

# An Authentic Brand

An Interview with Eric Brass, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Tequila Tromba



Eric Brass

**EDITORS' NOTE** Eric Brass grew up in Toronto, Canada with ambitions of entering the world of finance and making his mark with an eye for detail and sharp fiscal reasoning. Moving to Guadalajara, Mexico for a six-month university exchange program in 2005, he struck an immediate friendship with Australian roommate Nick Reid and later with James Sherry. Enticed by the culture, the land and the people, it was over sips of tequila that a passion for the agave spirit was born and an idea to educate the greater populace on the nuances of truly remarkable tequila emerged. From passionate intent, the storm of Tromba began to build under the guidance of Master Distiller Marco Cedano and his son, Rodrigo.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Tequila Tromba (tequila tromba.com), named for the intense rainstorms that rejuvenate the agave fields of the Jalisco Highlands, emerged when a group of young tequila lovers teamed up with the original Master Distiller of premium tequila, Marco Cedano. Building the brand out of their backpacks bottle by bottle, bar by bar, they remain uniquely distiller-owned and have become one

of the of the world's top craft tequilas. Their entrepreneurial spirit, obsession for quality, and passion to change the way the world sees tequila has brought them to where they are today – and they look to celebrate their commitment to craftsmanship in every sip. Tromba currently sells Blanco, Reposado and Añejo tequilas with a forthcoming launch of an Extra Añejo in Fall 2021. Tromba is sold in North America and Australia.

**Will you highlight the history and heritage of Tequila Tromba and how the brand is positioned in the industry?**

Tequila Tromba is hand-crafted by father and son duo, Marco and Rodrigo Cedano. Marco, the father, is a disruptor in the tequila industry who pioneered 100 percent blue agave tequila, which has helped elevate the taste and quality of the tequila category over the past 15 years. In 2005, while studying in Mexico, I noticed a gap in the tequila market and found that many tequilas were simply low quality or were too expensive and inaccessible. Together with my business partners, we sought to create a craft tequila at a moderate price that didn't

exist then. As a result, Tromba was created in 2012 by me, Nick Reid, James Sherry, and Marco and Rodrigo Cedano.

**What have been the keys to Tequila Tromba's strength and leadership in the industry?**

Marco Cedano has been working in the tequila industry for more than 40 years and is truly a legend in the industry – he created the first batch of premium 100 percent blue weber agave – the batch that started the premiumization of the industry. Marco worked on several aspects of the production process so co-founding his own brand was a logical next step. We were told by many it would be impossible to start a brand without significant capital. We built the brand with a meager \$10,000 – initially showing up at bars with a backpack full of tequila that we got people to taste. We heard so many “no’s” before we got a “yes,” but that kind of tenacity has embodied itself into the Tromba culture. By relying on the ultra-premium quality of the tequila, our authentic



Tequila Tromba Añejo



*Tequila Tromba Blanco Margarita*

Mexican pedigree and the relationships we fostered at each establishment, we have built a brand that stands for true craftsmanship and quality.

**How do you differentiate Tequila Tromba with so many brands in the tequila space?**

It's Marco's knowledge and history in the industry combined with Rodrigo's eye to the future that make Tromba unique. Our goal is to create a tequila that respects the past, while redefining the present, and that is why Marco enlisted his son Rodrigo as apprentice Master Distiller. So many brands in the tequila space have moved away from their roots to rely on the spectacle of celebrity. Our "celebrity" is, and always will be, Marco – he is the best craftsman in the business.

**Will you provide an overview of Tequila Tromba's product offerings?**

Our portfolio of premium tequilas includes Blanco, Reposado and Añejo and this November we will be adding an Extra Añejo to our portfolio as a limited release in the U.S.

**What are the key markets for Tequila Tromba and where do you see opportunities for growth for the brand?**

Tromba is currently available in North America and in Australia. In the U.S., we are particularly strong in what some might consider traditional tequila markets – Texas and California. We are currently in 23 states and expanding rapidly across the U.S. We are very excited about our new partnership with Sazerac/375 Park Avenue Spirits as our distribution arm in the U.S. We are working hard with them to collaborate with industry partners of all sizes to help rebuild the on-premise business and breathe new life into the hospitality industry.

**How do you define the Tequila Tromba customer and how broad is the target market?**

The Tromba customer is someone who appreciates a quality spirit and a brand with an authentic story that is made by real people. Tromba fans are not persuaded by celebrity endorsements and flashy marketing campaigns. They form their own opinions and seek out handcrafted quality brands.

**Has technology impacted the tequila making process or is it still about the hand craftsmanship?**

We are always keeping an eye to the future, embracing technology that enables better business practices and connectivity. That said, nothing can replace the value of hand craftsmanship. Ours is a high-touch business. The brand was born from a personal narrative and built by forging meaningful relationships with our vendors and customers.

**What are your priorities for Tequila Tromba as you look to the future?**

The tequila category has really taken off and there are more than 1,600 brands being produced in Mexico today. With this increased demand, we are facing an agave shortage and, more importantly, there are agave species that are near extinction. One of our key priorities is preserving this beloved and sacred plant. That's why we have launched the Endangered Agave Program (EAP) and committed to planting wild agave in a designated sanctuary near the base of the Volcán de Colima for every bottle sold to help save endangered populations of the prized species. We kicked off last month in honor of Mexican Independence Day and for every case of Tromba sold, one endangered agave will be planted with a goal of planting 5,000 plants representing five species that are in most need of protection. No agave on the sanctuary will be harvested to produce spirit products – instead, the plants will be allowed to mature, flower, and seed to create a rich source and ecosystem for mezcal producers to replant their own crop development. In order for future generations to enjoy Tromba, we must ensure that these endangered species are nourished and repopulated. ●



*Tequila Tromba Highlands agave fields in Jalisco*