

TEQUILA AFICIONADO

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Rico Austin PhD

Tres Cabo Amigos, LLC - BAJARRIBA ®



Rico Austin PhD – Mi Vida Loca (Biography)

Born and raised in Southwestern Idaho, Rico is the oldest of five boys, growing up in an area that was ripe for several adventures with his four younger brothers and numerous cousins.

Rico grew up near farmland that produced potatoes, hay, hops, grain and corn. There were several fruit orchards and vineyards in the Snake River Valley as well, due to the extraordinary fertile soil.

A few years out of high school he moved to (the big city) of Boise and enrolled at Boise State University as a student and walk-on football player. However, he could not escape the allure of traveling the world and began writing and storing his experiences in hopes of someday becoming

a novelist and writer. He began reading every chance he had. From contemporary novels to classical literature, Rico's love of storytelling was uncontrollable.

Rico earned an Associate Degree in Marketing and Sales from BSU. After a few years of low-level management positions, Rico moved to Hawaii for a short time, surfing the waters of Kaua'i and enjoying the outdoors. He then moved back to Idaho. In 1991, Rico moved to the Phoenix/Scottsdale area and continued his education receiving a Bachelors of Business Administration in International Business at Grand Canyon University, named the "Outstanding International Business Graduate of 1995." That same year he was also selected as "Mr. Future Business Executive" at the State Leadership Conference which included all universities in the State of Arizona.

The summer before graduating, Rico went to Vilnius, Lithuania, and taught English (ESL). During fall semester of his senior year at GCU, Rico attended Staffordshire University in England where he also started on the American Football Team for the Staffordshire Stallions. Rico finished his Masters, an MBA in International Management at Thunderbird School of Global Management with a focus on the Latin American Region and the Spanish language. He did this while working full-time as a feature writer and freelance journalist at the T-Bird school paper, *DAS TOR*. Rico wrote a few of his articles at *DAS TOR* especially for the foreign students of Latin America.

Hollywood has even had an encounter with Rico. Those who watched *Baywatch* with the beautiful Pamela Anderson and David Hasselhoff, might recall Rico Austin in a cameo appearance in the episode, "*Night of the Dolphin*" in 1997, where he played the role of a drug lord on a huge yacht with sexy chicks. He was invited back for another episode by casting director Susie Glickman, but declined due to a conflict with finals at Thunderbird. Rico chose education over stardom; when questioned why, he responded, "No one can ever take your education away. Everything else can come and go and, most likely will."

Rico is an avid fisherman and has traveled far and wide to cast his line into many waters; including streams, lakes, ponds, rivers, seas and oceans. He has worked for a few international companies as both a sales manager and a marketing manager. He has also worked as a land developer and was a licensed Realtor in Arizona.

Rico is happily married to a graphic artist from Minnesota. They make their homes in the "Land of the Sun," Scottsdale, Arizona, and San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico. He and wife Connie enjoy snorkeling, hiking, hanging by their swimming pool and traveling to the different beaches of Mexico while sipping on a cold cerveza or margarita blended with Rico's favorite TEQUILA.

Rico's first novel, *MY BAD TEQUILA* was published in September 11, 2010.

In May, 2014, Rico joined the Drivers and Racing Crews of the NORRA Mexican 1000 to write a travel /race book to accompany the documentary film that will be screened and made of the

Baja race. Rico was invited and chosen by the sponsors of the race and the documentary film maker to write of this adventure of which he is currently working on. *Baja Loco, 4 Racing Days and Tequila Nights on the NORRA Mexican 1000* will be ready for publication in 2016, just in time to celebrate the 50th year anniversary of the NORRA Mexican 1000, 1967 - 2017. This work was Rico's eighth published book.

Rico earned his PhD in Tequila in 2016, a feat of which less than 200 people in the world can claim. "I wasn't drinking, I was studying!"

In October 2020 Rico formed an Arizona LLC after arranging a meeting with two of his long-time Amigos who he'd met in Cabo some twenty years prior. All three of them now live in Arizona. Rico in Scottsdale, Jay Nance in Mesa and Mike Hill in Payson, Arizona. You can read their BAJARRIBA story on the back of their bottle or on the website: <https://bajarriba.com>

What is your current position in the agave spirits industry?

