



**AGAVE DE
CORTES**
≈ MEZCAL ≈

IMPORTED BY

BACK BAR PROJECT



JOSÉ CORTÉS,
4TH GENERATION

CASA CORTÉS – SINCE 1840



The Cortés family is one of the oldest and most important mezcal families in Oaxaca. The Agave de Cortés brand honors the family’s heritage and tradition. Now in their 6th generation, Casa Cortés has produced artisanal mezcal since 1840. Casa Cortés is proud to be one of the few mezcal companies that is 100% Oaxacan-owned.



100% OAXACAN- OWNED

As the mezcal category grows, so do the number of new brands available in the U.S. market. However, very few brands are actually owned by the people that make the mezcal.

Casa Cortés is proud to be owned by a 6th generation family with Zapotec heritage, whose history in the region dates to 1840.

José Cortés dedicated his life to continuing his family's great mezcal-making traditions.





MEZCAL: LIKE NO OTHER SPIRIT

Mezcal is the purest form of beverage alcohol. From a raw material that takes a minimum of seven years to mature in the field before harvest, to the non-industrial production processes, there is no spirit that has captivated the attention of our industry quite like mezcal. At the center of the category, are a handful of thoughtful producers that are ensuring that the future of mezcal is preserved.

CREATING JOBS LOCALLY

Casa Cortés has been working to improve the local economy since its inception. The explosion of mezcal's popularity in recent years has meant more consistent production cycles, especially for export markets. As production increases, so too do the number of jobs needed to ensure the products succeed in a competitive marketplace.

Since 2007, Casa Cortés has grown from a tiny core of 2 - 3 producers making mezcal, to include a team of 40 employees, handling everything from the actual production of mezcal, to bottling, logistics, administrative management, and branding and marketing.

Among its three brands, Casa Cortés works with 17 different families in 16 different regions for the production of its mezcals.



REGION: OAXACA

In the far south of Mexico, the state of Oaxaca is a unique mix of cultures, inhabited by several ancient civilizations, including Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec - throughout its 7,000 year. history. The continuing presence of the indigenous population is a major asset for the preservation of native tradition. Infused with European cultures and languages resulting from colonization, Oaxaca is a true melting pot and bastion of diversity.





STATE OF OAXACA

The state of Oaxaca has the largest diversity of flora and fauna in Mexico, which is a direct result of the great geological diversity.

Oaxaca has eight distinct regions, ranging from high elevation pine forests, to tropical coastlines with miles of beach, to rugged mountain terrains. Each region has a distinct microclimate.

Santiago Matatlán is surrounded by mountains, with a narrow valley floor to the NE.

VALLES CENTRALES REGION

Located in the heart of Oaxaca, the Valles Centrales region is home to hundreds of mezcal producers. The mountainous region is one of the most geographically and biologically diverse in Mexico, with the largest variety of endemic agave species on the planet.

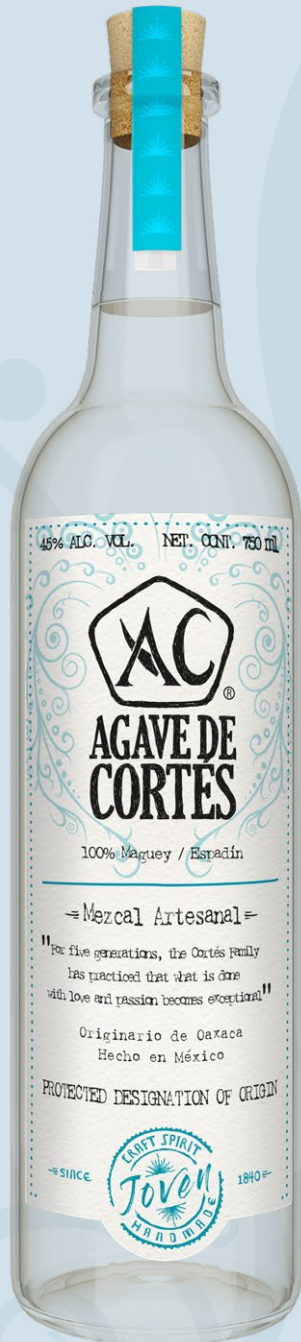




SANTIAGO MATATLÁN

The village of Santiago Matatlán is located in the Central Valleys region of Oaxaca, Mexico. With nearly 250 tiny mezcal distilleries dotted throughout the town and the surrounding rural valley floors, it is the self-proclaimed world capital of mezcal.





