

# The Eye



**Beach, Village + Urban Living in Mexico**

***San Miguel de Allende · Issue 6***

***July 2026***

**FREE**

## **MEXICO'S LITTLE CORNWALL**

**How Cornish miners gave Mexico its football obsession**

**Patronato Pro Niños: 55 Years of Caring for Local Children**

**A Creative Home Base for Artists**

**Can Mexican Wine Survive Climate Change?**



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# Editor's Letter

**"Our true nationality is humankind."**

— H.G. Wells

**W**e are in the midst of World Cup fever. What is more Mexican than El Tri? And yet, when we dig a little deeper, we discover that football itself is an import. The game arrived in Mexico with Cornish miners in the nineteenth century and was gradually adopted, adapted, and embraced until it became something undeniably Mexican.

At what point do the blurry lines of otherness disappear? I find myself thinking about this often. Maybe because I have spent so much of my life living somewhere other than where I was born. Over the years I have been called a tourist, a traveller, an immigrant, and occasionally the word that makes me cringe the most: expat. What is the difference, exactly?

An immigrant moves somewhere permanently. An expat plans to leave? A traveller keeps moving? A displaced person had no choice? The definitions seem straightforward until you start looking closely. Then they begin to fall apart. Is it intention that matters? Money? Privilege? Time? And what about the rest of us?

Aren't we all being displaced constantly? We move across countries and continents, but also through relationships, careers, beliefs, identities, and stages of life. The person I was at twenty is not the person writing this today. Sometimes the biggest migrations happen without ever crossing a border.

Perhaps movement is not the exception. Perhaps it is the human condition. The World Cup offers a fascinating reminder of this. National teams are presented as symbols of identity and belonging, yet many of their players have roots stretching across multiple countries and continents. Some were born in one place and represent another. Some hold dual citizenship. Some choose to play for the country of their parents or grandparents rather than the one where they were born.

These teams reflect a deeply interconnected world shaped by migration, colonial history, family ties, opportunity, and choice. And yet we remain remarkably attached to the question of origin.

Where are you from? Sometimes even when someone answers, it is not enough. "No, where are you really from?" As if birthplace alone could explain a person.

In this age of rapid technological change, global travel, and lives that increasingly unfold across multiple places, I sometimes wonder why we continue to use the location where someone first slipped into the world as one of our primary measures of identity.

Who are you really? Perhaps that is the more interesting question. The World Cup reminds us that identity is rarely as simple as a flag, a passport, or a place on a map. We are all shaped by where we come from, but also by where we go, who we love, what we learn, and the communities we choose along the way.

The older I get, the less interested I become in where people are from and the more interested I become in who they are.

Have a great July!

*Jane*

## The Eye Team

**Editor: Jane Bauer**

**Writers: Jane Bauer, Estefanía Camacho, Sunnie Collins, Alicia Flores, Melissa Lyon, Carole Reedy, Kato Rempel, Jordan Sánchez Armenta, Sharron Schwartz, Mark Shaff, Michael Solof, Kary Vannice**

**Cover Image: Argelis Rebolledo  
Photography/Art: Ben Indi, Kato Rempel, Jordan Sánchez Armenta, Michael Solof, Various Artists**

**Distribution: Juan Antonio Arias  
Layout: Jane Bauer**

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**We welcome submissions and input.  
To get involved send us an email.  
[TheEyeMexico@gmail.com](mailto:TheEyeMexico@gmail.com)**

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# Patronato Pro Niños: More Than 55 Years of Caring for San Miguel's Children

By Sunnie Collins and Mark Shaff

**F**or more than 55 years, Patronato Pro Niños has been helping ensure that children from economically disadvantaged families in San Miguel de Allende and the surrounding rural communities have access to the healthcare they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

What began in 1970 as a community effort to provide blankets and clothing to families in need has evolved into one of the region's most respected charitable organizations. Today, Patronato Pro Niños provides free, high-quality medical, dental, psychological, and social services to thousands of children and adolescents each year.

The organization's founders, including community visionary Stirling Dickinson, recognized that healthy children are the foundation of a healthy community. Over the decades, Patronato Pro Niños has continually adapted its services to meet the changing needs of local families, expanding from basic assistance to comprehensive healthcare programs that reach children who might otherwise go without care.

One of the hallmarks of Patronato Pro Niños is its commitment to serving children where they live. Through a fleet of mobile medical and dental units, healthcare professionals travel throughout rural communities, bringing services directly to schools and villages that often have limited access to healthcare. In 2024 alone, Patronato Pro Niños provided more than 13,000 consultations and traveled nearly 14,000 kilometers to deliver care. The organization continues to expand its reach as demand for services grows throughout the region.



Patronato Pro Niños focuses on four core service areas: medical care, dental care, psychological services, and social work. These services are complemented by educational programs that help children and families understand the importance of good nutrition, dental hygiene, preventive healthcare, and emotional well-being.

In recent years, the organization has seen a growing need for mental health support, particularly among children and adolescents in rural communities. Teachers, school administrators, and community leaders have increasingly identified psychological care as one of the most urgent needs facing local youth. In response, Patronato Pro Niños has expanded its psychological services and is working to further increase access to care through additional mobile outreach and staffing.

The organization also continues to explore innovative ways to address unmet healthcare needs. One exciting new initiative is the introduction of the USee Vision Kit program, a pilot project designed to provide vision screening and affordable eyeglasses to children in the field. Good vision plays a critical role in educational success, and the program has the potential to help hundreds of children who may never have received a vision exam. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of donors, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners.