Co-Founder, Managing Partner and the Media Spokesperson of Tres Cabo Amigos, LLC which owns the tequila brand BAJARRIBA ®. The founders of Tres Cabo Amigos are Rico Austin, Jay Nance & Michael Hill. We are excited to be launching our Plata and Reposado tequilas using only the finest Blue Weber agaves. Too, we have started our Añejo program using white oak whiskey barrels. In approximately 12 to 15 months we will begin to bottle that for distribution into the market.

What made you choose the Agave Spirits industry?

It began with my first trip to Mexico on Spring Break of 1986 of which I wrote my first book and best seller – MY BAD TEQUILA! I fell in love with Mexico including the food, the culture and the great taste of tequila, even though at that early time in my life I was doing shooters and not sipping and savoring fine tequilas as I've been doing for these last two decades. I have saved for years, studied and



tasted tequila continuously over the last 20 years including associating myself with other knowledgeable agave spirit lovers such as Mr. Julio Bermejo, Lou Agave aka Long Island Lou Tequila, Mike Morales, Jim Riley, Grant Gardner, Lippy Michael Lipman and one of Tres Cabo Amigos founders, Michael (Miguel) Hill.

Another great tequila mentor and friend is third generation distiller Señor Juan Nuñez. I always knew it would only be a matter of time before I was able to launch my own brand after tasting many distilleries both in the Highlands (Los Altos) east of Guadalajara, Jalisco, and the Lowlands (El Valle) where the towns of Tequila and Amatitan are northwest of Mexico's second largest city. So, in a way, I would say that the Agave Spirits chose me and for this I am grateful.

How has the industry changed since you've become involved in it?

One of the grandest changes has been the constant and continuing growth making Agave Spirits the fastest growing spirit in the world which is a great thing and has given BAJARRIBA® an opportunity to be amongst the most exquisite tequilas on Earth.

Another huge change in the last few years has been the staggering number of "Celebrity Tequilas." I have mixed feelings and believe this has been both a positive and a detriment for the tequila industry. To elaborate on my answer to Tequila Aficionado's question is that the celebrity owned tequilas has brought more attention to the agave spirits and has given us fresh, new customers who have now sipped, savored tequila and are now truly enjoying Tequila as their number one go-to spirit. This is what us old-timer tequila lovers have known for years.

On the negative side is the fact that some of the younger generations are treating it as a fad, an infatuation or something cool to do now aka "all the rage" now that Lebron James, Kendall Jenner, Nick Jonas and The Rock Johnson just to name a few have entered into the market. And who really knows if most or any of these celebrities really do enjoy the taste of tequila??

Also, I tend to be of the opinion that many great tasting tequilas are being overlooked as they don't have the advertising and marketing dollars as many professional athletes, actresses, actors and musicians and thus some never find their way off the shelf into our homes.

This being said, Sammy Hagar has been a constant in the tequila business for years beginning with his Cabo Wabo label and now teaming up with Guy Fieri bringing to market a good tasting and affordable tequila called Santo Fino. Now don't get me wrong, I'm sure some of other celebrities I mentioned do like their tequila as we too have a former NBA All-Star who is still working with the Phoenix Suns organization as a television commentator and analyst – Mr. Tom Chambers; and the former BAJA SCORE and NORRA racer – Mr. Jim Riley who was the founder of Azunia Tequila. Both Tom and Jim are minority partners / investors, but I assure you, these gentlemen are true tequila guys and we are extremely pleased to have them as part of our team BAJARRIBA®. Our team of Tres Cabo Amigos has more than doubled to Siete Hombres Locos with the addition of these two and another great tequila associate who has joined forces

with us – Mr. Mark Nuessle of Cave Creek, Arizona. And finally, we are pleased to announce we've added our great Amigo, Senor Carlos Chacon of Guadalajara, Mexico who has been incredibly valuable in helping us with our many vendors in Mexico. He has been with us every step of the way during our visits to Guadalajara and the neighboring area.



What do you see as the future of the agave spirits industry?

I believe that the agave spirits industry will continue to grow and thrive with more persons experimenting with Mezcal, Bucanora, Sotol and Raicilla along with all the new brands showing up on the market.

Do you approve of how brands are currently marketing themselves?

This question is very slick and icy as I do not believe I have a right to approve or disapprove of how other brands are currently branding themselves. This is what makes each brand unique and thank goodness others are branding themselves completely different than

what we are wanting to do with our new BAJARRIBA ® Tequila brand.

