

Born and raised in Caraz, Perú, Marco Suarez Lara grew up seeing agave plants, known there as maguey, as unwanted guests, "giant weeds, growing without permission."

But before globalization gave the region access to cheaper products, the Caral Civilization found maguey an essential tool for everyday life, crafting products from and consuming it since as far back as 5,000 years ago. 16th Century Mexican chronologist Gutiérrez de Santa Clara said, "everything that mother earth could provide to live and thrive as a human race, she put into this plant, from clothing... to eating and drinking and even for healing." Through modernization, though, pre-colombian traditions of maguey use have been slowly lost in Peruvian culture.

It wasn't until a trip to Mexico in 1996 that Marco saw the agave as a treasured, sacred plant, recognizing its majesty after experiencing the exquisite distillates it produced. Until Marco brought Aqará to fruition twenty years later, the agaves of the Andean Mountains of Perú remained asleep, waiting for someone to come and wake them. Marco and his team now work to transform those same mature, wild agaves into a beautiful spirit that pays tribute to its place of origin.

"Agave spirits are closely associated with Mexico. Agave, however, grows all over the Americas – from the desert southwest of the US to the Andean highlands of South America.

Already, distillers from Texas to Peru are crafting agave-based spirits from locally grown agave. Aqará, for example, is a Peruvian agave spirit produced from agave grown in the Peruvian highlands. Look for more, non-Mexican based, agave-based spirits to emerge over the next few years."

- Joseph V. Micallef, Forbes

Aqará is at the forefront of the next wave, expanding the agave category. With their own unique production techniques, rather than simply trying to imitate tequila or mezcal, we are beginning to see how producers from various agave growing regions are able to express terroir through agave.

Fast Facts

Origin: Caraz, Perú

Agave: Ensamble of Americana Expansa Gentry and Cordillerensis

Harvest: ~10 years (24° brix)

Crush: Cut by hand using a machete into 1-2 inch cubes

Cook: 7 hours (mash tun using a steam jacket) with local filtered water

Fermentation: Stainless steel tanks using dry yeasts and 5-10% of the bagazo (leftover agave fibers); for 12 hours anaerobic and a further 60 hours aerobic

Distillation: Double in two copper pot stills (120 and 150 liters respectively)

Resting: Plateado/Agreste at least 3 months; Reposado 4 months in new American Oak barrels

Yield: 18 kilos of wild agave will yield 1 liter of spirit. Reposado loses ~7% angel's share.

Agreste: Leave 1/2" more verde on the agave at harvest, adding more distinct agave flavor in the resulting distillate

