

DRINKING

top picks

- La Duelistas (p161)
- Mestizo Lounge (p164)
- Taberna Red Fly (p164)
- La Bipolar (p165)
- Salón Corona (p161)
- La Ópera Bar (p161)
- Tierra de Vinos (p164)
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- Café La Habana (p162)

DRINKING

Cafés, bars, cantinas and *pulquerías* are all key social venues on the capital's landscape. The traditional watering holes are, of course, cantinas – no-nonsense places with simple tables, long polished bars and serious waiters in formal white jackets. Traditionally male domains reserved for domino playing, tequila sipping and sports viewing, in recent years these establishments have opened their swinging doors to women.

A humbler kind of drinking venue rooted in ancient Mexican tradition, *pulquerías* serve *pulque*, a slightly slimy pre-Hispanic beverage. These relics are worth seeking out for a glimpse of the past. They are lately experiencing a resurgence, with young Chilangos rediscovering the joys of sharing a pitcher of the milky quaff. Another drink being reclaimed by Mexican youth is *mezcal*, the rustic mother of tequila, with *mezcalerías* popping up for hip aficionados to sample crafted batches from Oaxaca, Zacatecas and elsewhere.

Starbucks is a latecomer to a long-standing café tradition fueled by beans from Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas. Coyoacán in particular is jammed with java joints.

Opening Hours

Bars generally open their doors around 7pm, though people don't start pouring in till around 10pm or 11pm, especially toward the weekend. Last drinks are served around 1:30am or 2am, later on Friday and Saturday. Cantinas, many of which double as eating establishments, open earlier, from around 1pm and tend to close as early as 10pm, though there are a few late-night cantinas, such as El Tenampa on Plaza Garibaldi. *Pulquerías* are daytime drinking places; they may open as early as 10am and usually shut down by sundown.

How Much?

Prices of beer and liquor are very much a result of the neighborhood and type of establishment. Expect to pay significantly more in the bars of Condesa or Polanco than you would in your average cantina.

Beer is generally cheap, with bottles of Corona or Victoria going for around M\$20 (M\$30 in Condesa or Polanco), with more refined brews like Bohemia or Negra Modelo costing slightly more. If you're with friends, you can save by springing for a *cupeta* (ice-filled steel bucket) of six beers. Expect to pay M\$70 or M\$80 for a shot of top-shelf whiskey or tequila. A bottle of fine tequila, like Herradura Reposado, could set you back M\$950, Bacardi rum (complete with mixer, ice and hovering waiter) M\$550. You'll pay around M\$40 for a Cuba Libre in an ordinary cantina, M\$70 to M\$100 for cocktails in Condesa.

Wine may be more expensive than back home. It's not uncommon to spend M\$60 to M\$80 on a glass of wine, while bottles of

anything decent may go for anywhere from M\$200 to M\$800.

Tipping

Waiters in bars and cantinas will fully expect a tip of 10% to 15%, with the higher rate anticipated in the upscale dens of Condesa and Polanco. In dance clubs, a service charge of 10% may be added to your bill, but they'll still expect you to shell out an additional 5%.

CENTRO HISTÓRICO

Alcohol runs like a river through the ancestral memory of these streets. Everyone should enjoy a *trago* (drink) or two inside an elegant wood-carved booth at La Ópera Bar, or drown their sorrows with the mariachis at El Tenampa (p176) on Plaza Garibaldi. More adventurous aficionados can survey Calle Bolívar's cantina row, west of the Zócalo.

BAR MANCERA Map pp48–9 Bar

☎ 5521-9755; Venustiano Carranza 49; cover Fri & Sat night M\$50; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **M** San Juan de Letrán

This atmospheric gentlemen's salon seems preserved in amber, with ornate carved paneling, flowery upholstered armchairs and well-used domino tables. Lately it's been adopted by young clubbers who set up turntables Friday nights from around 9pm.

HOSTERÍA LA BOTA Map pp48–9 Bar

☎ 5709-1117; 1er Callejón de Mesones 7; ☎ 11am-8pm Tue, to 1:30am Wed-Sat; **M** Isabel la Católica

This fun and funky bar is one component of the Casa Vecina community arts center, a cultural beachhead in the rough-and-tumble southern fringe of the Centro. Tapas and tequilas are served amidst a profusion of warped bullfighting bric-a-brac and mismatched furniture.

LA GIOCONDA Map pp48–9 Bar

☎ 5518-7823; Filomena Mata 18; ☎ 4-11pm Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **M** Allende

Dark and light draft beer are poured by the pint in this happening little pub, located off a pedestrian thoroughfare. By around 7pm, the stone-walled space is usually buzzing with a varied crowd in the mood for relaxed conversation and a bit of rock 'n' roll.

LA ÓPERA BAR Map pp48–9 Cantina

☎ 5512-8959; Av 5 de Mayo 10; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun; **M** Allende

With booths of dark walnut and an ornate tin ceiling (said to have been punctured by Pancho Villa's bullet on an otherwise slow night), this late-19th-century watering hole remains a bastion of tradition. Enjoy a watercress salad or dish of snails in *chipotle* sauce alongside your tequila and *sangrita*.

SALÓN CORONA Map pp48–9 Cantina

☎ 5512-5725; Bolívar 24; ☎ 8am-midnight Sun-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; **M** Allende

Punks and suits help make up the crowd in this boisterous, no-nonsense beer hall, which has been running since 1928. The amiable staff serve up *tarros* (mugs) of light or dark *cerveza de barril* (draft beer) and bottles of almost every known Mexican beer, along with tasty *bacalao* (salt cod) and turkey sandwiches. The photo mural behind the counter, by the way, captures the patrons' stunned reaction when soccer star Hugo Sánchez missed a penalty kick back in the '86 World Cup against Paraguay.

LA HERMOSA HORTENSIA Map pp48–9 Pulquería

☎ 5709-1117; ☎ 10am-midnight; **M** Garibaldi
Opening onto Plaza Garibaldi, this is a good *pulquería* for beginners: its hygiene is above the norm, they're used to seeing foreigners, and the atmosphere is 100% 'familiar.'

top picks

CANTINA CRAWL

- La Ópera Bar (left)
- Cantina Covadonga (p164)
- Cantina La Jalisciense (p165)
- Salón Corona (left)
- La Guadalupana (p165)

CAFÉ JAKEMIR Map pp48–9 Café

☎ 5709-7038; Isabel la Católica 88; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; **M** Isabel la Católica

Run by a family of Lebanese coffee traders from Orizaba, this old distribution outlet was transformed into a popular café and has excellent and inexpensive cappuccinos, as well as baklava and other pastries. Bulk buyers will find bins of beans from Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas below the counter.

LA SELVA CAFÉ Map pp48–9 Café

☎ 5521-4111; Bolívar 31; **M** Allende

When the crowds and street noise begin to rattle you, duck into this branch of the Chiapas coffee trader, ensconced in the stunning patio of a colonial building.

ALAMEDA CENTRAL & AROUND

In contrast to the tony cafés that occupy the museums and malls in the immediate vicinity of the Alameda Central, plenty of workaday coffee houses and drinking establishments are scattered around the chaotic shopping district south of the park, though these options tend to diminish after dark.

LAS DUELISTAS Map p64 Pulquería

Aranda 30; ☎ 9am-9pm; **M** Salto del Agua

Now graffitied with pre-Hispanic psychedelia behind the swinging doors, this large *pulquería* alongside the Mercado San Juan has become the domain of young Chilangos who've rediscovered the virtues of their ancestral beverage. Despite the interior's new look, the *pulque* is still dispensed straight out of the barrel in a variety of flavors, including mango and coconut.

PULQUERÍAS

Before discotheques, even before cantinas, Mexico had *pulquerías*. Named after the drink they served, these seedy hovels were the working-class watering hole for the better part of 400 years, before refrigeration and more conventional beverages starting pushing them to the side.

