

Delivery #1 - April 2020

A note on these exceptional times:

Thanks again for joining this journey. It's a concept born out of desire for more time and space to get into the details of these fascinating spirits with a group that really appreciates them.

Now we all find ourselves locked-down and socially isolated it feels more appropriate than ever to build this little community offering the most fascinating drinks in the world to your door.

With all physical events unavoidably cancelled in the face of Covid-19, it's prompted me to think about what can be done remotely... and actually an online meet-up and drinking session could be a great fit for this club anyway, given we're all spread around the UK and even Europe. I'm working on that idea and will update soon.

Your packages were collected by UPS on Thursday and should be with you very soon. Please do keep in mind that these are not normal times and I guess there could be delays, but you should have received a tracking number to keep an eye on it. Any issues of course let us know.

Also a reminder that this is the beta launch of the M.A.S. concept, so the style of this email and the packages you receive your bottles in are liable to change. The really good news for you as an original member is that if the price rises in the future you will stay on the original price :)

Lastly, I am personally out in Mexico right now. The plan was to be writing this email from home, but this global pandemic has kind of gotten in the way. I've managed to organise the postage of the packages, but unfortunately the number of full size bottles of these first 2 distillates available on the members shop is going to be very restricted until I make it home. Hope you can understand logistics have been tricky to say the least!

Ok... now on to the details you've been waiting for....

Cheers!

Jon - Founder

- Distillate #1 -

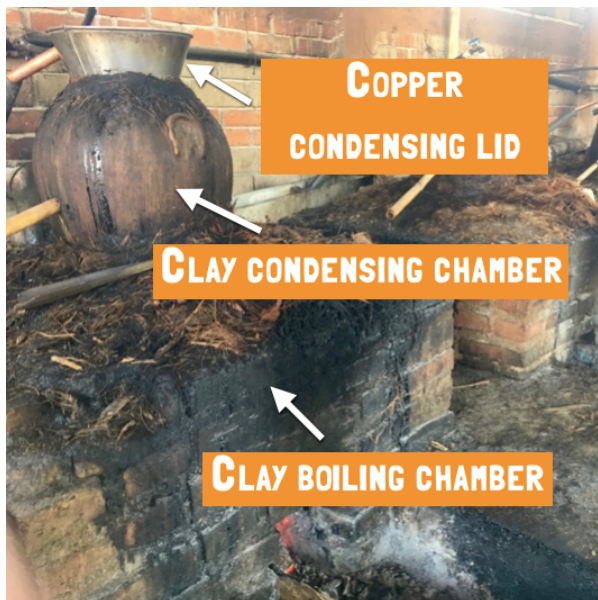


Info:

Felix is one of a number in his family to make mezcal in the town of Santa Catarina Minas. Others include Lalo Angeles of Mezcal Lalocura, and Lorenzo & Edgar Angeles for the brand Real Minero. Minas is known for its ancestral methods, with all the towns' producers (I think there's 7) distilling in small clay pots.

Felix cooks his agave in a traditional mezcal horno (oven), an earthen pit. He then crushes the cooked agave the old fashioned way, with a heavy wooden mallet. The cooked, crushed, sweet agave fibres are then open-air fermented in a large slatted wooden vat known as a tina – you can see one behind Felix in the picture above. Finally, the fermented mash is twice distilled in the small clay pots.

Felix uses a lot of different agave varieties and produces pure expressions as well as various ensembles. If you're ever in Oaxaca he's relatively easy to visit - just an hour or so outside of the city - and he's not shy to offer as many tastings as you can handle. Here we've chosen to showcase his pure Tobaziche, as a direct comparison to this month's other distillate.



The brick wall is build around the clay pot boiling chamber and needs to be broken down and re-built every time the pot cracks.

This could be anywhere between once a month to once a year, depending on the care taken by the producer to avoid rapid temperature changes... and to not stick a pitch fork through it when changing out the agave.

An agave leaf is suspended in the clay cooling chamber to catch droplets of mezcal as they drip from the low point of the underside of the copper condensing lid, which is full of cold water.

The leaf funnels the finished mezcal into the bamboo shoot, and out of the still.



