



Finca La Metate

Oaxaca, Sierra Sur, Teojomulco, Mexico

Partner since: 2017

Traceable to: Single Finca, run by Beto and Eliel Lopez (father and son)

Altitude: 1500 MASL

Varietals: Typica La Pluma

Processing: Home processed: cherries are pulped, dry fermented, and washed before drying on raised beds.

Harvest: December January February

Booking: March April May June

Arrivals: May June July

Community Context

Oaxacan coffee is grown on small plots spread over a large, diverse range. Well, three ranges actually. Oaxaca is where the Sierra Madre del Sur and Sierra Mixteca ranges come together to form the Sierra Madre Occidental as it heads north. Guadalupe Miramar is right here at this intersection. It's an active Mixteca community, the Mixtec name for the place being Ñuñume (meaning above the clouds). At 5700 feet, steep slopes capture the Pacific mists and feed an otherwise arid pine forest. This is home to some of Mexico's finest coffees and strongest farmer groups.

This is the heartland of La Pluma, a region rich with coffee tradition. And this group is no different. It's more of a collection of individuals brought together by one family. Roman and Eliel Benito Roman Lopez are a father-son team that organizes collections from their Zapotec-speaking neighbors. Once a season these neighbors come from up to five hours away to deliver their harvest. It's a matter of trust and tradition – these networks are how coffee has come down-mountain for over 5 generations.

Country Context

Mexico is for coffee lovers. Few origins offer such variety, such competency, and such short flights to

the farm. While often overlooked by their neighbors to the north, Mexico is the world's 7th largest coffee producer, the largest exporter of organic coffees, and a fast-growing consumer of specialty coffee.

Seventy percent of Mexico's crop comes from larger estates, concentrated around Veracruz, with the remaining thirty percent coming from 2 million smallholders, spread around the country but mostly in the Southern States of Chiapas and Oaxaca.

This is also where we find most of Mexico's indigenous population, communities who moved higher and higher up-mountain, onto smaller and smaller plots of land, first to get away from colonial Spain, and later pushed by larger landowners during decades of highly political land reforms. In this way Mexico's agrarian, coffee and Puebla movements are intertwined.

Though coffee arrived into Mexico two centuries earlier, it did not take off until the late 20th century. In the 1970s a farmer friendly government came to power and encouraged smallholder production. Coffee exports skyrocketed nearly ten-fold over the next two decades. However, in the middle of this growth the government had to default on debt, cut back programs, and end a decade of federal support for smallholders. Price, markets and credit dwindled to drips – and on top of that – we got some Roya too. Oh, and did we mention the condition of the peso?

Into this distressed situation we see the rise of the coyote; middle-men who build truckloads of coffee up from 1-5 bag household level. Still today, buyers look for points of aggregation that can cut out middle-men but still give them access to volumes.