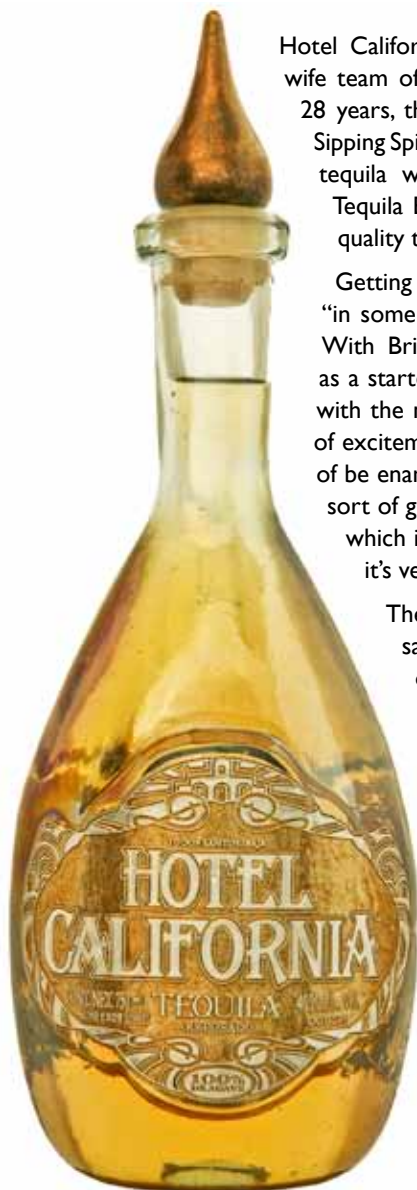


HOTEL CALIFORNIA TEQUILA

By: Dana Stone



Hotel California Tequila is run by the husband and wife team of Brian and Paula Whitney. Together for 28 years, the couple now runs Connecticut-based Sipping Spirits, LLC and launched the ultra-premium tequila with a goal to “make Hotel California Tequila Blanco, Reposado and Añejo the highest quality tequila on the market.”

Getting into the tequila business was, says Paula, “in some ways I believe, in a little bit of karma.” With Brian’s beverage and business experience as a starter, a friend of a friend approached Brian with the name Hotel California. “There was a lot of excitement about it. I think it was easy to sort of be enamored with the whole project and really sort of get behind it and develop a passion for it, which is what we’ve actually both done. I mean it’s very exciting,” said Paula.

The brand is supported by trade advertising, sales promotion, trade public relations, on-premise tasting and event marketing. Hotel California Tequila won the Double Gold award at the 2009 San Francisco World Spirits Competition and Gold for 2010.

The tequila is indeed linked to the real Hotel California on a beach in Baja (no connection to the infamous Eagles’ song). Brian explained, “It’s a real boutique hotel. It’s only got 11 rooms. But it’s a spectacular place to gather and have lunch and dinner. They are our partners in the venture and the hotel has been a

really cool thing to market both to consumers as well as distributors because it’s a great award. Between the hotel that was built in 1950, and the name, and the packaging, and the product it really all works very well together for a promotional standpoint.”

The tequila is now available in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Georgia, Rhode Island and South Florida. Brian said “South Florida has been a difficult market, which we knew when we went into it. Connecticut has been great. Rhode Island has been great. What we have found is that the brand, because of the name and because of the packaging and because it’s kind of a fun concept, the event marketing.” Paula added, “In Connecticut, the best part about this is really it’s our backyard. We know people all over the state. So it’s been really easy to promote in this area. We are using a lot of contacts that we already have.