AGAVE DE CORTÉS MEZCAL JOVEN

Agave de Cortés is produced by the Cortés family, one of the most respected mezcal families in Mexico with mezcal heritage dating back six generations to 1840 in Santiago Matatlán, Oaxaca. Our mezcal is produced using exclusively Espadín agaves cultivated in the rolling valley floors in the mountainous Valles Centrales region outside of Santiago Matatlán.

Agave de Cortés is “Mezcal Artesanal,” employing only non-mechanized methods. The Espadín agaves are hand-harvested, cooked in an earthen pit oven, crushed by tahona, fermented in open-air wood vats using native yeast, and distilled twice in small copper pot stills. The Cortés family is committed to the mission of preserving the tradition of mezcal as it was taught to them by prior generations and offer Agave de Cortés as an emblematic mezcal that honors the legacy of their ancestors.

TECHNICAL DETAILS:

PALENQUE (Distillery): El As

REGION: Santiago Matatlán, Tlacolula

MAESTRO MEZCALERO (Master Distiller): Francisco Javier Cortés

AGAVE: 100% Espadín

TASTING NOTES: Delicate and sparkling nose of wood smoke and savory herbs introduces a bright, citrus, tart fruit and peppery palate.

ABV: 45%

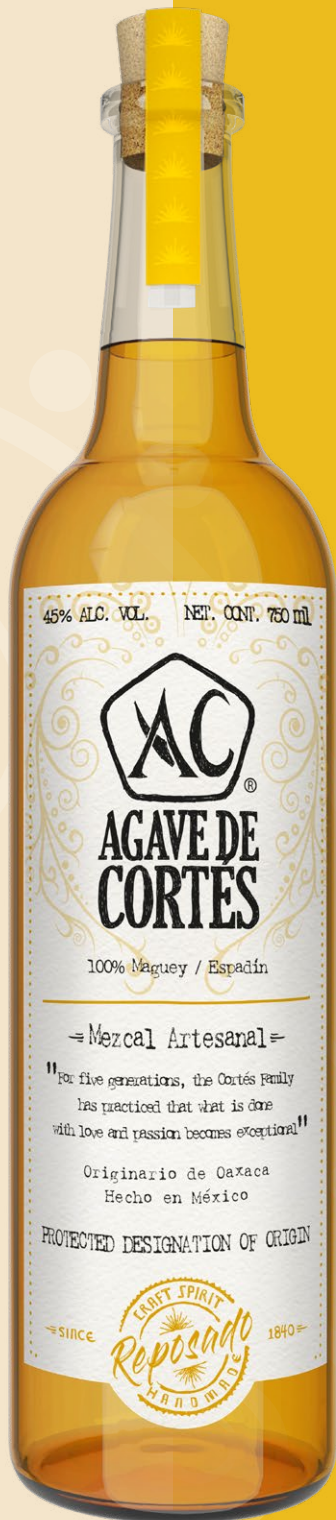


MEZCAL ARTESENÁL NOM - 070

Under the new laws governing the classification of mezcal, Agave de Cortés Joven is classified as **Mezcal Artesenal**. The classification requires the following production elements:

- **COOKING:** Agave piñas must be cooked in underground pits or above ground masonry ovens.
- **MILLING:** Wooden mallet, tahona, Chilean/Egyptian mill, cane press, or chipper.
- **FERMENTATION:** Fermentation can be performed in rock pits, in-ground pits, tree trunks, clay urns, wooden vats, or animal hide. The fermentation may include agave fibers.
- **DISTILLATION:** Distillation must be fueled by direct fire beneath a copper or clay boiler or pot still. The head or cap of the still may be made of clay, wood, copper, or stainless steel.