When the Aztecs ruled Mexico, *pulque*, extracted from the maguey plant, was used only in rituals and by the elite. Its production was strictly controlled and drunkenness was severely punished. When the Spanish arrived, *pulque* hit the streets. The milky, low-alcohol brew was sold from open-air stands and the method of service was just as primitive: purveyors would ladle the drink from large basins into earthenware cups. As the day wore on, these cups would be smashed by rowdy patrons once the contents were drained – *jepa!*

The ancient beverage was widely consumed in Mexico City throughout the colonial period, chiefly among the city's underclasses – statistics of the era show an annual per capita consumption among adults of 187 gallons. In the mid-17th century there were some 200 *pulquerías* operating in the Centro. The government restricted their locations to outlying neighborhoods, a factor that may have contributed to the wicked brew's eventual demise. In the meantime, other potent potables, such as beer brought by German immigrants, as well as *mezcal* and tequila, began to gain greater popularity and supplant *pulque* as the intoxicant of choice. True *pulque* is homemade, not bottled, and therefore not viable for large-scale commercial production.

Nowadays just a handful of *pulquerías* still function. They tend to be extremely rustic places, and some remain male-only enclaves. However, they are highly social venues with patrons in a conversant mood. Food is served (often for free) and jukeboxes are normally set just below blast volume. The viscous white liquid may be served straight up or in the somewhat more palatable *curado* (flavored form). Coconut, pineapple and mango are popular, along with some odd variations like beet, oat (sprinkled with cinnamon) and celery.

(coffee with milk) and a crispy *banderilla* (stick-like glazed pastry).

PAPA BILL'S SALOON Map pp74–5 Bar

☎ 5207-6669; Río Guadalquivir 88; ☎ 1pm-midnight or 1am Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes

For those in need of their sports fix, this sprawling gringo-style parlor has plenty of flat-screen TVs showing the big game. Happy hours are from 2pm to 9pm.

HOSTAL TEQUILERÍA CIELO ROJO Map pp74–5 Cantina

☎ 5525-1196; Génova 70; ☎ noon-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; **M** Insurgentes

Besides offering the most extensive selection of tequilas this side of Jalisco, this boisterous salon on the Zona Rosa's main pedestrian thoroughfare also stocks some fine hand-made *mezcals* from the La Venencia distillery in Oaxaca, including a 15-year-old *arroqueño*. Mariachis perform nightly, greatly enhancing the whole sampling process.

POLANCO

The bars of upscale Polanco can be more democratic than you might expect. Everyone seems to want to bask in the exclusive, electronica-fueled aura exuded by the hotel bars in the Zona Hotelera and along Presidente Masaryk,

top picks

CAFÉS

- Caffé Toscano (right)
- Cafetería Gabi's (opposite)
- Café La Habana (opposite)
- Café El Jarocho (p165)
- Los Enanos del Tapanco (p165)

and they're willing to pay the price for the sexy cocktails dispensed therein.

BIG RED Map p84 Bar

☎ 5255-5277; Presidente Masaryk 101; 8:30am-2am Mon-Sat; **M** Polanco

Big Red is a volume dealer. Drinks are priced by the ounce (M\$14 for Bacardi, M\$16 for Centenario tequila), plus your choice of mixer. Thus the place attracts a broader cross-section of the populace than the usual Polanco *antro* (bar). Rather than the icy electronica favored by such places, Big Red dares to blare *banda* (brass band music from northern Mexico) and pop.

SEGAFREDO Map p84 Café

☎ 5281-1203; Dumas 71C; ☎ 8am-midnight Sun-Wed, to 2:30am Thu-Sat; **M** Polanco

The Bologna-based chain expertly prepares all the espresso variations, from *caffé latte freddo* to *macchiato con panna*. Try a Caffé Maya, spiked with the Yucatecan anise liqueur Xtabentún. Attracted by wireless access, laptop-users often occupy the upper level, which has an open-air terrace attached.

CONDESA

Well-known as a culinary and nightlife destination, Colonia Condesa also abounds in casual sidewalk cafés serving espressos and lattes, particularly along Calle Tamauilipas (not to mention a couple of Starbucks branches). More recently, several *mezcal* tasting salons have popped up in the neighborhood (p164), to wildly positive response.

BLACK HORSE Map p88 Pub

☎ 5211-8740; Mexicali 85, cnr Tamauilipas; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Sat; **M** Patriotismo

It isn't just because they prepare bangers and mash and screen the soccer match

that this authentic British pub has earned a spot on the Condesa map. The place also boasts an international social scene and has excellent bands playing in the back room midweek.

CAFÉ BOLA DE ORO Map p88 Café

☎ 5286-5659; Nuevo León 192B; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat; **M** Chilpancingo
An outlying branch of the Xalapa coffee purveyor, this is a good place to score a bag of Coatepec beans or simply enjoy a cup of Veracruz' fine, full-bodied blends.

CAFFÉ TOSCANO Map p88 Café

☎ 5584-3681; Michoacán 30; **M** Metrobus Sonora
This sidewalk café opens onto a delightful corner of Parque México, making a fine setting for a latte and the morning paper – grab one off the rack.

CANTINA EL CENTENARIO Map p88 Cantina

☎ 5553-5451; Vicente Suárez 42; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat; **M** Patriotismo
Behind the swinging doors is an enclave of tradition in the heart of modish Condesa, brimming with bullfighting memorabilia and adorned with Spanish *azulejo* tiles. Sure, hipsters fill the place every evening, but the domino bouts, roving musical trios and tasty drinking snacks are the same as ever.

LA BOTICA Map p88 Mezcalería

☎ 5212-1167; Alfonso Reyes 120; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Tue, to 1:30am Wed-Sat; **M** Patriotismo
Like an old apothecary's, La Botica dispenses its elixirs from squat little bottles lined up on the shelf (these make nifty souvenirs). Available varieties are suitably scribbled on pieces of cardboard – try the *cuesh*, distilled from a wild maguey in Oaxaca. La Botica has been such a roaring success, they've opened other branches with similar hours at Campeche 396 in Condesa and Orizaba 161 in Colonia Roma.

PASTELERÍA MAQUE Map p88 Café

☎ 2454-4662; Ozulama 4; **M** Metrobus Campeche
Condesa sophisticates gather mornings and evenings at this Parisian-style café-bakery near the south end of Parque México. Waiters bring around trays of fresh-baked croissants and *conchas* (round pastries sprinkled with sugar) – point to your preference.

ZONA ROSA, CUAUHTÉMOC & JUÁREZ

The Pink Zone, the capital's international party center, boasts the highest concentration of bars and clubs in town, and prices at the numerous venues along Londres and Florencia reflect its tourist orientation. Male pedestrians in this area should be prepared for aggressive invitations from numerous street-corner hustlers to 'ladies' bars' and 'table dance clubs.' Calle Amberes has become the hub of the gay and lesbian-oriented bar scene (p196).

CAFÉ LA HABANA Map pp74–5 Café

☎ 5546-2555; Morelos 62; **M** Juárez
This grand coffeehouse is a traditional haunt for writers and journalists, who linger for hours over a *café americano*. Legend has it that Fidel and Che plotted strategy here prior to the Cuban revolution.

CAFETERÍA GABI'S Map pp74–5 Café

☎ 5511-7637; Nápoles 55; ☎ Mon-Sat; **M** Insurgentes
Cluttered with caffeine-related paraphernalia, this family-run coffeehouse perks with conversation midmornings and early evenings, when the occupants of neighboring offices pour in for a rich *café con leche*

MEZCAL RENAISSANCE

Mezcal, known erroneously as 'that drink with the worm in it,' is finally getting the respect it deserves. (The worm was a marketing gimmick for gullible American consumers.) A spirit whose origins date back to pre-Hispanic times, *mezcal* has languished in Mexico, overshadowed by other liquors, like rum and brandy. Many think of it as a rustic relative to the more refined tequila, when in fact tequila is just one form of *mezcal* derived from a particular plant that grows in the state of Jalisco – the blue agave. But *mezcal*s are produced from many varieties of agave (or maguey) throughout Mexico, including the states of Durango, Zacatecas, Michoacán, Guerrero and, most famously, Oaxaca.