My partners and I are old-school and trust in bringing an excellent presentation such as a uniquely designed bottle shaped as the BAJA California upside down giving credence and homage to the home of many Mexicans and the vacation destination of thousands upon thousands of Americans, Canadians and Mexicans. After delivering an artisan-painted bottle with a wood and coin medallion synthetic cork, we pride ourselves in keeping our customers

coming back for the pure agave taste of our tequila using deep well water and the choicest, ripest agaves.

This is where I truly see BAJARRIBA ® separating itself from the competition – we are not after the one-time purchaser. We want the true tequila lovers who respect and want tremendous value in both appearance and taste.

Is there anything you'd like to say to people who may be contemplating entering and working in the agave spirits industry in one form or another?

I would advise if you want to get into the agave spirits market, you should definitely love the taste of your own brand tequila. Start saving your money now, because it is going to take three times as much as you have slated. I have literally been dreaming of this opportunity for over half my life, some 30 years of education, saving and making life-long tequila connections.

Connect with Rico on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ricoastin/>

What are your main responsibilities?

Since we are a start-up brand and as managing partner, I am required to wear many hats at this time, most importantly engaging and negotiating with all suppliers including tequila distillery, bottle, cork and box manufacturers and working closely with our exporter / importer.

Too, my partner Jay Nance and I have had many meetings with different distributors representing the mostly the Arizona and California markets which entails reading, countering and or signing distribution contracts. Marketing and brand awareness too are on the top of my list.

At this time, I am performing all accounting functions, but am about ready to turn that all over to an accountant of which we have hired. Luckily, our BAJARRIBA ® Team has five other partners to act as brand promoters.

Jay has done an outstanding job with our website and both of us are constantly sharing content on social media.

One of our minority partners, Jim Riley acts as our consultant as he has had his own brand of tequila, while Jim, Jay and I all work closely together on short term and long-term company and brand strategies.

My wife Connie who is one of the top graphic artists in the country has been instrumental in the success of the many compliments we have received on our uniquely designed artisan bottle which the idea of the Baja shaped bottle was from founding partner Mike Hill. Connie took that idea and put her talents to work. In fact, she has done almost every cover of Sundance Catalog for Robert Redford's company for the last 23 years.

So, as you have read, we have an outstanding field of individuals to take us to an elite level of sales and distribution while at the same time enjoying the ride and having fun.

How did you become interested in this field?

I have been interested in the tequila industry for over 20 years because of the individuals I have met throughout the years of travel and exploring tequilas such as Jim Riley, Julio Bermejo, Mike Morales and Michael Hill.

How did you begin your career?

I am just now getting started in the tequila business, but my many years of being an entrepreneur with owning a restaurant, working as a land developer, realtor and representing large global companies within the commercial tire industry such as Michelin, Continental, Rema Tip Top and Double Coin have helped prepare me for this endeavor. I have had the opportunity to have worked in Mexico, US, Canada, England, France, Germany and Lithuania so it's been a challenging and incredible journey.

How long have you worked in this industry?

I am new to working in the industry as I just formed our Arizona LLC in October of 2020 and we have just received our first small order of Plata and Reposado Tequila this last April 2022. It has been a long, arduous road, but we are now beginning to see the fruits come forth from our year and half long continuous plodding and planning.

Which has been more valuable in your career, your education or your experience?



I would venture to say that education and experience go hand-in-hand as experience can be classified as education and a person needs an education of some sorts rather it be formal, traditional or vocational to survive.

Knowledge in the form of experience or education is one thing that can never be taken away from you and I have found them both to be extremely valuable in my career and fully know that I would not be in the position I am in without either.

What steps would you recommend one take to prepare to enter this field?

Numero UNO: Try and find a mentor to help educate and teach you about tequila.

Numero DOS: Read everything you can about tequila, including publications and magazines such as Tequila Aficionado by Lisa Peitsch and Mike Morales. I have a couple different issues that I've purchased from Amazon.com.

NUMERO TRES: Explore by tasting and savoring as many tequilas as possible.

What is a typical day (or week) like for you?

