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Hiking the Margarita Trail

 May 10, 2016, 12:00 am
 By Natalie Bovis

Did you know that the margarita is one of the most popular mixed drinks, not only in Santa Fe but also the *world*? Historically classified as a daisy (or *margarita*, in Spanish), the refreshing combination of agave spirit, fresh lime juice, orange liqueur and a kiss of agave nectar resonates with people everywhere.

Around here, bartenders and home entertainers have their own special ways of mixing it up. Sampling margarita variations on local bar menus is even more fun now that the **Santa Fe Margarita Trail** launched—appropriately—on *Cinco de Drinko*, otherwise known as May 5. Social media burst with tantalizing tequila tipples as excited trailblazers sipped around town.

Margarita Trail Passports are available for \$3 at participating establishments and at Tourism Santa Fe Visitor Centers to those over 21 years of age. Each bar visit collects another passport stamp, resulting in prizes such as a commemorative T-shirt after five stamps and a tequila book by local aficionado Al Lucero after 20 stamps. However, passports can only receive two stamps per day to help ensure responsible sampling.



#SFRfoodies Instagram Feed

Have you come across a dish so amazing that you just had to document it? Snap a pic and share it on **Instagram** using **#SFRfoodies** and join the Santa Fe foodie movement!

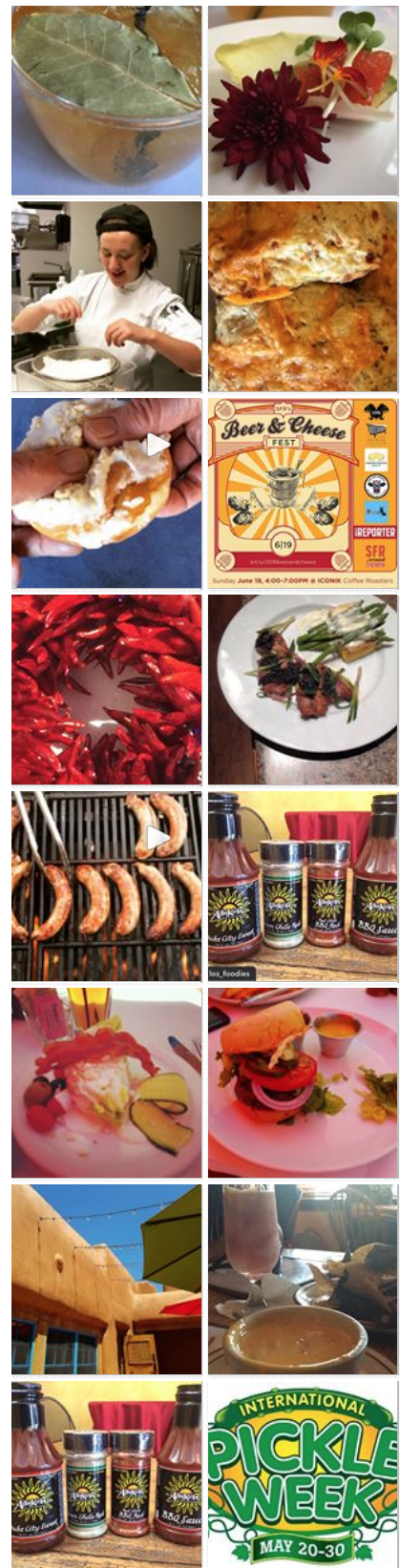
Randy Randall, executive director of Tourism Santa Fe, argues that this guide is especially helpful to visitors. “The Margarita Trail complements our storied history and guides visitors to restaurants, bars, live music and award-winning regional cuisine,” Randall says. Mayor Javier Gonzales goes even further saying the promotion helps “visitors discover exceptional talent and hidden gems in our city while they create some very special memories.”

So how do local businesses feel about it? According to Daniel Rivera, operations manager at Inn of the Anasazi, participants of the Margarita Trail become eager to try more of their margarita offerings. The bar added a designated tequila-sampling table last year, providing an opportunity for guests to explore their wide selection of tequila brands and housemade infusions. “The excitement we see on their faces when they are introduced to this experience is priceless,” Rivera says.

I still have a long way to go to collect all the stamps. So far, some of my favorites include the yummy strawberry jalapeño margarita at **Inn at Loretto (211 Old Santa Fe Trail, 988-5531)** and the signature Smoked Sage Margarita at **Secreto Lounge (210 Don Gaspar Ave., 983-5700)**. And, of course, watching the sunset from the **The Bell Tower** above La Fonda Hotel (**100 E San Francisco St., 982-5511**) is a must-do during summer. Bell Tower bartender Lorelee Cerletti remarks, “What better way to end the day than enjoying a Bellringer at the end of the Santa Fe Trail?”

Bar professionals and cocktail enthusiasts can learn more about the deep roots of the margarita at the New Mexico Cocktails & Culture seminar “The Historic Journey from daisy to Margarita, the World’s Most Popular Cocktail.” This event I’m organizing takes place at Skylight on Saturday, June 4, at 1:30 pm. The interactive tasting is described as “a romp through history as the classic gin daisy slowly changed over time to become the tequila-based Margarita.” Tickets are available at NMCocktailCulture.com.

Put on your hiking boots, Santa Fe, and start off down the trail. I hope to see you along the way. *Salud!*



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