REPOSADO

AGAVE:

100% Espadín

AGE:

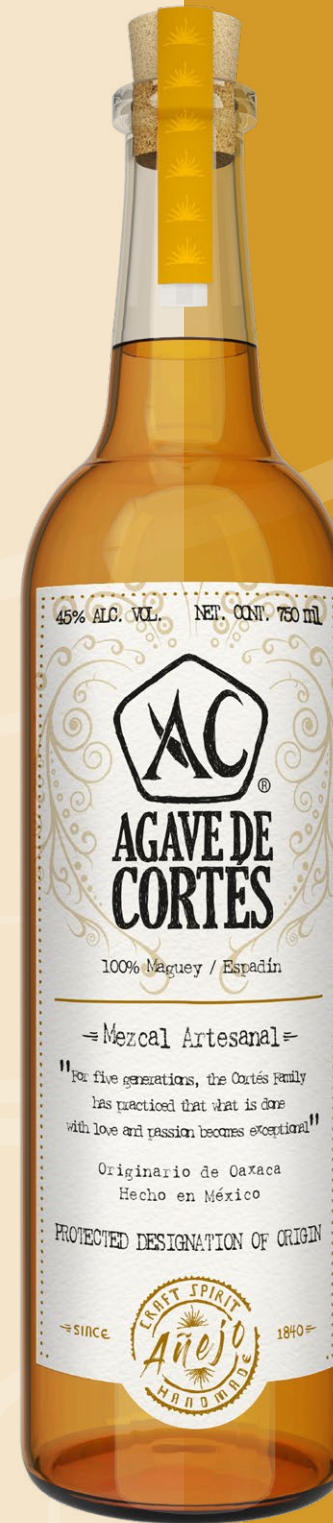
Rested for 2 - 11 months in second fill Bourbon barrels (Charred, American Oak) and second fill Chardonnay barrels (Toasted French Oak)

ABV:

41% - 43%

TASTING NOTES:

The short window of oak aging brings out a smoky richness, with flavors of caramel, crème brûlée, and dusty cocoa. The fresh, fruity agave is prominent with tropical flavors of banana and mango. Baking spices and pepper abound in the long, dry finish.



AÑEJO

AGAVE:

100% Espadín

AGE:

Rested for 18 months in second fill Bourbon barrels (Charred, American Oak) and second fill Chardonnay barrels (Toasted French Oak)

ABV:

41% - 43%

TASTING NOTES:

Extended barrel aging brings out nuttiness and caramelized orange with layers of baking spice and smoked butterscotch, which complement the stewed tropical fruit and brightness of the agave.

AGAVE DE CORTÉS AGED MEZCALS



Under NOM-070, the recently amended laws governing classification and labeling, mezcal can be aged for different amounts of time, and its category reflects how old it is:

JOVEN

“young” or unaged in wood or glass.

REPOSADO

“rested” i.e. aged in oak for two months to one year

AÑEJO

“aged” in oak between one and three years

EXTRA AÑEJO

this classification no longer exists under the new NOM



AGAVE DE CORTÉS AGED MEZCALS

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The tradition of aging mezcals goes back generations. Producers originally used barrels to transport their mezcal to markets in the eight regions of Oaxaca. Glass was too expensive, fragile, and hard to transport, so barrels became the standard.

Like other spirits, barrel aging softens mezcal's edges, adding a richness and light golden hue. Casa Cortés only ages mezcal made with the Espadín agave. Aged mezcals offer another expression of mezcal.





