



Oaxaca Times

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Free

Mexico's Finest Mezcal

INTEREST

Californians Carl Doumani and Pam Hunter researched mezcals throughout Mexico before settling on Oaxaca as the place of origin for the upscale Encantado Mezcal they began importing to 21 of the United States in June of 1995. Not only did Oaxaca's mountainous terrain and climate prove best suited to the blue agave plant they favored, but the region's mezcaleros were turning out deliciously complex flavors and aromas in their mezcal that outdistanced any mezcal or tequila the two had tasted.

The mezcal is produced exclusively from blue agave, known locally as maguey, grown in the State of Oaxaca in the districts of Sola de Vega, Miahuatlán, Yau-tepec, Tlacolula, Ocotlán, Ejutla and Zimatlán. The blending components are crafted by 29 different artisans whose techniques have been handed down through their families for 500 years.

In Oaxaca the culture of magueyeros (Maguey farmers) and mezcaleros (distillers) is unlike that surrounding the production of any other distillate in the world. The blue agave plants are cultivated for seven to ten years prior to harvest. Once the pineapple-shaped heart (piña) of the plant is harvested, it is transported by burro from remote fields to roadways where it is loaded onto trucks and carried to a nearby village distillery.

There, an outdoor, stone-lined oven is fueled with native woods for the four-day roasting process the agave must undergo to convert inulin (a complex carbohydrate) to sugar. The roasted piñas are then



The Agave Mezcal Cactus

transferred to a grindstone to be ground before fermentation and distillation in handmade clay pots. Encantado is distilled a second time under the close supervision of Don Valeriano Martínez at his facility ARIC in Etlá.

Encantado Mezcal is made primarily of the Espadín variety of the agave plant. Smaller percentages of two other agave are added to create

the distillate's unique aroma and flavor.

Since Encantado's introduction in 1995, it has been featured at many of America's leading restaurants and bars. Bartender Dale DeGroff of Rockefeller Center's Rainbow Room in New York pours Oaxacan mezcal cocktails for visitors from all over the world. Chef Rick Bayless, owner of Chicago's Frontera Grill and Topolobampo, features three cocktails in which the mystical smokiness of mezcal is the key element. San Francisco's famed Stars has featured a new mezcal martini in which Oaxaca's distillate is blended with Lillet.

This fall Encantado became available for sale throughout

Mexico and is now being sold at restaurants and hotels in the city of Oaxaca. Hunter and Doumani hope it will be enjoyed by holiday visitors as an aperitif or digestif. They offer the toast, "Para todo mal, mezcal y para todo bien, también."

For more information contact Encantado Mezcal de Oaxaca. 6150 Silverado Trail Napa, California 94558 Fax: 707-944-0247



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Holy mole y la tortilla

FAVORITES

The inspiration for this collage-style article comes from the sudden realization that in Mexico all food goes together and everything can be eaten. This broad outlook and ecological sense is well expressed in the following two dishes.

HOLY MOLE

Mexico is famous for its *mole* (a sauce made with chilies and many other ingredients). Those not accustomed to this specialty sauce usually form a love or hate relationship with it. The following are among the many different kinds of mole available in Oaxaca.

Green Mole (mole verde): served with pork and white beans or as a filling for *empanadas*, ingredients include green chiles, green tomatoes, garlic, spearmint, cumin, and onions. *Yellow Mole* (mole amarillo): served with pork, chicken or beef and made from various chiles, cilantro, tomatoes, garlic, oregano and cloves. *Chichilo* (a reddish-yellow mole): served with beef and contains chile pasilla, chile negro, tomato, toasted chile seeds, toasted tortillas, cloves, cinnamon, and garlic. *Red Mole* (mole colorado): served with chicken,

pork or beef and contains chiles, tomato, garlic, cloves, oregano, sesame seeds and other spices. *Black Mole* (mole negro): probably the best known of the moles is served at most festive occasions with boiled chicken or turkey. It contains a blend of chilies, tomato, sesame seed, raisins, almonds, oregano, cloves and chocolate.

All moles are traditionally accompanied by rice and tortillas. These types and many more can be purchased at the local market, but cannot be brought home. Processed and packaged moles are available at supermarkets (Gigante, Aurrera, Sumesa) but they lack some of the home-cooked flavor.

Y LA TORTILLA
The Tortilla, a symbol of discipline and perfection, has broken the limits of the Mexican imagination. With it they make an almost infinite number of dishes, from the most basic of tacos to the most complicated of entrees.
The renowned Mexican Jorge Ibarguengoitia classified the tortilla as an invention deserving the greatest elegies because of its exquisite design, as it serves as a spoon, napkin and food. Amando Farga, in his book *Historia de la comida en México*, describes the tortilla as a "vehicle, condensation plate, utensil, and at times the difference between a satisfied stomach

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A Letter from the Director

March, 1997
Dear Reader:

I am happy to announce that the Instituto de Comunicación y Cultura A.C. celebrates its 10th anniversary this month. We have not only taught some 6,000 students the Spanish language, but also Mexican and Indigenous culture and tradition since our founding in March, 1987. Many students have left awed by the marvelous contrast that exists here in Mexico and we feel blessed to be part of that learning experience.