One of Patronato Pro Niños' most successful fundraising initiatives is the Heart to Heart Charity Bazaar. For decades, volunteers and supporters have helped transform donated goods into support that directly benefits the organization's healthcare programs. The Bazaar has become a beloved community institution, creating opportunities for residents and visitors alike to contribute to the well-being of local children.



Another unique fundraising effort is the Historical Walking Tour of San Miguel de Allende. Led by knowledgeable guides, these tours offer participants a fascinating look at the city's rich history while generating funds to support Patronato Pro Niños. Public and private tours are available throughout the year, allowing both visitors and residents to learn more about San Miguel while supporting a worthy cause.

The organization's annual Gala has also become one of San Miguel's premier charitable events. Bringing together supporters from across the community, the Gala combines entertainment, fellowship, and philanthropy while raising critical funds for the organization's programs. Recent Galas have been extraordinarily successful, and the organization continually strives to raise the bar each year in both quality and impact.

Throughout the year, Patronato Pro Niños also hosts concerts, special events, and community activities that raise awareness and generate additional support for its mission. These events not only provide financial resources but also strengthen the sense of community that has been central to the organization's success for more than five decades.

Patronato Pro Niños is recognized in Mexico as a Donataria Autorizada, allowing it to issue Mexican tax-deductible facturas for qualifying donations. Supporters in the United States may contribute through Pro Niños USA, a registered 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides U.S. tax-deductible receipts. Canadian donors can also make tax-deductible contributions through Amistad Canada, which supports charitable organizations working throughout Mexico, including Patronato Pro Niños.

As San Miguel de Allende continues to grow and evolve, Patronato Pro Niños remains committed to its mission of helping every child access the healthcare they need to build a healthier future. More than 55 years after its founding, the organization continues to demonstrate what can happen when a community comes together to care for its children.

## **Learn More About Patronato Pro Niños Patronato Pro Niños**

Providing free medical, dental, psychological, and social services to children in San Miguel de Allende and surrounding rural communities for more than 55 years.

### **Websites**

#### **Patronato Pro Niños**

[www.patronatoproninos.org](http://www.patronatoproninos.org)

#### **Historical Walking Tour**

[www.historicalwalkingtour.org](http://www.historicalwalkingtour.org)

#### **Heart to Heart Charity Bazaar**

[www.heart2heartcharity.org](http://www.heart2heartcharity.org)

#### **U.S. Tax-Deductible Donations**

[www.proninosusa.org](http://www.proninosusa.org)

#### **Canadian Tax-Deductible Donations**

[www.amistadcanada.org](http://www.amistadcanada.org)

### **Ways to Support**

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- Shop, donate, or volunteer with Heart to Heart
- Attend the Annual Gala and other fundraising events



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# Spice of Life: Unpacking the Heat of San Miguel de Allende

By Michael Solof

**S**an Miguel de Allende is not just a feast for the eyes with its cobblestone streets and stunning architecture; it's also a culinary haven, especially when it comes to the use of spices. The history of spices in this region tells a story of cultural exchange and adaptation, revealing how local and international influences have shaped the way we experience flavor and heat in our food today.

I've got a lot of territory to cover in this month's article. In researching the history and uses of both traditional and non-traditional spices in Mexican cuisine, I had the pleasure of speaking with Marco Masseroti, Owner and Executive Chef of Casa Nostra; Donnie Masterson, culinary entrepreneur and master chef behind several of the town's dining establishments; and Chef Odin Camacho, an up-and-coming private chef and creative cooking instructor in Querétaro. All generously took time out of their busy schedules to share how they incorporate traditional spices into their cooking and how these ingredients continue to shape the evolving culinary landscape of central Mexico.

## A Brief History of Spices in Mexico

Spices have played an essential role in Mexican cuisine since ancient times. Indigenous peoples, including the Aztecs and Maya, relied heavily on local spices and herbs for both flavor and medicinal purposes. Key ingredients in this early culinary tradition included chili peppers, vanilla, and cacao. When the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, they brought with them a host of spices from Europe, Asia, and Africa, including black pepper, cinnamon, and cloves. This melding of flavors helped shape what we now recognize as traditional Mexican cuisine.

In San Miguel, much of the heat in food comes from local chile varieties, each offering its own unique flavor profile.

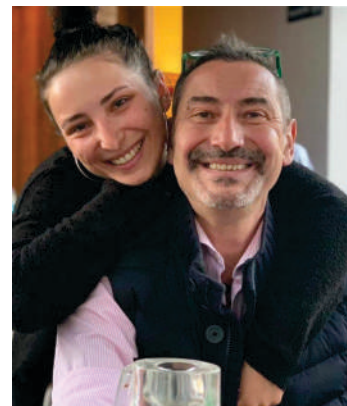
**Jalapeño:** Widely recognized and used, jalapeños add a moderate level of heat to salsas and sauces.

**Serrano:** With a sharper bite, serranos are often used in dishes such as pico de gallo.

**Chipotle:** Smoked and dried jalapeños, chipotles lend a rich, smoky flavor to many traditional dishes.

These peppers are frequently paired with other ingredients to create some of Mexico's most beloved foods. One seasonal favorite is Chiles en Nogada, featuring poblano peppers stuffed with a mixture of meat and fruit, then topped with a creamy walnut sauce and pomegranate seeds. The balance of sweet, savory, and spicy flavors has made it both a local favorite and a symbol of Mexican culinary heritage.

Chef Marco Masseroti, who has been running Casa Nostra for more than eight years, specializes in Italian comfort food but has developed a deep appreciation for Mexican spices.