OUR PRODUCERS:
**FRANCISCO
CORTÉS
HERNANDEZ**

Francisco Cortés Hernandez is a maestro mezcalero living in his hometown in Santiago Matatlán. For most of his life, Francisco Cortés worked closely on the palenques with his father Don José. While in his 30's, Francisco helped Don José restore the palenque he owned as a young man. Francisco is now the owner and caretaker of his father's original palenque, the site of numerous Cortés family stories and folklore. With four decades of experience making mezcal, Francisco earned his own title as a maestro mezcalero in the Cortés family.





OUR PRODUCERS:
**FRANCISCO
CORTÉS
HERNANDEZ**

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VILLAGE:

Santiago Matatlán

FERMENTATION:

Open air, in wood tanks

AGAVE:

Espadín

DISTILLATION:

Twice distilled in copper
pot stills

HARVEST:

By hand

PROOFING:

Adjusted to 45% with
local source water

COOKING:

Pit Oven

MILLING:

Mule-drawn Tahona



PRODUCTION PROCESS: HARVEST

Espadín agaves take anywhere from 7 - 10 years to mature prior to being harvested, which occurs around the time that the plant begins to reproduce. At that time, an agave will shoot up a large stalk called a quote, eventually bearing seeds and bulbs. A mezcalero normally allows the quote grow for around two months prior to cutting (*capón*). The plant will often be left to generate more sugar for a short window prior to being fully uprooted and sheared. Only the piña is used in production of mezcal, although the *pencas*, or leaves, have many uses and are often utilized as fuel for stills or for cooking.





PRODUCTION PROCESS: ROAST

After the piñas are harvested, they are transported from the field to the palenque. An earthen pit oven is prepared by building a roaring fire, often days in advance, to heat the stones lining the pit. Once red hot, the piñas are piled inside and quickly covered with a protective layer, followed by a mass of dirt to insulate the oven, creating an intensely hot earthen pressure cooker.

Without roasting, the wild yeast introduced during fermentation will be unable to break down the complex starches. After cooking for several days, the complex sugars in the agave piñas have been converted into simple sugars, ready for milling and fermentation.



THE RAW
MATERIAL:
**AGAVE,
ESPADÍN**

Agave Espadín was selected long ago as the agave species that would be the backbone of the mezcal industry.

90% of the mezcal that makes it to market is made from the Espadín agave. Thus, it is highly cultivated in various regions.

Several factors contribute to Espadín's attractiveness as a staple in mezcal production:

1. Relatively short maturation period
2. Large size increases yield
3. High sugar content
4. Adaptability to various environments and microclimates





PRODUCTION PROCESS: MILLING

Once the agaves are roasted, they must be crushed prior to fermentation. Agave flesh is dense, with much of the sugar inaccessible to the yeasts and bacteria that will affect it during fermentation. To unlock the cooked sugars, mezcaleros often use the crushing weight of a tahona stone, pulled by a mule or donkey.



PRODUCTION PROCESS: FERMENTATION

After the agaves are crushed, they are transferred to fermentation tanks, with local source water added, so that the ambient yeast and bacteria can get to work. During fermentation, these yeasts consume the sugars in the agave and, as a byproduct, excrete carbon dioxide and alcohol. After fermentation, the overall fermented agave “beer” is approximately 16 - 20% abv.



PRODUCTION PROCESS: DISTILLATION

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The fermented agave mash is distilled twice in copper stills, set atop a wood-oven. As the spirit evaporates and rises in the still, it is trapped and run through a serpentine pipe submerged in cold water, causing the spirit vapors to condense into liquid form.

After the first distillation, the spirit is approximately 37% abv, and increases to approximately 45% - 55% upon the second distillation.





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DIXEEBE!

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For Oaxacans, mezcal is much more than just an alcoholic beverage. Mezcal represents families and culture. The work is difficult and generations of tradition go into each batch.

The work Dixeebe (dee-shee-bay) is Zapotec word that signifies gratitude... for Mother Earth, for each other, and for each unique moment that we share the gift of mezcal.