It is estimated there are some 136 varieties of the succulent plant, and each one produces a different version. New laws now require *mezcal*s from the various regions to be labeled with an appellation of origin, as wines from regions in Europe are denominated. Due to worldwide demand, the production of tequila has become industrialized, while many small-scale *mezcal* makers still produce the drink in limited, hand-crafted batches.

Another difference is that *mezcal*s are customarily produced by roasting the *piña* – the pineapple-shaped heart of the agave – over a fire in an underground pit, which lends the drink its characteristic smoky flavor, while in the tequila process the *piña* is steamed.

Straight up, *mezcal* is typically served with slices of orange and an orangey salt blended with chili and – old myths die hard – a powder made from maguey worms, and chased by a Victorita mini bottle of beer. And, like a fine single-malt scotch, it's meant to be savored slowly rather than knocked back.

Places like the Mestizo Lounge (below) and Los Danzantes (p152), which has its own distillery in Santiago Matalán, Oaxaca, serve *mezcal* to a new breed of discerning aficionados. Another, the Taberna Red Fly (below) in Colonia Roma, organizes monthly tastings. La Botica (p163), with branches in Condesa and Roma, dispenses *mezcal* from old-fashioned pharmacy bottles and serves it in fruity cocktails.

ROMA

Colonia Roma remains a bohemian enclave where artists and intellectuals engage in animated conversation at Parisian-style cafés. Like Condesa, it's a center of the *mezcal* revival (see above), with various tasting venues found along Calle Orizaba.

CANTINA COVADONGA Map pp92–3 Cantina

☎ 5533-2922; Puebla 121; ☎ 1pm-3am Mon-Fri; **M** Insurgentes

Echoing with the sounds of clacking dominoes, the old Asturian social hall is a traditionally male enclave, though hipsters of both sexes have increasingly moved in on this hallowed ground.

MESTIZO LOUNGE Map pp92–3 Mezcalería

☎ 2454-1662; Chihuahua 121; ☎ 6pm-2am Tue-Sat; **M** Insurgentes

This highly social hole-in-the-wall run by gregarious hosts Gina and Manuel is very much at the heart of the *mezcal* renaissance. Taste a smoky *cenizo* (a Zacatecas variety) or have a *mezcal* martini. They make excellent sandwiches, too.

TABERNA RED FLY Map pp92–3 Lounge

☎ 1054-3616; Orizaba 143; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; **M** Álvaro Obregón An elegantly furnished space in a typical

Porfirato-era residence, the Red Fly organizes monthly *mezcal* tastings, where aficionados can appreciate the subtle gradations in flavor, based on where the beverage is distilled.

TIERRA DE VINOS Map pp92–3 Wine-tasting salon

☎ 5208-5133; Durango 197; ☎ 1-8pm Mon & Tue, to 1pm-midnight Wed-Sat; **M** Metrobus Durango Mexico is not a nation of oenophiles, so this salon is a pleasant surprise. The wine list changes monthly, with most of the world's vineyards represented. Sit at the front bar and nosh on tapas while sampling the month's featured vintage or take a table in the lively rear dining room (see p151).

TRAVAZARES TABERNA Map pp92–3 Pub

☎ 5264-1142; Orizaba 127; ☎ 1pm-2am; **M** Metrobus Álvaro Obregón

The downstairs adjunct of a cultural center, this popular Roma hangout strikes a suitably bohemian tone. Recycled objects furnish a series of cozy, candlelit salons where artistically inclined youth sip wine or Cerveza Cosaco (a Mexican microbrew). The fusion menu is hit-or-miss, depending on who's in the kitchen.

CAFÉ DE CARLO Map p92–3 Café

☎ 5574-5647; Orizaba 115; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes

Coffee connoisseurs head for this unassuming sidewalk café, with an aromatic roaster and a vintage espresso machine. Across the street is a relic of 1950s Roma, La Bella Italia. It's an old-fashioned ice cream parlor that sees few customers these days.

CAFÉ VILLA DE MADRID Map pp92–3 Café

☎ 5208-8549; Plaza Villa de Madrid; ☎ 8:15-6:30pm Mon-Sat; **M** Metrobus Durango

With just a few sidewalk tables at the top of the Plaza Villa de Madrid (aka Plaza Cibeles), this longtime storefront operation roasts beans from the family *finca* in Chiapas (they also roll their own cigars). Espresso are just M\$8.50 a shot (about half what Starbucks charges).

LOS ENANOS DEL TAPANCO

Map pp92–3 Café

☎ 5564-2274; Orizaba 161; ☎ 8am-11:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11:30pm Sat, 3:30-10:30pm Sun; **M** Centro Médico

Possibly Mexico City's coolest café, the 'Dwarves of the Loft' doubles as an art gallery. Cappuccinos and quiches are served along with an eclectic music selection. There's live music Friday and storytelling Tuesday evening.

MESÓN DE THÉ CARAVANSERAI

Map pp92–3 Tea room

☎ 5511-2877; Orizaba 101; ☎ 10am-9:30pm Mon-Fri, 12:30pm-9:30pm Sat, 3:30-9:30pm Sun; **M** Insurgentes

This French-managed tea room has over 100 blends, carefully categorized by their intended effects (Tokyo Springtime is 'a subtle tea for the afternoon'). Guests lounge on sofas and pillows to enjoy a pot of their chosen brew, which is ceremoniously served on silver trays.

COYOACÁN

Weekend hangout that it is, this southern district probably has more cafés per square inch than anywhere else in town. The cafés are mainly on the streets radiating off the two central plazas and along tranquil Francisco Sosa. One of them, Café El Jarocho, is a genuine Coyoacán institution. Nearby is the recently opened La Bipolar, an odd new hybrid of working class dive and hipster hotspot.

LA GUADALUPANA Map p95 Cantina

☎ 5554-6253; Higuera 2; ☎ noon-12:30am Mon-Sat; **M** Viveros

Serving spirits for over seven decades, this venerable tavern breathes tradition, from the bulls' heads on the walls to the blasé waiters in white coats. The setting is just right for a tequila, served with homemade *sangrita* and/or a few Bohemias. There are *botanas* and tortas as well as heartier fare like *cabrito* (goat).

LA BIPOLAR Map p95 Cantina

☎ 5484-8230; Malintzin 155; ☎ 1pm-2am; **M** Viveros

Owned by Mexican heartthrob Diego Luna of *Y Tu Mamá También* fame, this popular new cantina displays a *naco* aesthetic (see p127), playing up the kitschier elements of Mexican popular culture. Inside, the walls are fashioned from plastic crates and the light shades are sliced tin buckets while the 50s-era jukebox spins a remarkably eclectic music selection. Besides the Coronas and *mezcal* shots, they've got updated versions of classic Mexican snacks.

CAFÉ EL JAROCHO Map p95 Café

☎ 5658-5029; Cuauhtémoc 134; ☎ 6am-1am; **M** Coyoacán

This immensely popular joint churns out M\$7 cappuccinos for long lines of java hounds. As there's no seating inside, people have their coffee standing in the street or sitting on curbside benches. The branch just around the corner makes great tortas, and both branches have terrific doughnuts. Another branch at *El Jarocho* (Map p95; ☎ 5659-9107; Av México 25-C) is convenient to Viveros park.

OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS TLALPAN

CANTINA LA JALISCIENSE

Map p109 Cantina

☎ 5573-5586; Plaza de la Constitución 6; ☎ noon-12:30am Mon-Sat

One of the best reasons to make the trip down to Tlalpan, this always lively neighborhood cantina is frequented by the arty characters who populate the southern

BLOODY MARÍA

A good shot of tequila should be sipped and appreciated. In Mexico, it is often accompanied by an equal cup of *sangrita* (literally, little blood). This nonalcoholic chaser can range from sweet to spicy. The sweeter varieties contain mostly grenadine and orange juice, while the spicier ones have a tomato base with chili added. The best bars and restaurants make their own *sangrita*, and the spicier version predominates.

This recipe is the creation of owner and chef Fernando Ramírez at María del Alma (p148). Any combination of non-chunky or strained hot sauce can be substituted for the local brands mentioned here. (In a pinch, *sangrita* can be made by spicing up some Bloody Mary mix.)

Sangrita María del Alma

Blend and strain tomatoes to make 1L undiluted tomato juice. Add the following:

- 2 oz grenadine
- 6 oz orange juice
- 1 oz Clamato juice
- 2 oz lemon juice
- 1 oz Valentina hot sauce
- 1 oz Bufalo hot sauce
- 1 oz Tabasco sauce
- salt & pepper to taste

Optional:

- Puree and add 50g of celery and 50g of cucumber

Serve in a hollowed out Roma tomato; garnish with a small green chili.

district, though it has a distinctly down-to-earth atmosphere. In operation since 1870, in the revolutionary era it was a parting stop for gun-toting bandidos bound for the hills. Gregarious owner Miguel Ángel Fernández carries forward the legacy with his homemade sangría and toothsome *bacalao* sandwiches. But take heed: swearing is strictly prohibited. For transport information, see p110.

XOCHIMILCO

EL TEMPLO DE DIANA Map pp112–13 Pulquería

☎ 5653-4657; Madero 17; 🕒 9am-9:30pm;

📍 Xochimilco

This classic *pulquería*, a block east of the main market, has a cheerful sawdust-on-

the-floor vibe, with patrons from a broad age range enjoying giant mugs of the maguey-based beverage behind the swinging doors. Even a few females may pop in. *Pulque* is delivered fresh daily from Hidalgo state, and expertly blended with flavorings like mango, tomato and pine nut.

LA BOTIJONA Map pp112–13 Pulquería

Morelos 109; 🕒 9am-9:30pm; 📍 Xochimilco

Possibly the cleanest *pulque* dispenser in town, this institutional-green hall near the train station is a friendly family-run establishment with big plastic pails of the traditional quaff lining the shelves. Coconut and celery are among the more intriguing *curados* (flavored *pulques*) on offer.

NIGHTLIFE

top picks

- Auditorio Nacional (p171)
- El Batadán (p173)
- Salon Tenampa (p176)
- El Hijo del Cuervo (p169)
- La Casa de Paquita La del Barrio (p173)
- Mamá Rumba (p172)
- Pasajero (p173)
- Pata Negra (p170)
- Salón Los Ángeles (p171)
- T-Gallery (p170)

NIGHTLIFE

After-hours, the capital's attractions are just as lively and varied as they are by day. Chilangos take their nighttime pursuits seriously. Whether bouncing around on a dance floor, taking in a concert or gathering with friends at a nightclub, they devote considerable energy to the activity.

Nighttime entertainment tends to follow class lines. The DF's working classes may strut their stuff in large, elegant dancehalls like the *Salón Los Angeles*, crowd the *Zócalo* for free concerts by *norteño* bands, or sing along with Paqueta La del Barrio, the popular recording star, at her own cabaret (p173). Better-off *capitalinos* may prefer to squeeze into postmodern clubs and groove to DJ-driven beats and consume exotic cocktails at Polanco nightspots, or catch the jazz and pop stars who regularly perform at clubs and concert halls. But as an outsider, you can drop in anywhere and enjoy the scene.

Certain parts of town light up after dark. In the Zona Rosa and Condesa, revelers may hoof it from one venue to the next, while in Polanco or along Av Insurgentes Sur, it's customary to leave the car with the valet. The action is somewhat sparser if no less lively in the Centro Histórico, where the action unfolds in various colonial palaces and mansions.

To find out what's going on, check the 'Noche' or 'Conciertos' sections of the Spanish-language *Tiempo Libre* magazine, or scour the listings in *Chilango* and *Donde Ir*, monthly magazines with extensive nightlife coverage. For more information on these and other entertainment publications, or about where to purchase tickets for events, see the information section in *The Arts* (p178).

ANTROS

Halfway between a bar and a dance club, the *antro* is the unit of nightlife currency for with-it young *defeños* (DF natives). The concept varies, but *antros* usually have loud recorded music, maybe video screens, and enough space to dance if the mood takes you. Some *antros* lean more toward the bar end of the spectrum, while others are closer to a *discoteca*; some host live music a few nights of the week. Most *antros* will have a restaurant component, with snacks such as pizza or spring rolls to nibble on, and there will certainly be a range of colorful cocktails on offer. Polanco and Condesa offer the trendiest scenes, and there's more upscale action down in San Ángel.

ÁREA Map p84

☎ 5282-3100; Presidente Masaryk 201, Polanco; ☎ 7pm-midnight Mon-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; 📍 Polanco

Atop the Hábita Hotel, this open-air roof lounge does a brisk trade in exotic martinis, with sweeping city views as a backdrop and videos projected on the wall of a nearby building for entertainment. On chilly evenings beautiful scenesters gravitate toward the wall-length fireplace; in warmer weather they cool their toes in the pool on the deck below.

GO GO LOUNGE Map p84

☎ 5281-8974; Dumas 105, Polanco; cover M\$100; ☎ 10pm-5am Thu-Sat; 📍 Polanco

The honeycombed decor in this *antro* over a sushi bar seems lifted from *Kill Bill*, and features what is supposedly the largest mirror ball in Latin America. Merengue, reggaeton and pop keep a post-pubescent crowd bouncing in a series of packed salons. When it gets too sweaty, make your way to the terrace bar and order a Takeshi (sake and mango ice cream cocktail).

BAR MILÁN Map pp74-5

☎ 5592-0031; Milán 18, Juárez; ☎ 9pm-3:30am Wed-Sat; 📍 Cuauhtémoc

Tucked away on a quiet backstreet east of the Zona Rosa, this cave-like hangout gets as crowded as the metro, with a boisterous blend of college students and expats. Purchase drink tickets (*'milagros'*), then make your way over to the cactus-trimmed bar. The soundtrack ranges from classic rock to Café Tacuba; don't be surprised when the crowd spontaneously bursts into chorus.

BENGALA Map pp92-3

☎ 5211-4690; Sonora 34A, Roma Norte; ☎ 9pm-4am Thu-Sat; 📍 Chapultepec

This low-lit concept bar evokes a desert trek, with decor influenced by *Casablanca* and *The Sheltering Sky*, though disco-friendly DJs may put you on an entirely different plane. Its slightly out-of-the-way location only adds to the conspiratorial air. Have a 'Module' (a green cocktail of cucumber, Pernod and mescal) and mingle with the film and TV figures who customarily pop up here.

CELTICS Map p88

☎ 5211-9081; Tamaulipas 36, Condesa; ☎ 1:30pm-3am Mon-Sat, 6pm-1am Sun; 📍 Patriotismo

An Argentinean-run facsimile of an Irish pub, *Celtics* remains hugely popular with young *defeños*. A Guinness will set you back M\$70 here, a draft Sol M\$35. The soundtrack is more U2 than Chieftains; bands play Sunday to Tuesday evenings.