"I love spices like cumin and oregano that give a lot of flavor without adding a lot of heat from chilies," he says. "Pasilla and Guajillo are two of my favorites to work with. All my spices are sourced locally. Many foreigners have the misconception that all chilies are spicy, but many are much more flavorful than they are hot. A typical mole can cook for over 24 hours, with countless ingredients and spices needed to get the flavor just right."

Chef Donnie Masterson, who moved to San Miguel 24 years ago and is currently celebrating the 18th anniversary of his restaurant, *The Restaurant*, agrees.



"Two of my favorite spices are cumin and coriander seed," he says. "I love cumin for its warmth and versatility, which work beautifully across so many cuisines. I often use it in rubs, especially for pork, because it brings a deep, earthy backbone to a dish. Coriander seed adds brightness and a slightly citrusy note that balances richer flavors. One dish where I use both is an *albóndigas* soup that my Mexican grandmother used to make. It's a Mexican meatball soup layered with cilantro, jalapeños, cumin, and coriander, and it's incredibly comforting and aromatic."

Chef Odin Camacho sees spices as something even more profound.



"My passion stems from understanding that Mexican cuisine is deeply rooted in the intelligent use of spices, not just for their heat but for their complexity," he explains.

“Throughout my training and professional experience, I’ve come to understand that spices are a language: each one tells a story of region, tradition, and technique. That narrative is what continues to inspire me.”

One of Odin’s favorite ingredients is smoked dried chiles, particularly Chilhuacle and Pasilla varieties.

“They add depth beyond just spiciness,” he says. “I like to lightly toast them to release their oils and then incorporate them into sauces, emulsions, or even modern applications like foams or reductions, creating multi-layered flavor profiles.”

He is also passionate about lesser-known regional ingredients such as Querétaro saffron.

“It adds a distinct earthy flavor and vibrant color. It’s fundamental in traditional dishes like Garbanzo en Amarillo, where its presence defines the dish’s identity.”

### Signature Dishes Built on Spice

San Miguel’s culinary scene is rooted in traditional dishes that showcase Mexico’s remarkable spice heritage. While recipes vary from region to region—and often from family to family—certain dishes highlight the depth, complexity, and versatility of the spices that define Mexican cuisine.

**Mole Poblano:** Often referred to as Mexico’s national dish, mole is a complex sauce made from dozens of ingredients, including chiles, chocolate, nuts, seeds, and spices such as cinnamon and cloves. Every family has its own recipe, making each mole a unique expression of tradition.



**Tacos al Pastor:** A local favorite, these tacos feature marinated pork cooked on a vertical spit and served with onions, pineapple, and cilantro. The marinade typically contains a blend of spices that creates the dish’s distinctive sweet, savory, and slightly smoky flavor.



**Tamales:** Wrapped in corn husks and filled with everything from meats to sweet ingredients, tamales are a staple throughout Mexico. The masa itself is often seasoned with spices, adding another layer of flavor to this beloved comfort food.



For Chef Odin Camacho, the quality of the spices behind these dishes is every bit as important as the recipes themselves.

“Quality is everything,” he says. “A fresh, well-preserved spice can completely transform a dish, while a low-quality one flattens it. In Mexican cuisine, where preparations like moles or adobos depend on the complexity of spices, using high-quality ingredients is non-negotiable; it defines the final result.”

Odin believes innovation works best when it begins with a strong understanding of tradition.

“I always start with respect for tradition: the basic structure of the dish. Once that base is well constructed, I allow myself to reinterpret techniques or presentations. For example, I might maintain the classic spice profile of a mole but present it through modern textures or unexpected elements, creating a bridge between heritage and innovation.”

One dish that embodies this philosophy is his deconstructed Chiles en Nogada.

“The blend of spices in the filling—cloves, cinnamon, and pepper—creates a warm, aromatic base that contrasts with the freshness of the walnut sauce. By reinterpreting it with contemporary techniques, the spices become more present and intentional in every bite.”



Technique, he says, is essential.

“Toasting is fundamental, as it activates the essential oils and deepens the flavors. Grinding spices fresh is also key. I also use infusion techniques, incorporating them into fats or liquids to extract more complex nuances and integrate them harmoniously into the dish.” Chef Marco shares a similar philosophy when it comes to creativity in the kitchen.

“Techniques like fermenting garlic versus using regular garlic really help bring out exceptional layers of flavor,” he says. “I work closely with all my chefs, experimenting with different recipes, ingredients, and spices to create new dishes. I’m always on the lookout for new spices to try, both in our restaurant and at home. Every ingredient needs a reason to be on the plate.”

For Marco, spices do far more than season food.

“Spices are storytellers. They tell us about culture, how ingredients are used, how they are treated, and how they are grown. I don’t think there’s any end to blending traditional, centuries-old Mexican techniques with modern international cuisine. My Nonna probably would have killed me for mixing Cannelloni with Mexican meats, but I think it’s important to open new doors.”

Chef Donnie Masterson believes freshness is equally important.

“I always prefer buying whole spices and toasting and grinding them myself with a mortar and pestle. Freshness is everything. Spices lose their potency over time, so I try not to overbuy. Keeping them fresh makes a huge difference in the final dish.” For Masterson, quality spices are often the difference between a good meal and a memorable one.

“The quality of your spices can completely make or break a dish. If your spices are old or stale, you’re not going to get the depth, aroma, or intensity you’re looking for. Fresh spices bring life to food; they create layers, complexity, and balance. Without that, even a well-executed dish can fall flat.”

Whether they are preserving centuries-old traditions or experimenting with new techniques and flavor combinations, San Miguel’s chefs share a common belief: spices are far more than a source of heat. They are an essential part of the stories, cultures, and traditions that continue to shape Mexican cuisine.

