



## Our Story

All mezcalera families from Santiago Matatlán (Oaxaca, Mexico) have something in common. That is, the history of the first generations dedicated to this age-old artisanal activity. These generations learnt together on the Sphas hill, where the first mezcal palenque was established. This hill was the ideal location to do so, because of the great springs of water that benefited the mezcal production.

This heritage is part of the Santiago Hernández family, all in all. The lineage is carried by Leoncio and Octavia, both fourth-generation mezcal producers, respectively. Let us elaborate on both stories...

# The Santiago Family

## Don Leoncio's Story

It all started with Julián Santiago (1st generation), who taught his son Rosalino Santiago (2nd generation) the mezcal tradition. Rosalino was a farmer and a mezcalero. He actively worked the land by sowing agave and other seeds. He had three daughters and one son.

Rosalino's wife, Petrona Sernas, passed away when their youngest son was only a baby. As fate would have it, Rosalino also passed when the youngest was still very little, only nine years old.

The three daughters married and started their own lives, leaving the youngest son, Anastasio Santiago Sernas (3rd generation), by himself.

Anastasio faced the challenge to continue learning on his own, and carry on without his father. During this time, he used to look up at the sky and ask God to enlighten his life and show him the path.

Some elders in the community advised Anastasio to continue the work his father started. And so he did. First, he worked the land and crops. Later, he acquired large heads of cattle. Finally, slowly but surely, he perfected the technique to produce mezcal from the memories he kept of his childhood.

Money was scarce, so he worked all kinds of jobs for the town's people. His payment was occasionally in kind. Sometimes it was a tool or a piece of equipment he needed to establish the palenque. Anastasio recalls, "There was a kind man who employed me, he saw I always made an effort and I wanted to keep going. He gifted me an old set of containers. With my savings, I got a distillation pot. The process was slow but eventually my Palenque came together."

In 1960, when Anastasio was 20 years old, he got married to Josefina Hernández Cortés. They started a family together. He also started putting more work into the palenque and when the family grew, they all got involved. The eight sons learnt from Anastasio the complete process: from the plantation of agave to the mezcal manufacturing.

Out of the eight sons, one of them is Leoncio Santiago (4th generation). He is the fifth son of Anastasio aka "Don Tacho". Leoncio was keen on working at the palenque. He preferred to go there and spend his days in the field instead of attending school.

When Leoncio was 12 years old, he knew most of the mezcal elaboration process and he constantly practiced it. He was able to absorb all the knowledge and wisdom of the mezcal tradition.

When he was 24, Leoncio migrated to the United States in search of the American dream. His hard work allowed him to send money back home, so Don Tacho was able to invest more in the crops and buy more equipment, like a tractor, which would later prove to be very useful for their work.





# The Hernández Family

## Doña Octavia's Story

The Hernández family has a different story. Octavia Hernández (4th generation), our mezcal producer, is the youngest out of eight siblings. In spite of being a woman, when she was very little, she learnt alongside her five sisters how to manufacture mezcal. The oldest sisters knew how to work the kitchen, as well as the palenque activities, such as stirring the containers and distilling. The brothers did go to school and worked.

Unlike her brothers, Octavia learnt the theory behind the practice. She developed the ability to tell if each part of the process was going well and, whenever it was not, fix it promptly. Octavia never intended to learn the craft, it happened naturally while she was enjoying herself, playing and spending time with her father, Antonio Hernández (3rd generation). These experiences provided her with knowledge she never thought she would apply.

This is where the story gets interesting. Antonio Hernández Romero got married to Teodora Santiago Hernández. Originally, the mezcal legacy came from Teodora's part of the family. Antonio's parents were only dedicated to fieldwork. When Teodora and Antonio married, Taurino Santiago (2nd generation), Antonio's father-in-law taught him the mezcal manufacturing process. In turn, Taurino also learnt from his father-in-law José Hernández (1st generation) father to Antonia Hernández, his wife.

Therefore, the family's mezcal heritage passed on by José Hernández, was actually transmitted by the women. **Their fathers were mezcaleros who chose to teach this artisanal manufacturing craft to the men their daughters married.**

Despite the times in which all of this took place, when it was known that men had more rights, women in this family held an essential role, which earned them the respect and equality they deserved. All Hernández women, including Octavia, contributed their knowledge and wisdom to the art of the mezcal tradition.





# The fourth generation, creating Dainzú®

Don Leoncio and Doña Octavia, 4th generation respectively, decided to join their lives in marriage on January 30th, 2000 after a decade-long relationship. On December 12th, of the same year, **they decided to start their own mezcal factory where all the knowledge from both sides of the marriage would be applied.**

Both of them represent, with great honor, the fourth generation of two families dedicated to the mezcal tradition and, through their union, they combine the knowledge and love for said tradition, which is captured in each drop of mezcal they distill.

Since the beginning, our commitment and love for the culture and art of mezcal manufacturing have been the most important principles at Dainzú® mezcal factory.

Dainzú is a word from the zapotec indigenous language; it means “the mountain with thorny plants.”

Don Leoncio and Octavia, **who plant each agave as equals**, make sure all their love is part of the process. When the agave plant bears its fruit, the mezcal is filled with tradition, the heritage of four generations and the guarantee of being the best of the matateca land.

The seeds of love and mezcal are currently being sown: Don Leoncio and Doña Octavia’s sons and daughters. Their children are honoring the 5th generation of mezcaleros. They uphold the commitment to preserve and maintain their heritage. They wish to make the tradition their own and learn from the words and actions their parents share about the art of mezcal manufacturing, which





**DAINZU**<sup>®</sup>

Leoncio Santiago & Octavia Hernández and family.

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