CIBELES Map pp92-3

☎ 5208-2029; Plaza Villa de Madrid 17, Roma; ☎ 7pm-2am Tue-Sat; 📍 Metrobus Durango

This fashionable new *antro* is a low-ceilinged, L-shaped living room with a pervasively eclectic array of mismatched sofas, armchairs and coffee tables. The mood swings throughout the week from quiet and conversational (Tuesday) to loud and raucous (Friday, when DJs mix '80s hits with lounge-y beats). Reservations are a must on weekends.

CINNA BAR Map p88

☎ 5287-8456; Nuevo León 67; ☎ 7pm-2am Tue-Sat, to 1am Sun; 📍 Patriotismo

Looking at Parque España through red-tinted windows, this lounge-cum-dining room sports a self-consciously minimal aesthetic. Smartly outfitted professionals stop in after work to nosh on Vietnamese spring rolls, sip raspberry martinis and groove on sounds concocted by DJs with iBooks.

CONDESA DF Map p88

☎ 5241-2600; Veracruz 102, Condesa; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Wed, to 1:30am Thu-Sat, to 11pm Sun; 📍 Chapultepec

The bar of the fashionable boutique hotel has become an essential stop on the Condesa nightlife circuit. Action focuses on the triangular atrium and wackily decorated alcoves around it, where businessfolk, artists and the occasional film star gather before moving on to still-hotter spots. Up on the roof terrace, guests lounge on wicker sofas, nibble on sushi and enjoy views of verdant Parque España across the way.

EL HIJO DEL CUERVO Map p95

☎ 5658-7824; www.elhijodelcuervo.com.mx; Jardín Centenario 17, Coyoacán; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 1pm-1:30am Thu, 1pm-2:30am Fri & Sat, 1-11:30pm Sun; 📍 Viveros

A Coyoacán institution, this enormous stone-walled hall on the Jardín del Centenario is a sort of thinking man's-drinking man's habitat. Groups of friends pack into its various salons to share pitchers of beer, snack on boards of Spanish cheeses and engage in animated conversation. Assorted musical ensembles perform Wednesday and Thursday nights in a small theater toward the back.

HOOKAH LOUNGE Map p88

☎ 5264-6275; Campeche 284, Condesa; ☎ 1pm-12:30am Mon-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; 📍 Chilpancingo

Moroccan tapestries and scimitars set the tone for this North African fantasy. The fun revolves around the water pipes (from M\$100), available in a bewildering array of flavors. Wednesday to Saturday nights, DJs produce an eclectic mix of chill-out and Arab rhythms, with no fewer than four turntables. There are also Middle-Eastern snacks.

LA BODEGUITA DEL MEDIO Map pp92-3

☎ 5553-0246; Cozumel 37, Roma; ☎ 1:30pm-1am Sun-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; 📍 Sevilla

The walls are scribbled with verses and messages at this animated branch of the famous Havana joint where the *mojito* was reportedly invented. (Here the cocktail is prepared in classic style with white rum, mint leaves and brown sugar.) Excellent *son cubano* combos perform in the various interconnected salons above the bar. For

top picks

GLITTERATI SPOTTING

- Condesa DF (opposite)
- Área (right)
- Momma (p170)
- Bengala (opposite)
- Tiki Bar (p170)

top picks

HIPPEST DF NIGHTSPOTS

- T-Gallery (right)
- Cibeles (p169)
- Malafama (below)
- Pata Negra (right)
- La Bodeguita del Medio (p169)

snacks, try the *masitas de cerdo* (fried pork chunks) or stuffed plantains.

LAMM Map pp92-3

☎ 5514-8501; Álvaro Obregón 99, Roma; ☎ to 2am Mon-Sat; (M) Insurgentes

In the evening the open-air restaurant of the Lamm (p150) turns into a hip lounge where luminaries from the academic, artistic and political spheres converge until the wee hours. There's live *música cubana* and jazz Tuesday and Wednesday respectively.

LOVE Map pp92-3

☎ 5564-7823; Medellín 65, Roma; admission M\$70; ☎ 11pm-3:30am Tue-Sat; (M) Metrobus Sonora Socialites line up for Love, upstairs from the fusion restaurant Ixchel (p150), in a typically ornate Colonia Roma mansion. You're unlikely to get in without reservations, and even then it'll depend on your looks. Once inside the velvet-draped lounge, order an apple martini and party like it's 1983 – the DJ will help you remember what that was like.

MALAFAMA Map p88

☎ 5553-5138; Av Michoacán 78, Condesa; tables per hr M\$80; (M) Patriotismo

As trendy as its bars and cafés, Condesa's sleek billiard hall doubles as a gallery of photo art. The well-maintained tables are frequented by both pool sharks and novices.

MOMMA Map p84

☎ 5281-1537; Tennyson 102, Polanco; cover varies; ☎ 10pm-2am Mon-Sat; (M) Polanco

Currently Polanco's hottest *antro*, Momma attracts hordes of party people. Beyond a chic, minimalist restaurant, the brightly lit hall of mirrors resounds with pop *en español* and hits from past decades. As elsewhere in Polanco, expect a discretionary admission policy.

PATA NEGRA Map p88

☎ 5211-5563; Tamaulipas 30, Condesa;

☎ 1:30pm-2am; (M) Patriotismo

Nominally a tapas bar, this oblong salon draws a friendly, clean-cut crowd of 20-something Chilangos and expats. There's live music on both levels, with the upper Salón Pata Negra striking a more bohemian tone.

REXO Map p88

☎ 5553-5337; Saltillo 1, Condesa; ☎ 1:30pm-1am Sun-Tue, to 2am Wed-Sat; (M) Patriotismo

A minimalist, triple-decker supper club, the perennially popular Rexo really packs them in toward the weekend. There's dining on the upper levels, though the focus is on the lit-from-below bar at the bottom, which fuels the revelry with mezcaltinis and other unusual cocktails.

T-GALLERY Map p88

☎ 5211-1222; www.tgallerydesign.com; Saltillo 39, Condesa; ☎ 5pm-2am Mon-Sat; (M) Patriotismo

A low-key crowd kick back with cocktails in the various salons of this lovely old Condesa home, each appointed with a splendid array of kitschy sofas, coffee tables and mirrors. It's like going to a party at your hippest friend's house, with a difference – you can purchase any of the furniture that appeals to you. Jazz, blues and bossa nova combos jam downstairs nightly.

TIKI BAR Map pp92-3

☎ 5584-2668; Querétaro 227, Roma; ☎ 6pm-3am Wed-Sat; (M) Metrobus Sonora

Amidst the salsa dance clubs, this South Pacific spree spreads on the kitsch with bamboo-fringed walls and teak floors. The wacky cocktails are the real draw: not just mai-tais but chocotikis, mojitikis and various other rum creations that thrill a celebrity-studded crowd.

LIVE MUSIC

However the evening is enjoyed, it will probably involve some kind of musical performance. Cuban dance ensembles stir up the salsa at the various tropical dance halls, blues and rock groups entertain aficionados at smoky clubs, singer-songwriters deliver sensitive balladry at cozy cafés, mariachis belt out heartfelt ballads at Plaza Garibaldi, and globally known pop groups play concert halls and sports arenas.

CONCERTS

Mexico City has emerged as a prime stop on the international touring circuit, and you're as likely to catch such foreign visitors as Bob Dylan, Kenny G or Korn as homegrown artists like Maná, Alejandro Fernández or Banda El Recodo. As elsewhere, the size of the venue will depend on the artist's fame. Big acts will likely perform at the Auditorio Nacional or Palacio de Deportes sports arena, while lesser-known figures may play medium-sized halls like the Teatro Metropolitán or Vive Cuervo Salón. Check www.ticketmaster.com.mx to see what's coming up, and purchase tickets at Ticketmaster outlets (p178).