For visitors interested in exploring this world for themselves, a walk through Mercado Ignacio Ramírez, a cooking class, or simply a meal at one of the city’s many outstanding restaurants offers a delicious introduction to the flavors that have defined Mexico for centuries.

***Michael Solof leads SMA Adventure Hound, a group which takes locals and newcomers to brunches and dinners at different restaurants every week and he also offers classes in the art of smartphone photography. You can contact him at WhatsApp +1-443-310-9214 for more info and to reserve.***

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# Water Does More Than Just Hydrate; It Heals

By Kary Vannice

Long before anyone measured cortisol in a lab, people were wading into rivers, lakes and streams to let go of what they were carrying. When we think of the health benefits of water, we usually think only of drinking it to stay hydrated. But water does more for us than simply keep us alive. For thousands of years, people have turned to water for more than just survival. They have sought it out for comfort, healing, renewal, purification, and perspective.

In Judaism, the mikvah is a ritual bath used not for hygiene but for spiritual cleansing and transformation. In Islam, wudu prepares the body and mind for prayer through ritual washing. In Hinduism, bathing in the Ganges is believed to purify the soul and release old burdens. Christian baptism symbolizes death and rebirth, the letting go of one identity and the emergence of another.

And here in Mexico, water has played a similarly powerful role.

The Maya viewed cenotes as sacred portals to Xibalba, the underworld, places where communication between worlds was possible. The temazcal, used by the Maya, Aztecs, and Toltecs, combined water, steam, heat, and ritual to support purification and renewal. Throughout Mexico, thermal springs became places where people gathered for both physical healing and spiritual restoration.

Each of these practices emerged independently, in cultures separated by oceans and centuries, often with no contact at all. And yet they kept landing on the same instinct: that water engages human emotion. It changes us and it heals us.

The religious historian Mircea Eliade spent much of his career studying these patterns, and he noted something simple but profound, that across an enormous range of spiritual traditions, water consistently shows up as the element that dissolves, washes away, purifies, and renews.

Only recently has science begun building a vocabulary for what these traditions always knew to be true. Researchers have identified a measurable shift that happens in the nervous system when someone is near water. They experience lowered stress hormones, a calmer body, a different quality of attention.

Marine biologist Wallace J. Nichols coined the term *Blue Mind* to describe this mildly meditative state. He described water as something that quiets all the surrounding noise and distraction and reconnects us to our own thoughts.

Researchers studying so-called "blue spaces" have reached similar conclusions. These environments, which include oceans, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and coastlines, are increasingly associated with improved mental wellbeing.



Environmental psychologist Mathew White of the University of Exeter has found that people who spend time near water often report greater happiness and lower levels of psychological distress. Some studies even suggest that people who live near coastlines experience higher overall wellbeing than those who live farther inland.

It seems modern-day science is "discovering" what our ancestors knew all along. But water's influence doesn't stop with the mind.

Research suggests that ocean swimming can reduce stress, lower anxiety, improve mood, stimulate circulation, and support overall health. Seawater contains minerals that benefit the skin, while

ocean air carries microscopic sea particles that contribute to respiratory health and a greater sense of wellbeing.

Thermal waters also offer many health benefits. Long valued by cultures around the world, mineral-rich hot springs can relax muscles, improve circulation, reduce joint stiffness, and ease chronic pain. And people who soak in thermal waters often describe not just physical relief, but also mental restoration and renewal.

Even the sound of water appears to have beneficial effects on us. The rhythmic crash of waves, the gentle fall of rain, the steady movement of a river. These sounds calm the nervous system and promote deeper sleep.

Since ancient times, water has been used as medicine physically, emotionally, and spiritually. What's telling is not that just a few cultures discovered this, but that nearly every culture has.

The Maya sought wisdom and connection through sacred cenotes. Romans built elaborate bathhouses devoted to healing. Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas used water and steam for purification and transformation. Today, that instinct has simply found a new vocabulary. Doctors in the UK are now writing "Bluescriptions", as part of a growing program that uses nature to treat anxiety, stress, and other mental health struggles.

Because water is all around us, anyone can write their own Bluescription. Just consider which form of water would offer the most support, drinking it, bathing in it, swimming in it, listening to it, watching it, walking near it, or even just picturing it in your imagination. Each of these has demonstrated real benefits for better health. The idea is surprisingly simple: water doesn't have to be extraordinary to be healing. It simply has to be present.

***Kary Vannice is a writer and energetic healer who explores the intersections of culture, consciousness, and daily life in Mexico.***

# Water Near San Miguel: Places to Recharge, Relax, and Cool Off

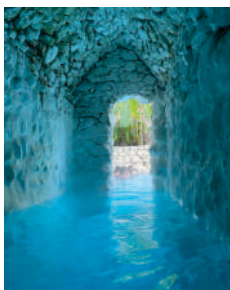
By Alicia Flores

**W**hile San Miguel de Allende sits high in the semi-arid highlands of central Mexico, water remains an important part of the region's landscape and culture. Whether you're looking for relaxation, recreation, or simply a break from the summer heat, there are several ways to connect with water nearby.

## La Gruta Spa

Perhaps the region's best-known thermal water destination, La Gruta offers a series of mineral-rich thermal pools surrounded by gardens and stone pathways. Its signature feature is a tunnel leading into a domed steam grotto where warm mineral water cascades from above. Many visitors describe the experience as both physically restorative and deeply relaxing.

[www.lagruta-spa.com.mx](http://www.lagruta-spa.com.mx)



## Escondido Place

Located adjacent to La Gruta, Escondido Place features expansive thermal pools fed by natural hot springs. Popular with families and locals alike, it offers a more spacious setting for swimming, soaking, and spending a leisurely afternoon.

