

CEREMONY OF APPRECIATION



No. 1

CUISH





THE MEZCAL TRADITION

To speak of the history of mezcal is to speak of a history of passion.

The knowledge surrounding maguey is generated from a continuous dialogue between different cultures, which has formed a historical wealth drawing from ceremonial, gastronomic, festive and religious spheres. In the Mesoamerican world, the aforementioned are often experienced together and in Mexico specifically, mezcal was born from this unique social dynamic.

The etymological origin of the word “mezcal” come from **Náhuatl**:

Metl: Agave
Izcalli: Cocido

Mezcal is obtained from cooking, grinding, fermenting and distilling the ripe maguey hearts. As the knowledge of this process has been passed down, uninterrupted from generation to generation, we refer to the resulting mezcal as “Traditional Mezcal”.

THE AGAVES

Agavaceae are plants native to the American continent that are distributed from the southern United States to South America. But, It is in Mexico where Agavaceae most expresses this biocultural importance. We know this plant was part of the diet of the ancient American man before the great Mesoamerican civilizations, as they have found traces of cooked maguey chewed next to chili seeds, pumpkin and teosinte (proto corn).

There are about 220 Agave species in existence, 160 of which grow in Mexico, 119 being endemic and 88 micro-endemic.

In Mexico different cultures gave different names to this plant: metl, mecetl (náhuatl), uadá (otomí), doba (zapoteco), akamba (purépecha).

En Zapoteco:

Dobasichi (Tobaziche)

Dobalá (Tobalá)

Dobadán (Mexicano)

Dob yeg (Espadín)

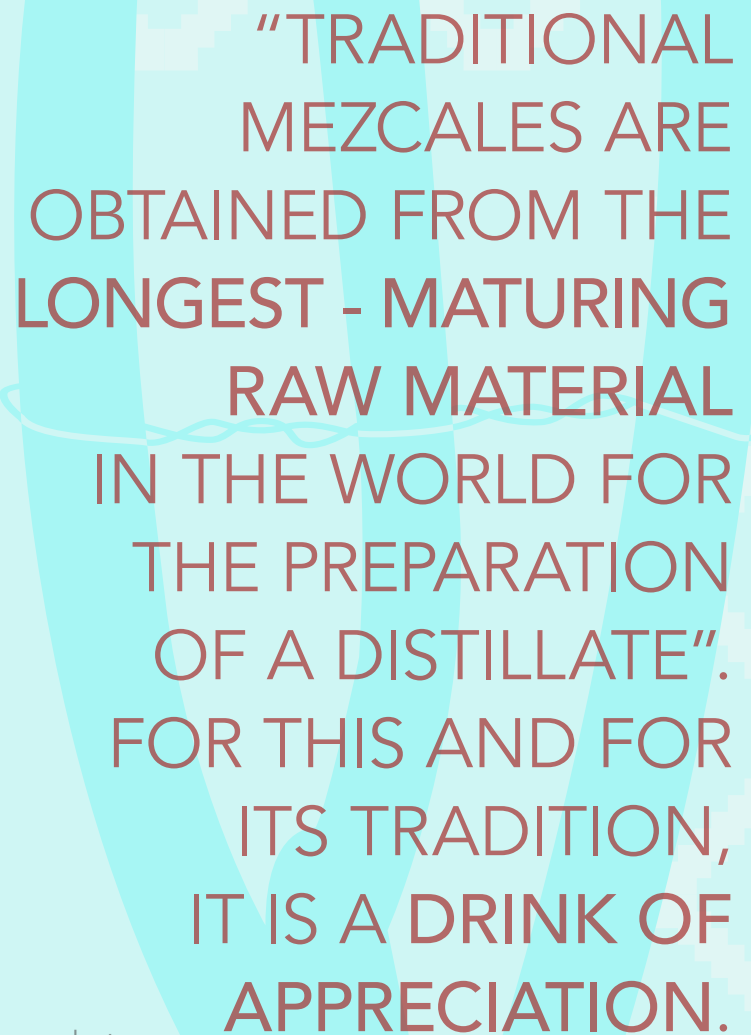
Dob Cuela (Tepextate)

Dob Cuishi (Cuishe)

Since pre columbian times this plant has provided us with various products: Honey, textile fibers, nectar, pulque and mezcal to name a few.

