



**Ensamble Madrecuixe + Espadín | June 2019 | Ranulfo García Pacheco | Fall 2020
Release | ENSRAN2006 | 246 Bottles**

Born in 1957 and raised in the community of El Sauz, Ranulfo García Pacheco makes some of the finest agave spirits in Miahuatlán. Ranulfo and his wife Carmela are farmers, dedicated to cultivating the *criollo* varieties of corn, beans, and squash that make up the backbone of the Oaxacan diet. Oranges, limes, lemongrass, and passionfruit surround his palenque in El Sauz, and on nearby family land, Ranulfo cultivates the Espadín, Bicuixe, and Madrecuixe he uses to produce his exquisite spirits. In typical fashion, the agaves are generally mixed to compose each batch, but every year sees one or two “single” maguey productions. After recently marrying and having a baby girl, his youngest son, Ranulfo Jr., has returned to the ranch with his family and assists his father around the *palenque*.

Ranulfo works his *palenque* only once a year, fermenting and distilling in the hot months of April-June, before the heavy rains arrive and when the consistent ambient temperatures result in more stable fermentation and a higher yield. When it comes time to work, the family and trusted assistant roast just a single batch of homegrown agave in his conical earthen oven, which they then craft into the 600-800 liters of high-proof spirits they will produce that year. The family built an ox-drawn stone mill *tahona* in the early 1990’s which continues to be their preferred method of macerating the cooked maguey.

In the final week of May and beginning of June 2019, the family made two different and nearly identical field blends using both Espadín and Madrecuixe in equal proportions. Working four vats in pairs of two, the batches were split according to when the *guarape*, or fermented mash, was ready for distillation. The contents and recipes are essentially the same, varying only in slightly different fermentation times with a marginally different final ABV and total yield. In preparing this 200-liter batch, the first of the two, Ranulfo and his son selected a mix of 20 *capón* Espadín agaves and 25 *capón* Madrecuixe from their *tierra blanca* and *tierra colorada* lands. After resting the freshly harvested maguey in the sun for over a week, the *piñas* were pit roasted with local mesquite wood for four days. The unearthed maguey was set to rest for eight

more days before being crushed by a massive ox-drawn stone mill. The collected juices of sweet, cooked agave *miel*, along with the fibers, were left to ferment for 48 hours in two 1,200L capacity *sabino* wood tanks before being mixed with around 400 liters of well water. Wet fermentation continued under watchful eyes and finished after ten days.

As is custom in their village, Ranulfo and family continue to use a *refrescadera* with their copper pot stills. Distilling with a *refrescadera*- a stainless-steel cylinder which is placed around the cap of the still and filled with cold water- can yield a high proof spirit in a single distillation. Doing it well, however, demands a well-learned palate and significant experience. As the fermented *guarape* and fibers boil in the pot below, the vapors rise and with the help of the cold *refrescadera*, condense and fall back into the boiler pot below. There they are heated again before they finally pass through the copper condensing coil and, now liquid, fall into the containers the *maestro* has set to capture them.

Part of a family recipe, Ranulfo fills his *refrescadera* four times and carefully selects multiple cuts from each run of the still- known as a *postura*. With his cuts, he is principally separating the *perla*-rich "*cordón*" liquid from the tails which he calls *shishe* or *colas*. This *shishe* is in turn mixed into the next *postura* of ready to be distilled fermented agave juices and fibers. To compose each batch, the *maestro* uses only his senses and the classic *palenquero* utensils – a *jicara* and *venencia*.

This *ensamble* is another exemplary representation of his craft and a tangible reflection of the lands where it was made. With the exception of a small amount that has stayed in the NETA reserve, the entirety of this batch has been available exclusively through our partners in California, Pueblo de Sabor.

NETA works closely with several small, family producers and a cooperative of twelve palenqueros from the southern valleys and hills of Miahuatlán, Oaxaca. Situated at the southern tip of the Central Valleys and the foot of the Sierra Madre del Sur mountains, the area is renowned for the strong character of its people, its diverse landscapes, and the rich agricultural and culinary traditions that have been maintained throughout generations. As such, the region has preserved its reputation for producing some of the finest mezcales and agave spirits anywhere in Mexico. The recipes and knowledge have been passed down and shared through family and community ties. Some mezcaleros follow their grandfathers' traditions to the letter, while others experiment to carefully fine-tune the laborious process in accordance with their own tastes, observations, and relationships with the natural world. No two productions can ever be exactly the same as environmental conditions, water, natural yeasts, and soil types all contribute to their nuances just as much as the touch of their maker.