AUDITORIO NACIONAL Map p78

☎ 5280-9250; www.auditorio.com.mx in Spanish; Paseo de la Reforma 50; (M) Auditorio

Major rock and pop artists take the stage at the 10,000-seat Auditorio Nacional (National Auditorium). Mexican stars like Luis Miguel, Maná and Gloria Trevi invariably pack the surprisingly intimate space, as do occasional foreign visitors like John Fogerty, Caetano Veloso and Joaquín Sabina.

TEATRO METROPOLITÁN Map p64

☎ 5510-1035; Independencia 90; (M) Juárez Artists as diverse as Café Tacuba, Buddy Guy and the Russian National Ballet have played this medium-sized hall near the Alameda Central. An old movie palace dating from the 1940s, the lavishly decorated theater holds around 3000, with an upper deck high above the stage.

VIVE CUERVO SALÓN Map p84

☎ 5255-1496; Lago Andrómaco 17; admission M\$250-550

A warehouse-sized venue for touring salsa stars as well as rock, world and other performers. With excellent sound, wall-length bar and dance floor for thousands, this is one of Mexico's most attractive clubs.

TROPICAL

A dozen or more clubs and large *salones de baile* (dance halls) are devoted to salsa, merengue, cumbia, danzón and other Cuban and Caribbean dances. The city's many aficionados can go to a different hall each night of the week, some capable of holding thousands of people. Even if you can't dance a step, you might enjoy listening to the great *salseros* on

top picks

TROPICAL MUSIC/ DANCING VENUES

- Salón Los Ángeles (left)
- Mamá Rumba (p172)
- El Gran León (below)
- California Dancing Club (below)
- Barfly (below)

stage, including many Cuban imports, and watching the smartly dressed couples hit the dance floor.

You might learn a few steps beforehand at the Plaza de Danzón (Map p64), northwest of La Ciudadela near metro Balderas. Couples crowd the plaza every Saturday afternoon to do the *danzón*, an elegant and complicated Cuban step that infiltrated Mexico in the 19th century. Lessons in *danzón* and other steps are given from around 3:30pm to 5:30pm.

BARFLY Map p84

☎ 5282-2514; www.bar-fly.com.mx; Presidente Masaryk 393, 1st fl; cover M\$140; ☎ 9pm-3am Tue-Sat; (M) Polanco

Upstairs at the Plaza Masaryk shopping mall, this small supper club jumps to live Cuban sounds most nights. This being Polanco, it's a well-coiffed crowd that fills the tiny dance floor, situated just below the stage.

CALIFORNIA DANCING CLUB Map pp42-3

☎ 5539-3564; Calz de Tlalpan 1189; admission men/women M\$45/40 Fri, Sat & Mon, M\$75 Sun; ☎ 6-11pm Fri, Sat & Mon, to 5am Sun; (M) Portales More *popular* (low-brow) than the Colonia Roma clubs, this old-fashioned hall has marathon dance sessions, with half a dozen bands on the bill. Hundreds of couples bounce around a vast tiled floor flanked by stout mirrored columns as groups like Los Escorpiones de Durango keep the *cumbias* (Colombian dance music) coming. Beer and soft drinks are dispensed from two humble bars.

EL GRAN LEÓN Map pp92-3

☎ 5564-7110; Querétaro 225, Roma; cover M\$60; ☎ 9pm-3:30am Thu-Sat; (M) Metrobus Sonora Two or three top-notch Cuban *son* ensembles take the tropical stage nightly at this old-school club. Unescorted (and escorted)

HAVANA, DF

Ever since Hernán Cortés set sail from La Habana for the coast of Veracruz, the fates of Cuba and Mexico have been closely linked. In contrast to its northern neighbor, Mexico has long displayed a benevolent attitude toward Cuba, and the island is frequented by vacationing Mexicans. Fidel Castro was a regular at Mexico City's Café La Habana (p162) before the revolution. Now Cubans are establishing a beachhead in Mexico City, and their presence has injected a healthy energy into the city.

With easy connections between the two countries, Mexico makes a convenient way station for Cubans en route to the US, and many use it for that purpose. But others come as tourists, students on scholarships or on cultural exchange programs and choose to stick around. Unlike their counterparts in the US, Cubans who settle in Mexico tend not to rail against the island's regime; their motivation for staying is often more economic than political. It's also much easier to maintain contact with the island from Mexico than from the US, as they're free to travel back and forth.

Though Cubans tend to integrate freely within Mexican society and many marry Mexicans, they fiercely maintain their Cuban identity, most visibly through their music and dance. Fortunately, Mexicans tend to be fans of Cuban culture and envy Cubans' capacity to party, not to mention their much-vaunted sex appeal. As demonstrated by the perennial popularity of the Cuban-influenced *danzón* in Mexican ballrooms, there's been a long tradition of musical borrowing. Cuban musicians are in great demand in the capital and many migrate here to cash in on that appreciation.

If there is a Little Havana, it's in Colonia Roma, particularly along Calle Querétaro, where many Cubans reside and the flames are fanned nightly at the various dance clubs clustered along the street. The spirit of Celia Cruz is regularly invoked at Mamá Rumba (see below), while Cuban salsaeros keep the floors filled at the nearby clubs El Gran León (p171) and *El Rincón Cubano* (☎ 5264-0549; Av Insurgentes, cnr Querétaro, Roma; 🕒 8pm Thu-Sun; admission M\$50-70; 🚏 Metrobus Sonora). Other Cuban ensembles jam in the relaxed setting of La Bodega (below), in Condesa. The *majitos* flow freely at La Bodeguita del Medio (p169), a franchise of the legendary Havana club with a full menu of Cuban specialties. For island fare like *moros y cristianos* (black beans and rice), Cubans head for *La Fonda Cubana* (☎ 5584-2825; Insurgentes 200, Roma; 🕒 noon-7pm Thu-Tue; 🚏 Metrobus Sonora); to stock their pantries they shop at the Mercado Medellín (p156) for items like green bananas and *malanga*, a root vegetable used in soups and stews.

women should expect to be invited up onto the tightly packed dance floor.

LA BODEGA Map pp8

☎ 5511-7390; www.labodega.com.mx; Popocatepet 25, Roma; 🕒 1pm-1am Mon-Sat; 🚏 Metrobus Álvaro Obregón

Fans of the Buena Vista Social Club will appreciate the Cuban combos who perform throughout the day in this rambling, tropically decorated Condesa home. *Rumbas*, *boleros* and *sones* accompany Mexican food, cocktails and dominoes in airy, high-ceilinged salons on both floors. Upstairs is the cabaret club El Bataclán (opposite).

MAMÁ RUMBA Map pp92-3

☎ 5564-6920; Querétaro 230, Roma; cover M\$70-80; 🕒 9pm-3:30am Wed-Sat; 🚏 Metrobus Sonora

Managed by a Havana native, Mamá Rumba features contemporary salsa, with music by the house big band. Instructors will get you started Wednesday and Thursday evenings. On alternate Saturdays the invariably packed club hosts reggaeton DJs and cabaret acts.

SALÓN LOS ÁNGELES Map pp42-3

☎ 5597-5181; Lerdo 206, Colonia Guerrero; admission M\$40; 🕒 6-11pm Tue & Sun; 🚏 Tlatelolco

Those who don't know Los Ángeles don't know Mexico' reads the marquee, and for once the hyperbole is well deserved. Cuban-music fans won't want to miss the outstanding orchestras here nor the incredibly graceful dancers who fill the vast floor. Particularly on Tuesday evening, when an older crowd comes for *danzones*, it's like the set of a period film. Salón Los Ángeles is in a rough area, so take a taxi.

ROCK

Mexico has come a long way since the dark ages (prior to 1990) when appearances by foreign rock groups were officially suppressed. (After the disastrous 1971 rock festival at Avándaro, Mexico's version of Woodstock, bands were not granted visas until 1989, when Rod Stewart played in Querétaro.) Nowadays, groups like Yo La Tengo, The Hives, King Crimson and The Cure regularly quench the rock-thirsty masses, while the *rock en español* scene thrives at downtown clubs, concert halls and festivals. A good place to catch free performances is the Tianguis del Chopo (p123), an alternative street market, where young-and-hungry bands take the stage every Saturday afternoon.