[www.escondidoplace.com](http://www.escondidoplace.com)



## The Presa Allende (Allende Dam)

Just outside the city, the Presa Allende provides one of the area's largest bodies of water. Birdwatchers visit for migratory species, while kayakers, sailors, and fishermen enjoy the reservoir's calm waters. Several restaurants along the shoreline offer panoramic views, particularly at sunset.



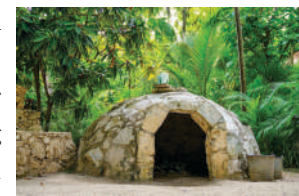
## Charco del Ingenio

Although not a swimming destination, this botanical reserve highlights the importance of water in the region's ecosystem. Seasonal reservoirs, wetlands, and natural springs support an impressive diversity of plants, birds, and wildlife. Walking the trails offers a chance to experience the quieter, contemplative side of water.



## Temazcal Experiences

For those interested in traditional forms of renewal, several wellness centers around San Miguel offer temazcal ceremonies. Combining heat, steam, water, and guided ritual, these Indigenous sweat-lodge traditions have been used for centuries throughout Mexico for purification and reflection.



## A Simple Prescription: Sit Beside Water

Not every encounter with water requires a swimsuit. Enjoying a quiet meal overlooking the Presa, listening to a fountain in one of San Miguel's gardens, or watching summer rains arrive across the countryside may provide many of the same calming benefits researchers now associate with "blue spaces."

As modern science continues to explore water's effects on mental and physical well-being, San Miguel offers plenty of opportunities to experience what generations before us already understood: sometimes healing begins simply by spending time near water.

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# A Creative Home Base for Artists

By Kato Rempel

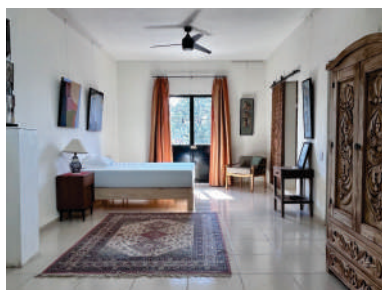
I've spent much of my life building businesses, exploring new places, and pursuing creative challenges. That spirit has shaped both my artistic practice and the path that led me to create Allende Arts Space, an artist residency program in Santa Julia, San Miguel de Allende.



My creative journey began in Vancouver, British Columbia, where I spent nearly two decades working in digital graphic design during the early days of the technology boom. Looking for new experiences and a different perspective, I later moved with my family to Southeast Asia. Living in Sri Lanka exposed me to different cultures, architecture, traditions, and ways of seeing the world. It was there that I discovered oil painting, and what began as a creative outlet quickly became a lifelong passion.



Over the years, I dedicated myself to learning, practicing, and developing my voice as an artist. Along the way, I have been fortunate to receive recognition for my work, but what continues to motivate me most is the opportunity to keep learning, exploring, and growing creatively. In 2025, that journey led me to create Allende Arts Space in San Miguel de Allende.



After spending time in San Miguel and getting to know the creative community, I noticed a gap in the residency offerings available to visiting artists. I saw an opportunity to create something different: a space that combined comfortable accommodations, dedicated studio space, and a genuine sense of community. When I found the perfect building, I knew it could become the creative home base I had envisioned.

Allende Arts Space was created for artists who need time to focus on their work while also having the opportunity to connect with other creatives. The residency offers private accommodations, dedicated workspaces, and a welcoming environment where painters, writers, photographers, musicians, and multidisciplinary artists can immerse themselves in their practice without the distractions of everyday life.

What makes the experience special is the balance between independence and connection. Artists have the freedom to work at their own pace, pursue their own projects, and shape their own experience. At the same time, they become part of a community of creatives from around the world who gather to share ideas, experiences, inspiration, and support.

Many residents arrive with a project they want to complete. Others come looking for renewal, direction, or simply the time and space to reconnect with their creativity. Some leave with finished work, while others leave with new friendships, fresh perspectives, and renewed energy for their artistic practice.

What consistently surprises people is how quickly the residency begins to feel like home. Shared meals, creative conversations, collaborations, and lasting friendships often become just as meaningful as the work created during a stay.

For me, Allende Arts Space is about creating the kind of environment I would have loved to discover throughout my own journey. A place where artists can fully immerse themselves in their work while being supported by a community that understands their creative process.

*Kato Rempel, artist, entrepreneur, and founder of Allende Arts Space in San Miguel de Allende.*

**Every artist deserves a season devoted to their work.**

Know someone who has been talking about "oneday..." for years?

The painter who never has enough time or space.

The writer waiting for the right moment.

The creative friend who keeps putting their own work last.

**Maybe this is their season!**

A creative home base.