AGAVE FLOWERS ONLY ONCE IN ITS LIFE, PRODUCING SEED AND THEN DIES.

Agave's scientific name is of Greek origin, ἀγαυή (agave) noble or admirable, which was coined by the naturalist of Swedish origin Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) in his work *Species Plantarum* (Plant Species). The friar José de Acosta in his book *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* called agave the tree of wonders.



“TRADITIONAL
MEZCALES ARE
OBTAINED FROM THE
LONGEST - MATURING
RAW MATERIAL
IN THE WORLD FOR
THE PREPARATION
OF A DISTILLATE”.
FOR THIS AND FOR
ITS TRADITION,
IT IS A DRINK OF
APPRECIATION.



WHY IS IT A DRINK THAT SHOULD BE PONDERED?

We can state five fundamental reasons to give all our attention to this drink:

- 1.- It is an **old plant** - it has been among us since about twelve million years ago, since its appearance on this planet.
- 2.- Mezcal is obtained from the **longest-maturing raw material** for the elaboration of a distillate; from six to eighteen years old.
- 3.- It is a **ceremonial drink** in the Zapotec and Mixtec communities of Oaxaca.
- 4.- Because of the genetic biodiversity found in agave; which provides a **huge range of aromas and flavors**.
- 5.- Traditional Mezcal does not need to be aged in wood or have other additives alter its flavor; **When distilled its organoleptic properties are a pure representation of the plant and terroir.**

Other distillates use raw materials that grow in a matter of months or a maximum of a year. Examples of this are: cereals that take (4 months), grape cognac and cane rum (one year), vodka, like whiskey, is made with malts from cereal (4 to 6 months), rice sake (4 months).

Mezcal comes from agave that has a lifespan of between 7 and 18 years. For this reason, traditional mezcal should be appreciated based on its raw material, as there is no comparison in longevity; Its aromas and flavors are pristine, elegant and balanced.

AS IS SUCH, IT IS NECESSARY TO DEVOTE OUR TIME AND RESPECT TO IT WHEN IMBIBING.



IS MEZCAL PRE-COLOMBIAN?

Many countries have drinks that promote and define certain nationalism; France has its cognac, the United Kingdom and Scotland whiskey; Russia its vodka; sake from Japan; in Serbia and part of the balkans, rakia.

MEXICO IS A COUNTRY OF MEZCALES,
WITH OAXACA POSSESSING THE GREATEST
DIVERSITY OF AGAVES.

We can say that traditional mezcal is the result of an enrichment and cultural heritage, and a truly the first mestizo drink of Mexico. **Looking at the initial question the answer would be in the negative;** as it is the result of both old and new world cultures, the method to produce mezcal came during and after the Spanish conquest.


While the specific style in which it is distilled is unique to various parts of Mexico, the processes for obtaining it come from times and cultures far away, for example, the method of distillation was used in the extraction of perfumes and essential oils in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

OAXACA AND ITS BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY.

Anyone who has traveled through the Oaxacan countryside will have noticed its mountainous knots; its forests in veils of mist; hills riddled with organs and cacti, as if it were a beast perpetually bristling; coasts and beaches of purifying waters; starry clouds of maguey covering reddish lands, as if twilight were upside down.







All these landscapes give an account of the rich biodiversity that Oaxaca possesses And which generates so much micro endemism. This micro endemism drives the great diversity of agave, and in turn mezcal, in Oaxaca.

While the lavish natural diversity is hard to miss, we must not forget the cultures that settle these lands, who are the heirs of different worldviews and ancestral knowledge that survive to this day: Mezcal being the vessel from which they combine and sprout.