Every day seems like a new challenge greets me in this crazy, fast moving tequila business. I am working full time as an international tire manufacturer representative covering the Western Region which comprises of 13 states and El Paso, TX so I travel a great deal. This gives me the freedom in the evenings to visit different restaurants, cantinas and bars while eating different foods and trying different agave spirits.

Too, I am a writer / author so I spend some of my evenings in a hotel room either writing novels or short stories. One of my favorite things to do is just to read. I love learning and reading is a great way to increase your knowledge whether it be about tequila, tires, travel or trails to hike.

How does your job affect your general lifestyle?

Both of these jobs that I am doing affect my lifestyle in a very positive way as I am able to go out and meet new people constantly as well as being in a position to see customers who are my friends. I feel like I am one of the most fortunate persons in this beautiful agave colored world I call home.

What do you like most about your work?

Traveling and getting to see my customers who I consider friends. I love sales, nothing better than the feeling of showing others why they should purchase your product and when you make a sale, WOW, you've excelled!



What current issues and trends in the field should people know about/be aware of?

One of the most important issues I feel is of the inflation that is upon us daily and how this affects our true costs of goods.

What is the culture like at your company?

Personally, I feel like the culture of our company is incredible and fun-filled. Whenever any of us or all of us partners get together there is lots of laughter, smiles, tequila flowing and work is extremely enjoyable when some of your best friends are your business partners and investors. We are all different, but we do all share in our love of tequila. It is also such a fringe benefit to have a tequila brand of which we all love the taste and agave aroma.

We are a very diverse group of partners and investors: (1) Rico an Author / Salesperson / Fisherman; (2) Jay a former Stockbroker / Boating Enthusiast; (3) Mike a Musician / Songwriter; (4) Jim a former Baja Racer / Cowboy / Tequila Consultant; (5) Tom a former NBA All-Star / TV Commentator / Rancher; a (6) Mark a Construction Company

Owner / Travel Enthusiast; (7) Carlos a Mexican National / Event Planner; But, one thing that binds us is our love of Tequila and Mexico and striving to give the world another great brand which is BAJARRIBA ®. We call it BAJA in a Bottle!!!

Where do you see the industry going in the future?

With all the inflation that we are facing today, I do see prices steadily increasing due to the costs of glass, cardboard, freight and agaves. I do hope that the small distilleries and brands can continue to make it through the tougher times.

Do you remember the first tequila you ever had? If so, what was it?

I'm sure my first taste of tequila was Jose Cuervo over 40 years ago. Yes, I was a stupid, young kid who use to do shooters instead of sipping and enjoying.

Is there a place in the world that you feel most represents who you are?

Well, we are called the Tres CABO Amigos for a reason! Yes, I love it at Land's End where the Sea of Cortez and Pacific Ocean meet. I have many great friends who live there and visit there. The fishing is tremendous, the food outstanding and tequila is readily available anywhere in that tourist town. Unfortunately, it continues to grow and becomes more Americanized daily. I do miss the old Cabo I knew back in the late 80s and early 90s.

What are you most grateful for?

I am most grateful for my health and for having a mother who taught us to work hard, to take and learn any kind of work which was available as the 70s were tough years, especially during the cold winters in Idaho. I am grateful we grew up as one of the poorest families in Marsing, Idaho along the Snake River as it has taught me to appreciate all that I have and all that I have gone through to bring me to this day.

Does your brand give back or volunteer with any organizations?

Yes, and this is one of the top things about our Tres Cabo Amigos company that I am proud of. There are a couple of organizations in the Mexican Baja of which BAJARRIBA ® has already given back to even though we are still a very new company. I believe five of the six organizations help children with education, housing and or food nourishment.

One of them is called Feeding Los Cabo Kids (FLCK), another is Corazon de Vida which is a for-purpose organization giving life-saving support to orphanages in Mexico and building futures for abandoned children through long-term education, located in Northern Baja. Tres Cabo Amigos through the brand of BAJARRIBA ® also donates to Cowboys for Kids which is an Arizona based organization and we give back to Barb's Rescue Dogs in Puerto Penasco aka Rocky Point in Sonora, MX.

What's one of your favorite memories about agave spirits?

Wow, I'm so glad you had this question as it brought back an awesome memory of being with a couple of friends and my wife at Horsepower Ranch in Ensenada Mexico about 4 years ago.

Connie and I were on vacation from AZ to San Diego and then driving down to Ensenada and then on east over to San Felipe on the Baja.

