

# Mezcal Vago

## Sierra Negra

100%

A-07-SN-18

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For the first time ever, Aquilino has released a 100% batch of beautiful Sierra Negra.

This 84-liter batch was created from only seven wild-harvested piñas, weighing 999 kilograms, each piña having an average weight of 315 pounds. They were all harvested by hand on February 3rd from the Lomas de Cocoshle parcel, belonging to his brother Benito.

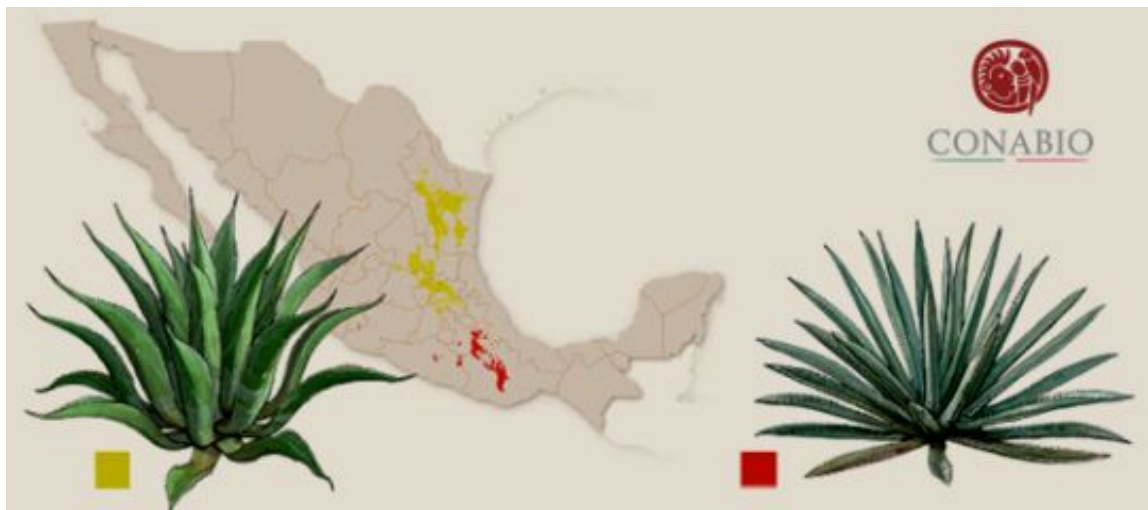
The piñas were buried to roast from February 5th to February 8th. That may not seem like very long, but remember, Aquilino doesn't like to roast any longer than it takes to achieve a full conversion of Inulin (starch) to sugar. They were left to cool for two weeks, with the first tina being tahona-crushed on the 22nd of February. 314 liters of fresh river water was added on February 24th, creating 1,312 liters of tepache. This tepache was allowed to ferment until February 28th, when it underwent initial distillation. This rendered 210 liters of *ordinario* at 28.4% ABV. Rectification was performed on February 28th, producing 73 liters of still-proof mezcal at 60.20% ABV. 13.68 kilograms of agave were required per liter of mezcal produced. After letting the batch rest for a month-and-a-half, 14 liters of distilled river water were added to the batch to produce a final spirit of 87-liters at 51.3% ABV, with three liters taken out for testing.

### **Agave Sierra Negra**

Agave Sierra Negra is a sub varietal of the Agave Americana family. It takes up to 25 years to mature. Sierra Negra is quite rare. It was widely cultivated many years ago but due to its producing very little seed or hijuelos and long times to mature it has been mostly abandoned in favor of Agave Espadín.

### **Agave Americana var. Oaxacensis**

According to Howard Scott Gentry, Agave Americana started to appear near what could now be considered the borderlands between the United States and Mexico. They were eventually brought to the central region of Mexico by native peoples that began to cultivate them in the across the Oaxaca valley and into the sierra. Once very prevalent in mezcal production, they began to be pushed out by Agave Angustifolia as mezcaleros began to realize that Espadín has a higher sugar content and matures faster. The current geographic distribution of A. Americana var. Oaxacensis is represented in the map below by the red coloration.



\*Image taken from CONABIO website.

Although Espadín has become the standard for mezcal production, being the source of ~90% of all mezcal on the market, a. Americana continues to be utilized, albeit with less frequency. The species has several sub-varieties with sufficient sugars to ferment and then distill. These sub-varieties include, but are not limited to: Arroqueño, Blanco, Cenizo, Coyote, de Castilla, Pulquero, and Sierra Negra.

### **Aquilino García López**

Aquilino is the father-in-law of Mezcal Vago's co-founder, Judah Kuper. This family connection and his exquisite mezcal were the inspiration to form Mezcal Vago. Aquilino had never produced commercially before working with Mezcal Vago and produces exclusively for Mezcal Vago.



Aquilino García López, grows Maguey Espadín, and Maguey Mexicano. He wild harvests Maguey Cuixe (Tobaziche) and Tepeztate. He has taken over fields from his father and also has family and friends with whom he sources agave.





His *palenque* is in Candelaria Yegolé, Oaxaca (16°29'41.36"N, 96°18'38.69"W) This is a river town in a hot and dry climate at an elevation of around 1100 meters. Two rivers converge in a narrow Valley and it is mountainous on all sides. It is a rugged three-hour drive from Oaxaca city.

The palenque is on Aquilino's ranch where he lives full time. He and his father moved it to its current location 15 years ago. It has moved around from nearby locations over the years. He believes his family has been making Mezcal for at least five generations. Aquilino does nearly all of the work himself.

The Agave Espadín and Agave Mexicano both take 7 to 9 years to mature and Aquilino is very careful about only using ripe agave. It takes 1000 kilos to yield around 100 liters of Mezcal. So every 10 kilos will yield a liter. The Espadín we cut ranges from 5 to 100 kilos per agave with an average of around 50 kilos for a well-grown ripe piña (agave heart). Therefore, one ripe Agave Espadín yields around seven 750ml bottles of Mezcal. A bit less but similar for Coyote, Arroqueño and Mexicano. Agave Tobalá and Cuixe yield even less.

Batch sizes of Espadín and Elote are around 750 liters. Each batch needs around 7 tons of cleaned and prepared agave piñas. Aquilino limits his batch sizes to one full oven.

The Mexicano and the Cuixe are smaller batches due to the availability of the agave. A batch of Mexicano is between 200 and 900 hundred





Liters. The Cuixe is between 100 and 300 Liters (he only does around 2 a year.) The Cuixe is very laborious to make. Locating ripe agave growing wild and spread out over a large region surrounding the village takes lots of time and patience. Many of the agave are far from the road and need to be brought down the mountain by burro. The Cuixe is also laborious to clean and prepare and is tough to grind. It is roasted at least a full day longer than Espadín to fully extract the sugars.



Aquilino uses a traditional stone *tabona* to grind the cooked agave. All of the mashed agave and its juices are scooped together into the fermentation vats. A full oven of agave will take a couple of weeks to grind. This helps space out the fermentation process so not everything finishes at the same time.

Aquilino's nine fermentation vats are made of pine and hold up to 1000 liters. The cooked agave and water ferment from the natural airborne yeasts in the air. No additional ingredients are used to make the mezcal other than agave and water.



Each batch ferments for around a week. This varies depending on the ambient temperature at the time of fermentation. Aquilino distills his fermented mash before all of the sugar has fermented. This is sooner than other mezcalero's' techniques.

Aquilino has a copper still that has a 250-liter capacity. He makes all the separations (cuts) by smell and taste. The heads are between 70% and 30% AVB and his tails are between 30% and 15% AVB. Everything else he doesn't use.