With the anniversary come many memorable moments filled with personal success and growth. As an institution, the I.C.C. Could not be a greater success. The memory of our first students bring a smile to my heart. Bob Davis, Frank Fichera, Vera Doshlenky, Scott Roth, Dale Marsh, Jeff Dennis, Frank and Guillermo Leonard Hettie and Reinaldo Veneciano, Daniel Carpoza, Kelly Rice. Don Northey will live on in our memory. I am happy to say that Kelly and Don, still visit us each year when they bring their students to study here.

Of course, without our first Spanish professors, all this would not have been possible. Aída Pérez, Marisela García Caballero, Concepción Velázquez, and Concepción Hernández García all left their memories in our students hearts with their professionalism, faithfulness, and enthusiasm.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the Oaxacan families that have accepted our students with their warm, truly-Oaxacan affection and the local authorities and tourism agencies for their cooperation that, together, has made the I.C.C. Such a success. Thank you all!

Sincerely,

Yolanda García Caballero
General Director, I.C.C.

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Letters from our readers

INTEREST

Dear Oaxaca Times:

Family and friends have been asking me what to bring on trips to Oaxaca. I thought that you might find my advice of some help to others. Oaxaca is a good-size, small town. Most of what you need is here, unless you happen to be a larger person, in which case you will have a hard time finding shoes and clothing. Also, dress for spring! It is spring in Oaxaca year 'round...that spring you remember from when you were a kid, before the bugs came out, when a gentle breeze held your kite aloft and it only rained only a little. Oh yes, I was telling you what to bring. You will need money, that is for sure, but not a lot because things are most reasonable here. It may be best to bring your ATM card so you won't be short. There are things to buy that will break your heart if you have to pass them by—rugs, pottery, jewelry...and the food! Bring good shoes, the best you can get. Oaxaca is in a valley so walking isn't so much up and down, but it is the thing you do. Don't forget your camera, film and such to capture the walls, churches, streets, flowers, and people from 'round the world sipping drinks in the *Zócalo*.

If you never had a high school Spanish teacher, come and give Yolanda a great big kiss, she can get you through Spanish quickly. Although Spanish is a second language to many Oaxacans (first may be Zapotec, Mixtec or 26 other indigenous tongues), at any rate a quick stop will help acquaint you with the best part of Oaxaca: its warm, patient people.

The People of Oaxaca are what makes it such a treasure...they are kind, overly generous, will smile and laugh, and then help you find your way. Oaxaca is the best place that I have found to spend my precious time.

—Mike Callaghan, A North Carolina Sculptor, USA—

Dear Oaxaca Times:

My times spent in Oaxaca has been "off the beaten track." I came here to get away from the Gringo stereotype and have found it hard to do so. However, after being here a month, I met some friends and made an effort to get to know them as friends. I found that if I was not thinking that their every misunderstanding was because I did not speak Spanish, I soon forgot about the stereotype and it no longer existed. What I am trying to say is that a stereotype is often a two way street. People are people, after all. Once you get to know someone, your attitudes and views change, hopefully for the better.

So I hope that others like me come here not only to get away from it all, but also to live and learn.

P.S. I liked your paper. I found it helpful and informational.

—Lance Larson, Alaska, USA—

Send us a letter about your experience in Oaxaca or at I.C.C. to: Letters to Oaxaca Times
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 All letters are subject to editing and become archives for use in the Oaxaca Times

Holy mole y la tortilla
 Oaxaca Times

Continued From Page 4
 and a voracious hunger?
 For demanding palates
 compares to a freshly-made
 —preferably made the traditional
 way. Some women continue the
 condition marked by its rhythmic
 ping of the tortilla between the
 of their hands to the rhythmic
 additional pizza making—just be
 placing the tortilla on the ceramic
 ceramic hot plate). Sadly, the
 tion is disappearing as commercial
 food production becomes more
 and more convenient for those
 buy their groceries weekly.

Today we know that every 100
 grams of tortilla provides 244
 calories and, 5.9 grams of protein,
 47 grams of carbohydrates,
 grams of fat, 196 milligrams of calcium
 and 2.6 milligrams of iron.
 They are delicious hot and fresh
 made. Even cold and hard to
 make great *tostadas*, *sopas*,
totopos.

The best news of all, however,
 is that tortillas eliminate trash
 dishes! In this day in age, when
 ern is in and the old is in fashion,
 nice to come to a place where
 tion plays a role

—Translated and adapted from
 Jan. 31, 1997 article in, *Reforma*

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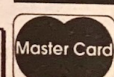
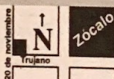
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