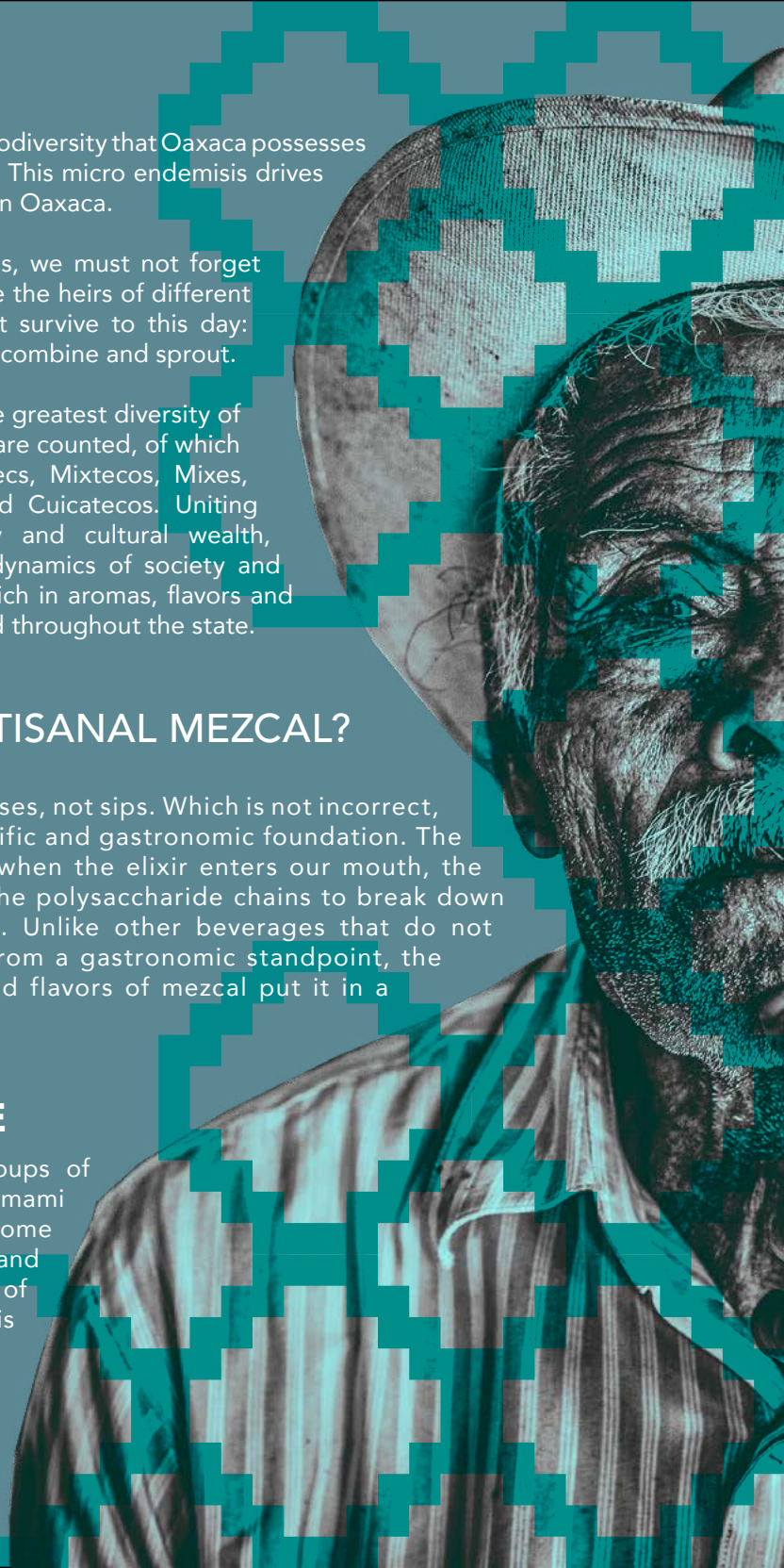
Returning to the above, Oaxaca has the greatest diversity of indigenous groups In Mexico, sixteen are counted, of which the most representative are: Zapotecs, Mixtecos, Mixes, Chontales, Mazatecos, Chatinos and Cuicatecos. Uniting these two provisions, biodiversity and cultural wealth, mezcal is born. Founded on the dynamics of society and its environment; myriad mezcals rich in aromas, flavors and techniques of production are found throughout the state.

HOW TO TASTE ARTISANAL MEZCAL?

It is said that mezcal is given kisses, not sips. Which is not incorrect, since the idea has both a scientific and gastronomic foundation. The first is based on the idea that when the elixir enters our mouth, the enzymes from our saliva cause the polysaccharide chains to break down into their molecular ingredients. Unlike other beverages that do not have this chemical complexity; from a gastronomic standpoint, the intense complexity of aromas and flavors of mezcal put it in a class of its own.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NOSE AND TASTE

Our sense of taste perceives five groups of flavors or textures: sweet, sour, salty, umami and bitter. The remaining sensations come from the interaction of our internal and external sense of smell. An example of this is seen during a cold, where smell is limited and by correlation so is taste.