DADA X Map pp48-9

☎ 2454-4310; www.recia.org/dadax, in Spanish; Bolívar 31; cover free-M\$200; 🕒 from 9pm Thu-Sat; 🚏 San Juan de Letrán

Black-clad youth gravitate toward this space on the upper floor of a magnificent colonial building. The varied program includes cult films, poetry readings and live music, which might be anything from ska to electronica.

HARD ROCK LIVE Map p84

☎ 5327-7101; cover from M\$220; Campos Eliseos 290; 🚏 Auditorio

Occupying a superb old Polanco mansion near the Auditorio Nacional, this branch of the international club hosts the cream of *rock en español*, with groups like La Cuca, the Nortec Collective, La Gusana Ciega, Zoe and Molotov on stage.

MULTIFORO ALICIA Map pp92-3

☎ 5511-2100; www.myspace.com/foaloalicia; Av Cuauhtémoc 91; cover M\$70; 🕒 9pm-2am Fri & Sat; 🚏 Cuauhtémoc

Behind the graffiti-scrawled facade is Mexico City's premier rock club. A suitably smoky, seatless venue, the Alicia stages up-and-coming punk, surf and ska bands, who hawk their music at the store downstairs. As many as half a dozen groups crowd the bill at the unapologetically *naco* space, with images of wrestling combatants as a backdrop to the performances.

PASAGÜERO Map pp48-9

☎ 5512-6624; www.pasaguero.com; Motolinía 33; cover M\$100; 🕒 10pm-2:30am Thu-Sat; 🚏 Allende

Some visionary developers took a historic building and transformed its ground level into a space for various cultural happenings, particularly rock and electronica gigs. When buzzworthy bands visit Mexico, they'll likely be playing here. Located off a pedestrian esplanade, El Pasagüero features a front café-bar (from 11am to 11pm) with cheap *chelas* (cold beers), making for a fine pre-show hangout.

CABARET

The musical revues now in vogue at the following venues update the old tradition of the *carpas*, impromptu tent shows that were performed in neighborhoods outside the Centro (where the more established theat-

ers drew higher-class audiences). The *carpa* shows included comic sketches that dealt with the political and social concerns of the day, and unlike their Centro counterparts were delivered in the spoken and visual language of the working classes. Actors like Tin Tan and Cantínflas cut their teeth in these venues before moving on to the Mexican silver screen. The most successful of today's cabaret performers, like Jesusa Rodríguez and Astrid Haddad, update the *carpa* tradition to a German cabaret-type forum, still cleverly skewering the hypocrisies of the country's political classes whilst retaining the kitschy costumes and nutty slapstick of the old tent shows.

BAR EL VICIO Map p95

☎ 5659-1139; www.lasreinaschulas.com, in Spanish; Madrid 13; cover M\$100-200; 🚏 Coyoacán

With liberal doses of politically and sexually irreverent comedy and a genre-bending musical program, this offbeat cabaret is appropriately located in Frida Kahlo's old neighborhood. It's also the showcase for Las Reinas Chulas, an all-girl troupe who put a feminist spin on the normally macho-intensive *grupera* genre.

EL BATACLÁN Map p88

☎ 5511-7390; www.labodega.com.mx; Popocatepet 25; cover M\$100-200; 🕒 9pm Tue-Sat; 🚏 Metrobus Álvaro Obregón

A theater within a club (La Bodega, see above), this intimate cabaret showcases some of Mexico's most vivid performers, with frequent appearances by the wonderfully surreal Astrid Haddad. Cocktails and *antojitos* are served, with tables on stepped levels leading up from the stage. Afterwards, catch top-notch Cuban *son* combos in La Bodega's various salons.

LA CASA DE PAQUITA LA DEL BARRIO Map pp42-3

☎ 5583-8131; Zarco 202; 🕒 8:30pm Fri & Sat; cover M\$150; 🚏 Guerrero

Located in the rough-and-tumble Guerrero district, this bastion of popular culture is the frequent venue for TV and recording star Paquita La del Barrio. The corpulent chanteuse customarily performs a sublime set of plaintive ballads, almost all of which express disdain for her suitors – her asides are deliciously bitter. Phone ahead to see if Paquita herself is performing.

LA PLANTA DE LA LUZ Map p101

☎ 5616-5238; Plaza Loreto; www.laplantadeluz.com.mx; admission M\$150-250; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed-Sat; 🚏 Metrobus Dr Gálvez

The 'power plant,' inside the Plaza Loreto shopping mall, is the creation of raconteur and *Reforma* columnist Germán Dehesa (sometimes called the Mexican Woody Allen). The large supper club alternates between Dehesa's own comedic revues and music performances by well-regarded folk, rock and pop artists.

JAZZ, BLUES & WORLD

The term 'Latin jazz' may most often be associated with Cuban and Caribbean artists, but Mexico City's jazz scene has been blossoming, thanks to a recent crop of clubs. Besides these venues, concerts by jazz and world artists are sometimes staged at the Centro Cultural Universitario, the Teatro de la Ciudad and the Centro Nacional de las Artes (p178), the last of which stages the annual Euro Jazz festival in March.

CULTURAL ROOTS Map pp48-9

☎ 5521-6622; Tacuba 81; cover M\$25; ☎ 4-11pm Fri & Sun, 9pm-2am Sat; 🚏 Allende

Portraits of Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie and Emiliano Zapata glare down over the throngs of skanking youth who fill this warehouse-sized room, where DJs pump out a heady blend of contemporary reggae. Despite the pervasive aroma, signs remind you that ganja use is prohibited.

LUNARIO DEL AUDITORIO NACIONAL Map p78

☎ 5280-9250; www.lunario.com.mx; admission M\$350-700; 🚏 Auditorio

Major jazz artists from throughout the hemisphere perform at this large, classy nightclub adjacent to the national auditorium. Seating is at tables that ascend back from the stage, and cocktails and snacks are served. Enter off the right side of the Auditorio.

NEW ORLEANS Map p101

☎ 5550-1908; Av Revolución 1655, San Ángel; admission M\$50-150; ☎ 9pm-3am Tue-Sun;

🚏 Metrobus La Bombilla

Littered with bric-a-brac, the DF's longest-running jazz club has a relaxed, homey ambience, and the kitchen prepares home-

made pastas and salads. Gregarious owner Ángel keeps things eclectic, staging everything from Dixieland jazz to scat singing to funk and fusion.

PAPA BETO Map pp74-5

☎ 5592-1638; www.papabeto.com, in Spanish; Villalongin 196, Cuauhtémoc; cover M\$80-120;

☎ 1st/2nd set 9:30pm/11pm Tue-Sat

Run by a Japanese expatriate to highlight the impressive wealth of local talent, this excellent salon remains the city's top jazz venue. Tuesday night is reserved for jam sessions with surprise guests. It's a bit out of the way, though – six blocks north of Paseo de la Reforma via Río Sena. From Metro Chapultepec, take a pesero marked 'La Raza'.

ruta 61 Map p88

☎ 5511-7602; Baja California 281; cover M\$60-200; ☎ music from 10pm Thu-Sat; 🚏 Chilpancingo

Catering to Mexico City's denim-clad blues cult, this split-level venue stages electric blues artists in the Buddy Guy-Howlin' Wolf mold. About once a month there's a direct-from-Chicago act, though you're more likely to see one of the many local cover bands.

