



## Santiago Sochiltepec

## Sierra Sur, Oaxaca, Mexico

**Partner since:** 2021

**Traceable to:** Individual  
Households

**Altitude:** 1700 - 1750 MASL

**Varietals:** Typica La Pluma,  
Bourbon, Caturra, Mundo Novo

**Processing:** Fully washed with  
12-24 hour delayed pulping,  
followed by 24-36 hours of wet  
fermentation (in wood or stone  
tanks) before washing and  
drying on raised beds and patios  
for an average of 15 days, after  
which it is stored in a farmers'  
house until delivery to Oaxaca  
City.

**Harvest:** December January February

**Booking:** March April May June

**Arrivals:** May June July



Santiago Sochiltepec is a town of one thousand people, 420 indigenous Zapoteca households and 80 cell phones. It's also the most populated town in the entire municipality, which spans the Sierra Madre mountain range that separates Oaxaca's Central Valley from the Pacific Coast. This area is cooled by pine forests, evening fog and morning dew – making it the perfect climate for coffee. It's not chance that this is the heart of Mexico's famous La Pluma region, home to the Typica varietal of the same name and now protected as a recognized geographic indicator. Farmers from Sochiltepec are turning on to specialty one by one, and for advice they turn to Terra Coffeas.

Terra Coffeas Mexico is a new (2022) collaboration to bring 80 years of operational expertise from the mill to export – in the form of long-time family-business Galguera Gomez – together with fresh perspectives from a young, CQI-calibrated team of on-the-ground mobilizers – led by the passionate Frida Mendoza. Their team includes engineers, agronomists, biologists, chemists, cuppers, artists and, of course, coffee lovers, all together for the common goal of agroecológico – the intentional purposing of international standards for quality, productivity and traceability, towards the advancement of local cultural practices, environmental resources, and economic outcomes.

This group is on the ground, investing their time and advancing producers consultancy services, well before the harvest begins. They have a narrow focus that allows them to truly partner with producers, reviewing farm, processing and export processes as a peer. While visiting the farms, Terra Coffeas staff also look to the household. They work with producers to fill out a customized family work plan that recognizes roles related to harvest and processing, and offer to pay an additional premium for women-produced coffees. And this is such a coffee, where women producers received an addition .15 – .20 USD / KG premium (2022).



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 consumers 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 Royo 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.