VICES AND BAD WAYS TO APPROACH MEZCAL.

What is established is not always “good” or “true”. Certain ways of consuming mezcal have been established that distort all the traditions mentioned above. Some of these errors and disrespect would be:

1. The idea of a **shot** in a shot glass: Mezcal should be enjoyed in a wide-mouthed glass, to appreciate all the notes and aromas that it offers us.
2. **Being consumed with citrus or salts.** Both these elements overwhelm our taste buds, in turn preventing us from appreciating the distillate.
3. The shot; an ideal way to pass something of poor taste quickly. Mezcal is “**kissed**” not drunk at once. With mezcal we want the opposite approach; what we want is to enjoy the distillate in all of its complexity.

• CEREMONY OF APPRECIATION •

Every culture that has passed through this world, has had liturgies and initiations; conclaves and ceremonies where you inhale, drink or chew some concoction of a divine nature. Whether barley and pennyroyal in Greek times, or more modern Eleusinian rites, as in the 19th century with the torch ritual to prepare absinthe. In Mexico traditional mezcal has been instituted as a ceremonial element in Zapotec and Mixtec communities a compelling reason to consider it a drink of appreciation.

THEREFORE, WE WANT TO GUIDE YOU ON THIS JOURNEY OF APPRECIATION OF THE COMPLEXITIES AND FLAVORS OF MEZCAL. THE PRISTINE AND PEARLED BOTTLE THAT RESTS IN YOUR HANDS HAS TAKEN MANY YEARS TO GET THERE.

They fought for the land to cradle these magueys, generations of mezcal masters - Shamans and alchemists - have shared with love and discipline; how to harvest, the specific times and techniques for grinding and distilling. Traditional mezcal is produced with the oldest raw materials in the world: agave, which take between six and eighteen years depending on the species, to reach maturity; for this reason and for its means of artisanal production mezcal is the most complex drink in the world.





CUISH MEZCALES ARE A DRINK OF APPRECIATION AND FOR YOUR BEST ENJOYMENT WE SHARE OUR TASTING CEREMONY:

1. Take time and relax.
2. Serve some Cuish mezcal in a wide-mouthed glass, center your attention on the spirit and observe its density and body.
3. Identify the aromas with your nose.
4. Kissing technique: sip a little of the distillate and keep it in the mouth.
5. Identify notes in the mouth, swallow.
6. Exhale the vapors through your nose and identify the notes in the aftertaste.
7. Enjoy and repeat.

Always in a tasting we look for familiar notes, but you will find notes that don't exist anywhere else.

The delight in tasting mezcal is finding notes that are not present in fruits, herbs or flowers. We could say that, to drink mezcal, is an act of exploration through a universe of textures and aromas leading to new and authentic flavors. Sail through the land from which this sacred water, plowed by the sun, gushes forth.





BLESSING OF THE DRINKS.

In the Zapotec communities of the central valleys of Oaxaca, the “Blessing of the Drinks” is done in important celebrations such as festivities, mayordomías or weddings.

Before the party, a ceremony takes place in the most sacred place in the home; the altar (Lashán), where the elderly (Bin Gual) and hosts meet and welcome and thank you in Zapotec.

Then they go one by one to say prayers, ask God and cross the drinks at the foot of the altar; the tepache (Baäch), pulque and mezcal. In addition to drinks there are cigars (Yazé) and pennyroyal grass (Guie zá); an herb that scents the celebration.

After the blessing, the drinks are served in hierarchical order and pennyroyal crowns are given. Before ingesting, a little bit of mezcal is dripped on the ground to give the earth a “drink” and with those drops praying for an abundance of food.

After the ceremony in the altar room, the party commences with the other guests; starting with a Jarabe del Valle.

The “Blessing of the drinks” is a mix of Christianity (The Marriage at Cana and the conversion of water into wine for The joy of the festival), and the customs of the old Zapotec world; like coexisting with the dead in the cemetery after every major celebration.

All the senses are involved in the ceremony; the scent of pennyroyal and the copal incense, the melody of the Zapotec, the aromas and flavors of mezcal and tepache; and you want the party to take place in harmony and peace without falling into excesses.