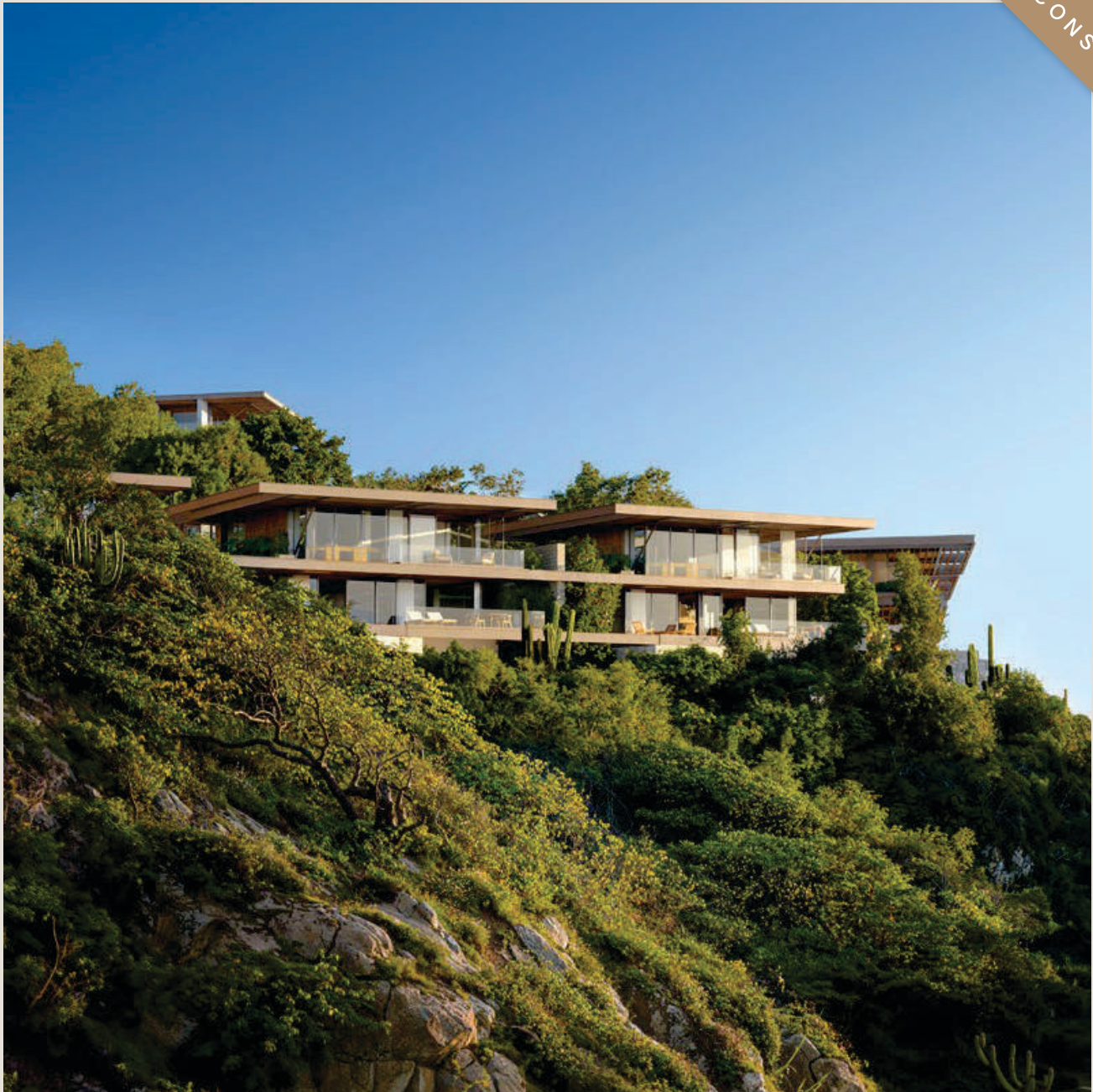
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# Mexico's 'Little Cornwall': Cradle of Mexican Football

By Sharron Schwartz

**N**ine minutes into the opening game of the World Cup 2026, Julián Quiñones scores the first goal of the tournament to give Mexico, one of the three host nations, the lead against South Africa.

The iconic Azteca Stadium in Mexico City erupts in joy, and I shoot from my seat in a bar at Gatwick Airport, arms aloft, punching the air with a loud cheer. I am undaunted by the bemused looks of onlookers, for I have skin in this game.

I am Cornish and for over two centuries, my people have played a significant role in Mexico's silver mining industry. In 1824, the first Cornish mineworkers arrived at Real del Monte, a small town in the picturesque Sierra Madre Oriental in the State of Hidalgo. They were employees of the British-capitalised Real del Monte Mining Company and one of those men was a distant cousin to me.

The Cornish did not just bring their innovative high-pressure steam engine technology and mining know-how, which helped to revive the flooded mines of Real del Monte, but also their culture.



This included their Methodist faith, Cornwall's signature dish - the pasty - and sports, including cricket and football.

All of these left an indelible imprint on the mining settlements of the Comarca Minera de Hidalgo, also known as Mexico's 'Little Cornwall'.

Along with the humble pasty, adapted to suit the Mexican palate and now a dish as famous throughout Hidalgo as barbacoa, the Mexican people embraced football. Mexico is the first nation to host the World Cup three times.

With the spotlight firmly on Mexico's footballing pedigree, attention has turned to the history of the sport in the country, with several places claiming to be the cradle of Mexican football.

Prior to the late 1880s, the game was not mentioned in the Mexican press. In 1887, the employees of the General Offices of the Central (a railway) in Mexico City, were reportedly trying to set up a football club.

In November 1891, a match was played at San Cristóbal between 'Pearson's Wanderers' (of the British construction firm S. Pearson & Sons) and the 'San Cristobal Swifts'. The Swifts were defeated 1-0. The game was still relatively unknown in Mexico at this point:

"Many of the Swifts had never played at football before, and consequently were at a disadvantage, but they played remarkably well considering that the Wanderers had just returned from a trip to Europe where they had practiced for some months." *Daily Anglo American*, 3 November 1891.

In September 1892, *The Two Republics* newspaper reported that a football match was being arranged in Mexico City for the inauguration of the Mexican Athletic Club's ground on the Paseo, "the first game between two organised clubs ever played in the vicinity".

British schools in Mexico City undoubtedly played the game at this period, but it did not take off due to lack of competition. However, competitive football was being played in Mexico's Little Cornwall several years before the abovementioned games.