ZINCO JAZZ CLUB Map pp48-9

☎ 5512-3369; www.zincojazz.com; Motolinía 20; cover M\$100-200; ☎ 9pm-2am Wed-Sat;

🚏 Allende

A vital component in the Centro renaissance, Zinco is a subterranean supper club featuring local jazz and funk outfits and occasional big-name touring artists. Located downstairs from the Art Deco Banco Mexicano building, the intimate room fills up fast, so reserve ahead.

TROVA & TRADITIONAL

Situated well outside the commercial mainstream, Mexico's *trovadores* – more singer-songwriters than troubadours – perform in a number of casual cafés around town. Taking their cue from such Cuban artists as Pablo Milanés and Silvio Rodríguez, they write songs that are deeper and more poetic than the usual pop fare, with lyrics that touch on political and personal themes. The website www.trovamex.com does a good job of compiling events, venues and artists.

If you're looking for traditional Mexican songsters, you're as likely to find them in the

local cantina or on a nearby street corner as in clubs or concert halls. Too often undervalued by their own compatriots, itinerant musicians are forced to scrounge for tips from bar patrons or passersby. One venue that gives regional styles their due is the Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares (p94) in Coyoacán, which regularly stages indigenous artists.

CAFÉ CORAZÓN Map p101

☎ 5550-8854; Frontera 4; cover M\$60-80;

☎ 9:30pm Fri & Sat; 🚏 Metrobus La Bombilla

Folk singers in the Silvio Rodríguez mold take the small stage at this temple of *trova* near San Ángel's Plaza San Jacinto.

CAFEBRERÍA EL PÉNDULO Map p88

☎ 5286-9493; www.pendolo.com, in Spanish; cover varies; Av Nuevo León 115; 🚏 Chilpancingo

Leading Mexican *trovadores* play this café-bookstore-CD shop toward the weekend. 'The Pendulum' is frequented by a well-read, mature crowd who actually prefer to listen to the lyrical content of such singer-songwriters as Fernando Delgadillo and Hernaldo Zuñiga. There's another branch in the Zona Rosa (☎ 5208-2327; Hamburgo 126; 🚏 Insurgentes).

EL BALCÓN HUASTECO Map pp42-3

☎ 5341-6762; www.elbalconhuasteco.com; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz 248, Colonia Agrícola; cover M\$40; ☎ from 6pm Thu-Sat; 🚏 Normal

This center for the preservation of the Huastec culture of Hidalgo and Veracruz stages performances by the region's fiery trios. There are wooden platforms for traditional *zapateando* dancing and snacks from the area.

CLUBBING

The capital's thriving club scene has become an obligatory stop on the international DJ circuit, and on any given weekend young Chilangos turn out in droves to dance the night away to *punchis-punchis* (Mexican slang for electronic music). The venues in this category are especially ephemeral and news is generally communicated by word of mouth or on Myspace pages. To find out what's going on, pick up flyers at Condesa's Malafama billiard hall (p170). Some of the hottest clubs are gay-oriented venues that are open to adventurous scenesters of all stripes – check the Gay & Lesbian chapter for listings (p197).

ALTAVISTA 154 Map p101

☎ 5616-7504; Av Altavista 154, San Ángel;

🚏 Metrobus Altavista

This San Ángel club has three rooms: red, yellow and blue. Superior DJs rule the red room, laying down such dense grooves that even certified nondancers must get up and move their butts. A lounge and bar occupy the other rooms. Admission is free though cocktails are typically pricey for the zone.

CENTRO CULTURAL DE ESPAÑA

Map pp48-9

☎ 5521-1925; www.ccemx.org; Guatemala 18; admission free; ☎ 10pm-2am Thu-Sat; 🚏 Zócalo

Young hipsters pack the roof terrace of the Spanish cultural center each weekend for its excellent DJ sessions. Located directly behind the cathedral, the rebuilt colonial structure is usually quaking by midnight.

CREAM Map pp74-5

☎ 5292-6114; Versalles 52; cover M\$120; ☎ from 10pm Thu-Sat; 🚏 Cuauhtémoc

The longstanding El Colmillo club has been spruced up and reborn as one of the city's premier electronica venues. Beyond the ghoulishly red narrow front room, steps lead down to a hallucinatory party lounge, where internationally renowned DJs work from a catwalk above a laser-lashed dance floor.

PATIO DE MI CASA Map pp74-5

Versalles 68, Juárez; admission M\$50; ☎ 10pm-6am Thu-Sat; 🚏 Cuauhtémoc

This low-key venue is a new addition to the clandestine club zone on the east edge of Colonia Juárez. Minus the exclusive attitude of some venues, it's simply a gathering place for fans of electronic music that has managed to attract such globally prominent figures as Alan McGee and Jeremy Scott. After a few Mezcal Sunrises, the warped decor begins to make sense.

PERVERT LOUNGE Map pp48-9

☎ 5510-4457; República de Uruguay 70, Centro Histórico; cover M\$100; ☎ 10:30pm-5am Thu-Sat;

🚏 Isabel la Católica

A pioneering electronica venue in the heart of the Historic Center, the Pervert routinely hosts DJs the stature of Luca Ricci and Satoshi Tomiie. Tribal house, deep house

and progressive house are among the featured styles heard within the narrow, stone-walled room.

RIOMA Map p88

☎ 5366-6593; Insurgentes Sur 377, Condesa; admission M\$100; 🕒 11pm-3am Thu-Sat; 🚏 Metrobus Campeche

Once a restaurant owned by Mexican screen star Cantinflas (the name is a jumbled version of the actor's first name), Rioma is now an exclusive lounge attracting a sexy 20-something crowd. The below-street-level space retains the restaurant's original mahogany paneling, with the red polka dots contributed by Japanese designer Yayoi Kuzama. Star DJs fire up the turntables.

MARIACHIS

Plaza Garibaldi (Map pp48-9; take the metro to Bellas Artes or Garibaldi), five blocks north of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, is where the city's mariachi bands gather in the evenings. Mexico's most characteristic music, mariachi originated in the state of Jalisco, but Plaza Garibaldi remains a landmark for the tradition, featuring bronze statues of such musical icons as Pedro Infante and Juan Gabriel.

Outfitted in silver-studded *charro* suits and broad brimmed sombreros, the musicians stand around with drinks until approached by someone who's ready to pay for a song (M\$70) or whisk them away to entertain at a party. The typical mariachi ensemble consists of seven to 12 members, playing trumpets, violins and guitars of various sizes, including the bass-toned *guitarrón* and the five-stringed

vihuela. Rather than one particular type of song, the mariachi repertoire actually consists of a variety of styles, including *boleros*, *ranchera* songs, and *huapangos*. The players are usually men but they don't have to be – the all-female group Mariachi Sonidos de América Femenil also work the plaza, offering a refreshing spin on the macho tradition.

The plaza gets going by about 8pm and stays busy until midnight or so. Besides the mariachis, other small combos perform *sones jarochos* – the sweet harp-driven music of Veracruz – and *norteño* polkas. You can wander and listen to the mariachis in the plaza for free, but if you're celebrating something and feel like being serenaded, request a classic tune like *El Rey*, *Amorcito Corazón* or *Ay Jalisco No te Rajes*. For food, try the Mercado San Camilito (p156) north of the plaza.

The biggest mariachi gathering of the year coincides with the Fiesta de Santa Cecilia (November 22), when a stage is set up on the plaza for performances by stars of the style.

SALÓN TENAMPA Map pp48-9

☎ 5526-6176; www.salontenampa.com; Plaza Garibaldi 12; 🕒 1pm-3am; 📍 Garibaldi

Graced with murals of the giants of Mexican song and enlivened by its own songsters, this historic cantina on the north side of the plaza is an obligatory visit. Founded in 1925 by a Jalisco native, the cavernous hall is always in a festive mood, with carved wood booths around the perimeter and roving mariachi bands performing for groups of revelers. It's the ultimate setting for *el último trago*, the evening's final shot of tequila.

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