



Quality in the Bottle

An Interview with J. Gary Shansby,
 Founder and Chairman, Tequila Partida, LLC



EDITORS' NOTE A noted brand builder, Gary Shansby co-founded a consumer goods private equity firm and has developed and marketed such notable household products as Vitamin Water, Famous Amos Cookies, Terra Chips, and La Victoria Salsa. Prior to founding his own private equity firm, Shansby was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Shaklee Corporation and brings more than 40 years of brand development experience to Tequila Partida.

COMPANY BRIEF Headquartered in San Francisco with offices in Guadalajara, Mexico, Tequila Partida (www.partidatequila.com), combines traditional tequila-making methods with cutting-edge technology. Partida is an award-winning, 100 percent blue agave, estate-grown tequila. Its special ingredient is the pure natural essence of blue agave, which is cultivated for 10 years until the piñas are ripened with concentrated sugars, harvested by hand, and slowly baked in state-of-the-art stainless steel autoclaves.

How has the Tequila Partida brand evolved and would you highlight the strength of the brand today?

Tequila Partida has evolved wonderfully over the past seven years, and we are proud the mixology community and the most respected spirits professionals continue to rate our brand as the top Tequila in the world. The strength of Tequila Partida is the quality in the bottle, as well as our dedicated team in the U.S. and Mexico, who are all committed to building our brand to be the largest and most consistently accepted ultra-premium Tequila of choice by true aficionados.

You have created a culture of innovation with the brand. Would you highlight how critical that is to the success of Partida?

Innovation in marketing and dedication to quality, consistency, and smoothness, as well as broad acceptance by discriminating consumers, is a hallmark at Tequila Partida. We have succeeded in building an authentic Mexican brand

combining the best of history with technological innovation from farming and harvest through cooking, fermentation, distillation, packaging, and positioning. Tequila Partida will always stand first and foremost for quality, and is bold, contemporary, smooth, fun, and food friendly. Consumers continue to discover the unique qualities of the product and our growth has been exceptional.



J. Gary Shansby working in a blue agave field (above); Tequila Partida Añejo, Blanco, Reposado, Organic Agave Nectar, and Elegante (top left); Tequila Partida Production Manager Jose Valdez (top right)

With the global economic challenges of the past few years, how much of an impact have you seen on your business?

We were impacted in the early stages of the recession, since most of our early distribution was on-premise in bars and restaurants, which were greatly impacted. We decided not to take shortcuts with discounting or unusual promotional deals, and to remain true to our ultra-premium position. I felt price cutting would result in "brand suicide" so we held the line. The result has been highly favorable. Our discovery by consumers continues and today we are enjoying accelerated growth as an ultra-premium tequila brand that delivers on the promises we made. We anticipate the continuation of this exceptional growth for many years.

You continue to invest in the brand during challenging economic times. How effectively positioned for growth is Partida?

We recently brightened our package and moved a bit to the more contemporary and vibrant positioning of modern Mexico. Like the exciting contemporary Mexican architects, Tequila Partida has been embraced more and more by the 25- to 40-year-old consumer group, ensuring our continued growth and acceptance.

Partida offers great quality, but is also one of the more expensive brands in the market. Do consumers understand that you can still get great value even at a higher price based on the quality of the product?

Absolutely. Very few brands have had as much success as the best of the ultra-premium tequilas. Tequila Partida is consistently ranked among the best of the best. The cost is relatively low on a per cocktail or neat consumption basis. It is important to note that the favorite cocktail in America, the margarita, is only as good as the base ingredient, which is tequila. Our consumers understand the smooth product we produce using perfectly aged agave, distilled according to our own secret recipe. They have and will continue to pay for this quality.

What are you most focused on for the future to ensure Partida's continued leadership in the industry?

We strive to serve our distributors, accounts, and consumers with care and infinite detail to ensure Tequila Partida remains as we are today: a small company with a hands-on approach. Our focus is not on being the biggest, but on being one of the very best. This includes paying attention to every detail from the planting of the agave in the volcanic soils in the valley of Tequila in Jalisco, to proper aging of the agave, harvest, and every production and packing step. Leadership takes patience and steady attention to detail, as well as expecting our executives and sales representatives to serve our customers with respect and consistency. ●