

Production of Fidencio

Fidencio Jimenez started making mezcal over 120 years ago. Now, his great-grandson, Enrique Jimenez continues the art and tradition.

Agave – The Jimenez Estate is located in Santiago Matatlán, Oaxaca; known as “Capital Mundial Del Mezcal – mezcal capital of the world”. The Jimenez Family started farming agave in the 1950’s taking great care to produce the highest quality agave. The entire estate is dedicated to one of Oaxaca’s noble agave, Espadín. In the fields, the Zapotec heritage continues with biodynamic and organic (certification pending) farming.

Harvest – We always harvest during the new moon. The phase of the moon during harvest has a profound influence on the flavor of mezcal. A new moon harvest will result in a more delicate mezcal. During harvest, the farmers remove the long, sharp leaves and separate the body from the roots. At this point the agave is referred to as a piña because it resembles a very large pineapple.

Roast – At the palenque (distillery), the piñas are split by hand with an ax into four to eight pieces, depending on the size.

- **Sin Humo** – The split piñas are placed in our Radiant Heat Oven and roasted for three days. Enrique’s designed and built this unique oven to produce a mezcal that is a pure expression of espadín, with out the influence of smoke that is typically found in other mezcals.
- **Clásico and Pechuga** – The agave for the Clásico and Pechuga are roasted in the traditional method. The oven is a stone lined, earthen pit. A fire of Encino, the local black oak, is lit in the pit, which heats up the stones. When the fire goes out and the stones are hot, the agave is piled in the pit and buried. After three days the smoky maguey is ready.

Why Roast? Fermentation requires simple sugars. The agave is loaded with complex sugars called inulin, which are gently broken down to simple (fermentable) sugars.

Crush – The roasted piñas are removed from the oven and brought to the tahona (grinding stone) to be crushed. The tahona is a large stone wheel made out of cantera rosa (rose quartz). Hitched to the wheel is Rocio, the trusty steed that supplies the power. As Rocio makes his rounds, the roasted piñas are crushed, releasing the sweet agave juice. This liquid is called aguamiel or honey water.

Wash – The crushed agave is rinsed with water from our deep well to make the tepache (fermenting liquid).

Fermentation – After the wash, the tepache is placed in fermentation vats. The pine vats are left open so the wild yeast and the tepache can mingle. The yeast consumes the sugars and makes alcohol. This takes about six to eight days to complete depending on the air temperature.

- **Sin Humo** – When we ferment for Sin Humo, we remove the agave fibers before fermentation. This gives us a lighter and more delicate mezcal.
- **Clásico and Pechuga** – The Clásico and Pechuga are fermented with the agave to extract maximum flavor.

Distillation – Fermented agave is boiled to separate water and concentrate the alcohol. With each pass through the still, we separate the heart (corazon) of the distillate from the head (cabeza) and tail (cola), which are not used for mezcal. At this point we have mezcal that is at batch strength which around 48%.

Why separate? Different parts of the fermented agave juice evaporate at different temperatures. The impurities are found in the beginning and end (head and tail) of the distillation cycle. Only the corazon is used in the final product.

- **Sin Humo** – Fidencio Sin Humo is distilled in a custom, wood fired, Alembic (pit still) that was designed by our Mezcalero. There are additional chambers in this still that recirculates the mezcal. This gently softens the intensity and is another contributor to the elegance of the mezcal. It is distilled twice, the minimum allowed for export. We then add well water to reduce the alcohol to 40%.
- **Clásico** – Fidencio Clásico is distilled twice in a traditional, wood fired, simple Alembic. This still is very similar to the stills used in Cognac. After the second distillation, we add a touch of water, and bottle at 44% alcohol.
- **Pechuga** – This is the point in the process when Pechuga becomes unique. Undiluted Clásico is put back in the still for a third distillation and bottled, undiluted at 45.4%. Along with the mezcal, we add our traditional mixture of fruit: quince, apples, bananas, pineapple and guava. A whole chicken breast, skinned and washed to remove all fat is hung from the cap of the still. The breast is said to soften the intensity and round out the flavor of the mezcal. All of the fruit are from the mountains of Oaxaca and must be harvested during the very short, quince harvest. Pechuga is produced over a short time at the end of the summer. The fruit will have different expressions from year to year. The 2010 vintage was delayed 6 weeks due to the rain, the most in decades.