Part of the Karwinski family of agave. Tobaziche (also know as Largo) grows long and tall, rather than circular like most agaves.

The karwinski family in general tend to have a lower sugar content that the Espadín (the most common agave), and have more earthy and grassy flavours.

Availability:

MEMBER EXCLUSIVE – extremely limited bottles available (4 or 5).
Unfortunately showing as sold out until Jon makes it back from Mexico. We'll let you know as soon as that happens :)

M.A.S. SHOP

– Distillate #2 –



Info:

Maestro Sergio Juárez Patricio and his son Luis Enrique keep a small palenque (mezcal distillery) in the back garden of the family home in San Agustín Amatengo, in the Ejuta district of Oaxaca.

While still in the central valleys of Oaxaca, maybe 20 miles as the crow flies from Felix in Minas, the style of production here is entirely different. Sergio cooks his agave in the same earthen pit, and also ferments in a wooden tina. But instead of hand crushing he uses the huge tahona (stone wheel) you can see in his picture – so big it takes two bulls to pull around the central column (which incidentally is made from an old car axle!).

The major difference here is the distillation, which in Amatengo is done in a classic copper alembic still, with a refrescador.

Sergio also produces with a number of different agaves. We bought a few litres of an exceptional ensemble too, but this delicious pure tobaziche was chosen as a direct comparison to Felix's.



The refreshador is a water bath around the condensing chamber of the still. The cold water keeps the condensing chamber at a lower temperature, so it takes longer for the vapour inside to heat to a point of being able to escape into the cooling coil.

This has the effect of producing a liquid at higher abv. After a second distillation this batch came out at a very punchy 57%.

The water in the bath heats up over time and therefore stops having the cooling effect on the vapours. So the plug on the refreshador is regularly pulled and the bath refilled... refreshed... refreshador.



Availability:

We produced 81 bottles of Serigo's tobaziche. It's available from Masters of Malt for £60.95, from our public shop for £56.00, or via the M.A.S. shop for £42.00 (25% members discount). Again there's a small supply issue until Jon returns from Mexico. For the moment there's just 4 bottles available on the members shop :)

M.A.S. SHOP

Remember the password to the M.A.S. shop: MASMASMAS

SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

DO YOU PREFER #1 or #2?!

Our thought's:

I want to reiterate at this point that, just like the Sin Gusano bars and the M.A.S. events, this is not supposed to be a place for us to tell you what to think or taste.... rather it's a forum to open the discussion. Having said that, I'll go ahead and kick that discussion off:

I think this is a fascinating side-by-side tasting, and I always knew I wanted it to be the first pairing for the subscription. These two producers live little more than 20 miles away from each other, in the very similar climate of the central Oaxaca valley. It's entirely possible that they source their agave from the same land. Yet have a taste of these two distillates and you would hardly believe it. So for me, a lot of the difference you can taste has to come down to the distillation style – clay pot v's refrescador.

In both distillates you can pick up that classic earthy and grassy karwinski profile. But in Felix's clay pot a lot of the green freshness has been muted, with extra earthiness added. While in Sergio's refrescador those green tones have been sharpened and turned up to 11. For me this is a great example of what the natural (and slightly porous) materials add/take from the flavour, and the difference between that and the far more closed circuit of a factory built copper still.

When I first tasted and decided to buy Sergio's batch, I thought it was probably around 46-48% abv. It's only after the lab test I found out it was as high as 57%. I think it's amazingly smooth for 57%. As a general rule, the "bigger" and more unusual flavours live within the oils found in the higher alcohol levels.

In certified mezcal terms, Felix's is "ancestral", while Sergio's is "artisanal", although none of the Sin Gusano distillates are actually certified, which is why we label them as "agave spirits" rather than mezcal. The certification debate is for the months ahead. For now I'll leave them with you to contemplate your palate and preferences.

Salud amigos – Jon



Remember that members also get priority access to M.A.S. tasting events

Unfortunately they're all on ice at the moment due to Corona Virus. But we're working on an online met-up and will send more info asap.



UPGRADE TO A FULL SIZE BOTTLE NOW



Sin Gusano, London, N16 8AY, UK

[Unsubscribe](#)