It is only by chance that a report of one of those matches, the earliest documented in Mexico, found its way into *El Minero de Pachuca* in May 1889.

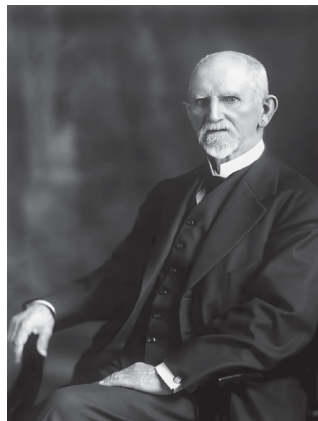
A football match between men from El Rosario Mine in Pachuca (managed by Cornishman, Richard Rule) and those from La Joya Mine in neighbouring Real del Monte, was abandoned.

The game, played on the sport's field of the Railway Racetrack in Pachuca, descended into a free fight when the referee awarded a penalty to El Rosario, which was winning 7-4.

The players from La Joya disagreed with his decision and attacked their opponents, causing serious injuries to two players. Fourteen people appeared in court for involvement in the brawl.

In the mid-1860s, one quarter of all British subjects in Mexico were resident in Hidalgo's mining settlements. This critical mass of people and the 'friendly rivalry' between Cornishmen in Real del Monte and Pachuca, echoing the fierce sporting rivalries in Cornish towns such as Camborne and Redruth, undoubtedly led to the success of football in Hidalgo.

Pachuca had established a football club by late 1892, as an anonymous letter in Mexican newspaper, *The Two Republics*, revealed. The Pachuca Football Club had lately degenerated to a great extent and was being reorganised. This was due to a schism between the players at Pachuca and the "mountain men" (the Realmontese):



"This must be attributed to the lack of energy of certain members of the above-named body. We may in particular refer to certain so-called football players who live in the mountains and who are so egotistical as to imagine that without their mighty efforts the club would not but expire."

Besides the deep rivalry between the two mining settlements which made competitive football attractive, was the fact that organised sport already existed in the form of cricket.

In August 1888, Cornish newspaper, the *Cornishman*, reported that the Pachuca Cricket Club was over 20 years old. Mining entrepreneur, Frank Rule, Pachuca's most famous Cornish resident, had served with the club for 21 years. Crucially, the Pachuca cricket team played against established teams in Real del Monte and Velasco.

Pachuca's first football squad was built from its cricket team and included William Retallack, Sydney Ludlow, Charles Grenfell, John Mayne Rule, W.C. Rule, and some enthusiastic recent arrivals from Cornwall.

By the early 1890s, football was growing in popularity throughout Mexico's British enclaves. Clubs had been formed in Mexico City, Orizaba (State of Veracruz) and Puebla. In 1894, Mexican newspaper *El Nacional* explained that football was a team game played with a rubber bladder covered in leather.

In 1895, a meeting was held at Hacienda La Luz in Pachuca to agree on the amalgamation of the Pachuca Cricket Club, the Velasco Cricket Club and the Pachuca Football Club, to create a stronger competitive entity: the Pachuca Athletic Club.

A large field belonging to Hacienda La Luz was given over for a sports field. The officers and committee were all Methodist Cornishmen, so no games were to be played on Sundays. The team chose as its strip, the historic dark and light blues of Oxford and Cambridge, with blue shorts.

In February 1902, a hotly contested international between Scotland and England was played on the Reforma Club's grounds in Mexico City, watched over by the British Consul, which England won 3-2. The game between the two 'auld foes' was not without controversy, with Scotland claiming the referee had made an error that awarded the game to England!



This galvanised interest throughout the expat communities and later that year, several Scottish footballers involved in establishing the Orizaba Club, suggested setting up an Association League. In 1902 the Liga Mexicana de Football Amateur Association was formed among the English-speaking community.

The teams of the new league were the Reforma Athletic Club, the Mexico Cricket Club, The British Social Club (all three based in Mexico City), the Pachuca Athletic Club and the Orizaba Athletic Club.

League football benefitted from the Porfiriato's improved communication and transport links, particularly the railways, which made it easier to travel to opponents' grounds for matches. English language newspaper, *The Mexican Herald*, published upcoming fixtures and devoted column inches to detailed reports of the various matches.

Pachuca's first league game was played at the Velódromo Pachuca against the Reforma Athletic Club. The game began at 4.00pm and was well supported and hotly contested, watched by the Hidalgo state governor, Pedro L. Rodriguez, and all the principal families of the area.

The only drawback was the strong wind that interfered with kicking, which occurs each afternoon in Pachuca, La Bella Airosa!

“The scene on the ground was made picturesque by the presence of a large number of ladies in most beautiful costumes, many of them wearing the colours of the Pachuca club, dark and light blue.” *Mexican Herald*, 2 November 1902. Both teams played “with dash”. The game ended in a tie: three goals apiece. Orizaba won the first league of 1902.

Pachuca AC won its first amateur title in the 1904–05 season and also won the Copa Tower twice (1907–08 and 1911–12).

Football was deemed modern, encompassed British cultural imperialism, and became fashionable in societies wishing to emulate the British sense of fair play. In 1908 the first Mexican, David Islas, became a Pachuca club member.

Alfred 'Fred' C. Crowle (1889-1979), the Pachuca-born son of Alf Crowle, a Cornish miner from St Blazey, was a key player during this era. He was eventually promoted to team coach and freely admitted Mexicans from all backgrounds to the team, blurring class and ethnic boundaries.