When arriving we were surprised that my good friend and co-owner Mr. Adrian Hoyle was already there with an old high school buddy – Mr. Grant Chambless. There were no other guests and my Amigo Adrian invited Connie and I to join he and Grant for dinner in the main dining room at the center, grand table. We gladly accepted and to our surprise and Adrian's surprise the other co-owner Mr. Todd Clement arrived. None of us had told any of the others that we were arriving at Horsepower Ranch this particular evening.

Well, the four of us had white cloth linen service with a spectacular meal and then we settled in on tasting and trying different tequilas that are served there. We had excellent service as three waiters stood at our attention as if we were royalty. The setting was excellent throughout and some cigars were lit that evening as well. At the end of this fun-filled, glorious evening which lasted well into the late hours we were fully treated by both Adrian and Todd for our meals and tequilas.

It was truly a magical night and then Connie and I were invited back for Horsepower's New Year's Eve party completely comped which included lodging. Unfortunately, our schedules did not work out for that event, but I can't wait to visit again and of course Adrian has agreed to carry BAJARRIBA ® on the top shelf.

What do you wish people better understood about you?



Those that really know me and have known me since my early years understand that I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth, not even a wooden one. Sometimes people who meet you after being somewhat successful haven't seen all the tribulations and hard work that 50 years prior brought forth. Even though I have quite a few diplomas including two MBA degrees and one Doctorate degree, all of which took years and years to obtain. I didn't earn my first diploma which was an Associates two-year degree in Sales and Marketing until I was 30 years young. I consider myself a simple man sharing tequila with other simple men and complex women.

What show would you binge-watch if you had time, and why?

I really enjoyed watching both the Sopranos and most lately the Yellowstone series episodes. Too, I enjoy good comedy such as Seinfeld and King of Queens of which I could watch hours of those old episodes.

What are you currently reading?

Right at this time I am not reading anything as I just finished reading Jim Riley's book – Freedom to Say Yes. After I finish reading a book, I like to take a couple of weeks off and let what I have just read sink into my mind especially a great novel, a biography, a self-help book or educational read such as Jim's book which will help anyone who is business minded or an entrepreneur or someone who may want to become a successful business owner. Those who think they can not learn anything more, will be completely surprised if they just put their ego away and turn the pages. We all can learn something anew weekly if not on a daily basis.

What are you working on right now that Tequila Aficionado could help you with?

Well, one thing I know is that being selected to interview as Whos Who in Tequila Aficionado is one giant step in helping me realize my dream. Too, I am sure that an ad would go a long way in getting our product recognized by the tequila consumer. Thank you for this opportunity – SALUD with Peace, Love & Tequila ®

Rico Austin PhD

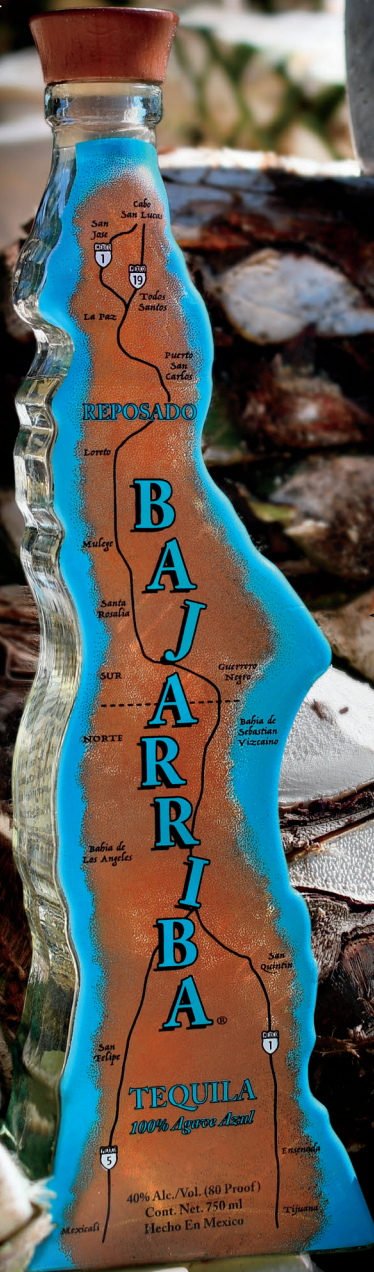


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