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Monthly
Meet Our Makers Newsletter



Meet Doug and Amy Smith

Every April, Tucson comes alive with the Agave Heritage Festival, a gathering of producers, scholars, and enthusiasts exploring the history, culture, and future of agave spirits. At the center of it all are Doug and Amy Smith, owners of Bar Crisol and longtime stewards of Tucson's coffee and mezcal scene. Though we first introduced them three years ago, much has changed for the duo since our last conversation. Keep reading to learn their updates or click the link below for the latest media updates from Visit Tucson.

[What's New](#)



Since our last conversation, Doug and Amy Smith have stepped into a new chapter, selling their Sixth Avenue coffee roasting operations at Exo Coffee to longtime friends Mollie Silva and Clay Koweek. They continue to run Bar Crisol, their café and mezcal bar in Tucson's historic Barrio Viejo, and the two businesses remain closely connected as co-branded “sister cafés.”

Today, Bar Crisol operates as a café from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., exclusively serving Exo coffee roasted by co-founder and longtime partner Christopher Byrne, before reopening Wednesday through Saturday evenings as a bar centered on agave spirits. But more than a shift in hours, the transition reflects a deeper one: a growing focus on mezcal as both a craft and a cultural anchor.

For Doug, that connection dates back decades.

“I had a chance to see it in its maybe most intense cultural matrix at a patron saint fiesta in the state of Guerrero,” he said. “Mezcal was circulating among people who were taking part in the revelry – how this was a kind of ritual gesture that bound people together in community. It’s more than the sum of its parts – it’s a really transcendent experience.”

That early experience stayed with him, eventually shaping what Bar Crisol would become: not just a place to drink mezcal, but a place to understand it.

But for Doug and Amy, mezcal isn’t a departure from their work in coffee, it’s a continuation of it. Both have always been vehicles for the same ideas: place, process, and connection.

“It would be hard to separate our business from our marriage,” Amy said. “We really have been married to it alongside our own marriage. It’s incredibly embedded in our lives.”



Amy’s relationship to coffee stretches back to her youth, and she has worked as a barista since the mid-1990s. Doug’s path began alongside business partner Christopher Bryne. While attending the University of Arizona in the ‘80s, Doug and Chris used to frequent Bentley’s House of Coffee Tea, where they offhandedly talked about one day opening a coffee shop of their own.

Then in 2009, after learning how to roast coffee while living in Portland, their dream was born. The duo began turning out coffee for various wholesale accounts in Tucson, including Time Market, where Amy recalls first being made aware of Doug’s talents.

“I secretly had a crush on Doug because I noticed the difference in the quality of the coffee,” said Amy. “When I asked what they were doing differently, they pointed to Doug.”

Shortly thereafter, Amy and Doug became an item both personally and professionally. They share a love of academics (both were teachers) and what Amy refers to as “placemaking” or highlighting the region’s abundance and history as a borderland.

“Building connections to Mexico has always been at the center of our mission,” Doug said. “Tucson is a place that we celebrate, the Borderlands is a place that we

