, becoming a focal point of any gathering.

Just south of Guadalajara, in the municipality of Tlaquepaque ("place above the clay lands"), the Cazuela has found a particularly welcome home. There, the drink is referred to by locals as Cazuela Voladora, or "flying casserole," because finishing a few on a hot day sends you flying. That's the danger of the Cazuela's easy-drinking nature, something Castro credits to the balance created between "the acidity of citrus, the sweetness of soda and the touch of salt."



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Martín Padilla, the owner of El Toreo restaurant in Tlaquepaque, explains that the Cazuela Voladora was first created using aguardiente blanco, a generic spirit he describes as similar to schnapps. Over time, modifications were made to continually improve the formula, whether that meant swapping Squirt for Jarritos, using tequila or adding a spicy dash of tajín.

But what ties all the variations together is its unique presentation. “What makes the cocktail famous and unique is not only its combination of natural citric fruits,” says Padilla, “but that it is to be enjoyed in a *cazuela de barro rojo*, or red clay bowl, to keep the freshness and flavor from the clay.” The preparation is often compared to another Mexican-born cocktail, the Cantarito, a similar local specialty served in clay cups, which, like the wide-mouthed cazuelas, serve to neutralize the acidity of citrus.

Visitors to Guadalajara have ample opportunity to experience the Cazuela, which is served in the city’s many *campestre* restaurants; among them is El Abajeño, where guests can choose from up to 45 tequila options. Just up the street on Calle Independencia, one can also find the hacienda-style Restaurante Casa Luna and its version of Guadalajara Punch, served in hand-carved wooden bowls that rest upon metal stilts—a tactile drinking experience of its own.

A departure from the drink’s namesake earthenware vessel, Casa Luna’s Cazuela nevertheless fits into the drink’s organic evolution, changing ever so slightly from one preparation to the next. As Castro explains, “That preparation was passed from mouth to mouth and began to become famous, until it became one of the most iconic drinks of our country.”