

Fidencio Mezcal – What is Mezcal

Denominación de Origen (DO) del Mezcal

Mezcal is a distilled spirit made from fermented agave. In order to be called a Mezcal, the spirit must meet certain requirements outlined by COMERCAM, the governing body for mezcal.

Location–Mezcal must come from one of the seven Mezcal producing states in Mexico *Fidencio Mezcal is from Santiago Matatlán, Oaxaca*



1) Oaxaca, 2) Guerrero, 3) Guanajuato, 4) San Luis Potosí, 5) Zacatecas, 6) Durango and 7) Tamaulipas

Agave a.k.a. Maguey – *Fidencio Mezcal is made from Agave Espadín that is harvested after at least 10 years old.* There are many varieties of Maguey that are always permitted in the DO of Mezcal, close to thirty. Some examples are:

- Espadín (*angustifolia*) – the most widely cultivated and produced agave. The genetic mother to blue agave (*tequiliana weber*). The piñas are large and juicy
- Tobalá (*potatorum*) – A wild (*silvestre*) variety of agave found at very high elevations in Oaxaca. Difficult to cultivate and only a small amount are available annually. The piñas are very small.
- Madrecuixe/Tobaziche (*Karwinskii*) – A wild (*Silvestre*) agave found in southern Oaxaca at high elevation. The agave grows off the ground like a small tree. The piñas are long and woody yielding very little
- Cenizo (*durangensis*) – Cultivated in the northern mezcal states of Durango and Zacatecas
- Papalometl (*Cupreata*) – Found in Guerrero and western Oaxaca

What is Agave? The genus *Agave* are succulents that fall under the family of *Agavaceae*. Often, they are incorrectly regarded as members of the lily or cactus families. These plants are primarily found in deserts ranging from the southwest United States to the northern tropical area of South America but have become synonymous with Mexico. Agave have a long growth cycle needing 6-14 years for maturity. They reproduce by flowering, which occurs once in their lifetime.

Types of Mezcal – *Fidencio Mezcal is Type I, 100% Agave*

Type I-100% Agave Mezcal – Very simply, these Mezcals must be made from Agave sugars only.

Type II-Mezcal – When a label does not say 100% agave it will just have the word Mezcal on the label. This means that it is a mixto (mixed) mezcal. A mixto must have a minimum of 80% agave.

Categories of Mezcal – *Call of Fidencio mezcals are Joven*

Joven – The word joven means young. Jovens are Mezcals that are aged less than 2 months. Most jovens, like Fidencio, are not aged in wood at all.

Reposado – The translation of reposado is rested. Reposados are aged in oak barrels between two months and one year.

Añejo – Añejo means aged and añejos are aged in oak barrels for a period of one to three years.

Extra Añejo – This is an unofficial category that is gaining popularity and will likely become recognized in the near future. Extra Añejos are aged in oak for over three years.

History of Mezcal

The history of Mezcal is as rich and colorful as the country that this mysterious spirit owes its heritage. A mythical tale from the indigenous Nahuatl Tribe from pre-Columbian Mexico, tells a story of a bolt of lightning descending from the heavens and striking an agave plant on the hill. The agave is split open and cooked by the heat of the lightning, and releases from its heart a magical elixir that flows down from the hillside. The tribe believes this elixir to be a gift sent directly from the gods above. It becomes known by the tribesmen as mexcalmetl, meaning cooked agave or simply Mezcal.

The historical record of Mezcal takes us down a different road. Most historians generally agree that Mezcal is essentially the evolution of the pre-hispanic beverage known as Pulque, a mildly alcoholic drink made from fermentation of mashed agave. Natives had been making pulque for centuries prior to the Spanish Conquest. Since Mezcal emerged around the same time as the Spaniards arrived, many people believe that it was they who initially introduced the natives to the Mezcal distilling techniques. However, there is evidence to suggest that it was actually the Phillipinos who first exposed the natives to this distillation process. In the early part of the 16th century Philipino seamen used small portable distilleries on their boats to make coconut brandy. When they came to ports like Acapulco and Colima, these distilling techniques were passed on to the native tradesmen. It is believed that the local traders then passed these techniques on to people who lived further and further away from the coast until eventually the natives were forced to distill agave instead of palm, which was unavailable in the high arid valleys of the interior. Mezcal might be the result of this contact.

Therefore, if it was the Philipinos who initially introduced the process, it was undoubtedly the Spaniards who expanded on it and increased its role in early Mexican societies. After the soldiers of the conquest ran out of the distilled spirits they had brought over from Europe, they found the weak, milky Pulque to be a poor substitute for the much more potent alcoholic spirits they had got accustomed to drinking. Soon they began distilling the pulque in alembic stills to give the beverage an acceptable potency level.

Over the years Mezcal has become an integral part of the Mexican culture, especially in the regions where there is still strong, indigenous influences, such as the State of Oaxaca, where large populations of Zapotec and Mixtec decedents still exist. Oaxaca is often recognized as the most important Mezcal producing area in Mexico, currently producing over 60% of all mezcals. Many of the producers there use the same traditional methods of producing Mezcal as they did 400 years ago. The agave are still roasted in underground wood-fired pits, the pi-as are mashed with a horse tethered to a large round grinding stone, and the liquid from the mash is processed in small clay or copper pot stills. Other distilleries, like that of Fidencio, are beginning to incorporate more innovative techniques, like roasting agave in radiant heat ovens.

Today mezcal has emerged as one of the most important drinks in Oaxaca. It is the traditional toast of choice at ceremonial occasions such as baptisms, weddings and town fiestas. Businessmen often celebrate successful deals over a mezcal, and often times it will be served at the conclusion of a formal dinner, or sometimes even rubbed on the skin for an effective home remedy.

In Oaxaca there is a saying that accurately and appropriately sums up the importance and magnitude of this magical spirit....

“Por todo mal...Mezcal...Por todo bien...tambien!”

For all things bad, Mezcal, for all things good, also Mezcal!