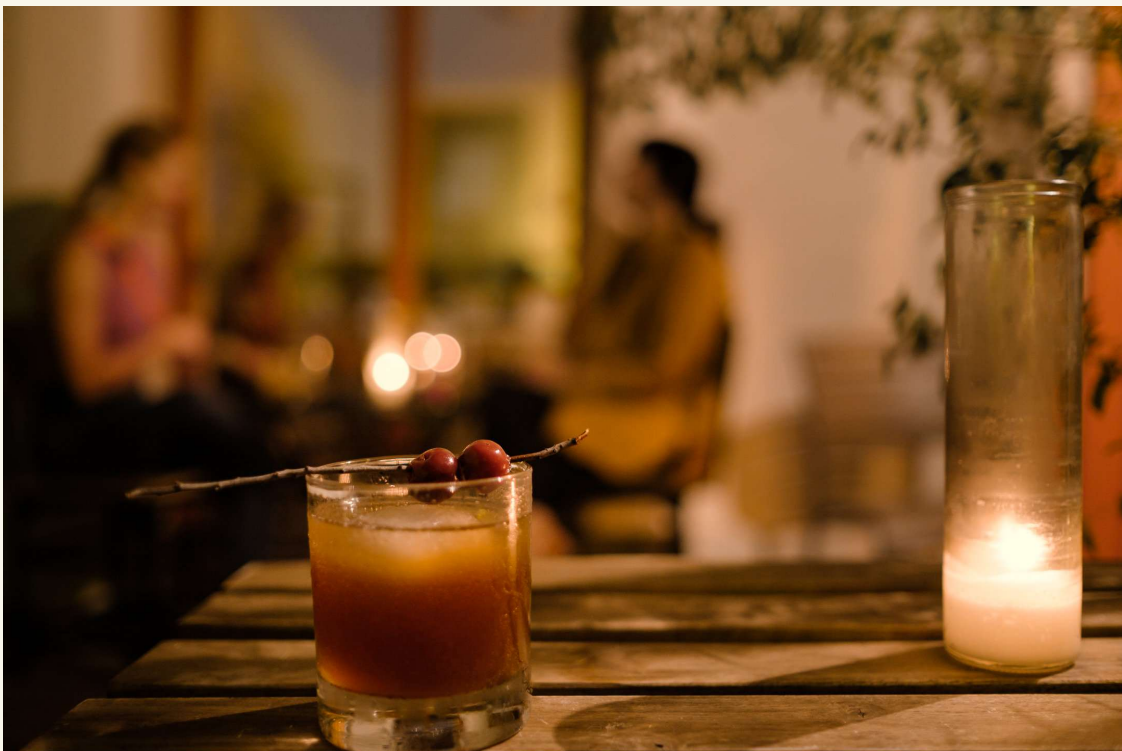
celebrate, and the Southern Arizona to Mexico connection is another thing we celebrate.”

Today, that mission finds one of its clearest expressions through agave.

Since Bar Crisol's inception in 2017, Doug has become an increasingly central figure in Tucson's agave community and plays a key role in the city's Agave Heritage Festival, an internationally recognized gathering that took place in Tucson this past weekend.

“I think the festival is probably the most important of its kind in the whole world,” he said. “We bring together scholars, researchers, producers, brand representatives, botanists, geographers... to talk about the significance of the spirits, their history, their culture, their geography, and their future.”

During the four-day event, Bar Crisol came alive with special events: two guided mezcal tastings, a bar takeover by Malcriado Bar from Oaxaca, and a screening of the sotol documentary, *La Ciénega*. At the festival's Fiesta Norteña, guests sampled Bacanora, lechuguilla, and sotol, mingled with producers, and were treated to Sonoran Norteña music by Los Acuñaas.



At Bar Crisol, that same ethos carries into the day-to-day experience. Doug leads mezcal tastings on the first Thursday of each month, giving guests a deeper understanding of the spirit's cultural significance and environmental context. Each tasting includes four pours, and Doug often introduces guests to other regional spirits like bacanora or sotol, offering a curated journey through the diversity of agave and its neighboring distillates. Sometimes, guests get to meet the makers, too; for example, the March tasting featured Miguel Partida, a fourth-generation mezcalero from Chacolo in southern Jalisco, who joined virtually.

Beyond the tastings, the space fosters community and creativity. Typewriter gatherings take place twice monthly, while weekly live music creates a lively backdrop where conversation and learning unfold alongside a shared appreciation for mezcal, coffee, and Tucson culture. Guests leave with not only a taste of the spirits, but a richer awareness of production practices, regional connections, and the thoughtfulness that goes into each pour.

“The mission of the coffee house is to create an approachable setting where we can authentically appreciate Tucson and connect with others,” Amy said. “A lot of those connections are with conservation and non-profit networks, and the relationships that we’ve built over the last decade or so.”

That commitment extends beyond the bar itself. With support from a City of Tucson grant, Doug and Amy recently expanded Bar Crisol’s patio, planting native velvet mesquite trees and Hermosillo Select chiltepín with the goal of saving seeds in partnership with Native Seeds/SEARCH, an effort rooted in the same values of preservation and regional stewardship that define their approach to mezcal.

If Bar Crisol represents anything today, it’s a distillation of those ideas: coffee and mezcal, culture and ecology, all grounded in place.

“We aren’t the type of business owners that look to expand by having 10 locations,” Doug said. “Rather than expand the footprint to other locations, we’d like to maximize the footprint we have.”



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