Under Crowle, Pachuca won two more amateur league titles (1917–18 and 1919–20). He later went on to found Club Necaxa before becoming the national coach in 1935, enjoying a 100 per-cent record during the year he was in charge.



The Mexican Revolution (1910–20) and WW1 affected the team, as players moved away. Pachuca-born Johnnie Vial, a cousin of mine, signed on as a gunner with the Royal Field Artillery. He died at the Somme. In the 1920s, the club folded.

The Pachuca club, 'Los Tuzos' (The Gophers, honouring the city's mining legacy), was successfully revived in the 1960s and currently plays in Liga MX. Pachuca prides itself on being the spiritual home of Mexican football and boasts the interactive museum, Mundo Fútbol.

I will continue to follow 'El Tri' with gusto during this year's World Cup. Next time you see La Ola (the Mexican Wave) ripple through a stadium, remember the role that Mexico's 'Little Cornwall' played in popularising the beautiful game in this football-mad nation.

***Born and bred in Redruth, Cornwall, Sharron Schwartz completed her PhD at the Institute of Cornish Studies, University of Exeter. She is the pre-eminent authority on Cornish migration to Latin America and is a Bard of Gorsedh Kernow.***

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# Books to Watch For

By Carole Reedy

**Partita by Barbara Kingsolver**  
(publication date October 6, 2026)

The most anticipated fall read, without a doubt, is Barbara Kingsolver's *Partita*.

Kingsolver's previous novel, *Demon Copperhead*, entertained and educated readers with its smooth narrative of a remote and forgotten part of the US where the pharmaceutical industry introduced addictive drugs. (To understand the facts of this tragedy, read Patrick Radden Keefe's *The Empire Of Pain*.) Kingsolver received accolades around the world for her depiction of a modern-day *David Copperfield*.

This new novel is the story of a farm girl and her unfulfilled musical talent, class barriers, and love. At the heart of the story, however, is the importance of art and beauty.

Kingsolver herself had the talent to pursue the piano as a career, but when faced with the practicality of a life in music changed her college major to biology. She also had aspirations as a writer and studied journalism. As a child she read Tolstoy and played Bach on the piano.

Noted author Ann Patchett, whose new novel *Whistler* has just arrived, accompanied by rave reviews, on bookshelves, says of Kingsolver's latest "She means to save us by telling us stories...She comes closer than anyone else I know."

**Country People by Daniel Mason**  
(publication date July 7, 2026)

Mason's *North Woods*, published in 2024, was, for me, a mesmerizing read covering centuries of the inhabitants of a yellow house in a remote part of Massachusetts.

His latest story takes us on a family voyage to Vermont from California.

It's described by the publisher as a "joyous, absurd, gorgeously-drawn exploration of marriage, family, friendship, storytelling and how people find connection in an increasingly fragmented world."

We know Mason as a consummate storyteller that can deliver a story in a masterfully fluent manner.

**Ply by Hernan Diaz**  
(publication date September 29, 2026)

How we loved Diaz's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Trust*, the story of a "successful" man and his wife told in three parts, the last part putting in perspective the first two in a most shocking way.

Though his previous novels dealt with the past, this one takes us to the distant future and questions the role of technology in our lives. It is a Dickensian-style family drama in addition to being a scientific thriller.

**The Eye 22**



The novel takes place in a US city where the protagonist, an orphan, steals energy to feed the city's vibrant music scene. This high-risk life shifts when he becomes involved in a scientific project that could change reality itself.

**The Dying Light by Anne Cleeves**  
(publication date October 8)

Few of us will forget the isolation of the pandemic of 2020 for the gift of time that allowed us hours more to read. During the following three years many of us discovered various book series and authors that entertained and allowed us to get through those difficult days.

One such author was Anne Cleeves. Cleeves is a prolific writer, but the most striking aspect of her writing is the characterizations she creates. These people become part of the reader's life. It may sound corny, but during the pandemic I talked by phone to friends in the US about characters in the novels as though we were discussing our own friends.

Cleeves' Shetland series became so popular that it was made into a television series. The lure of an unknown part of the world added mystery to the mysteries! Tourists started putting the Shetland Islands on their travel bucket lists.

Cleeves recently introduced the Matthew Venn series (also called the Two Rivers series), which takes place in Devon England, where detective Venn lives with his husband. Again, the magic of these books lies in their characters rather than the plots.

Cleeves knows and understands her characters so well that she seems to describe them from memory rather than imagination.

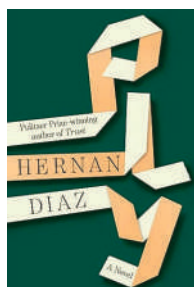
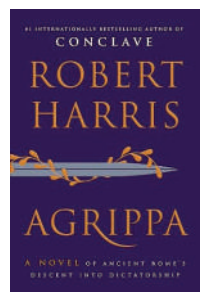
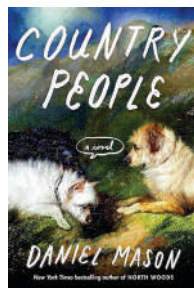
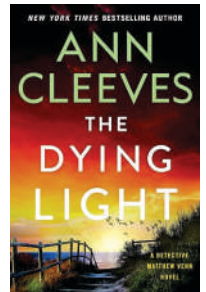
**Agrippa by Robert Harris**  
(publication date August 27, 2026)

Harris has always been recognized for his ability to combine personal drama and political machinations. His *Conclave* gripped book lovers as well as movie fans.

In *Agrippa* we return to the Roman Empire, where there is plenty of drama for writers. After the death of Julius Caesar, the 17-year-old Octavius becomes heir to the throne. His closest friend is Agrippa. For 20 years they rule the empire together.

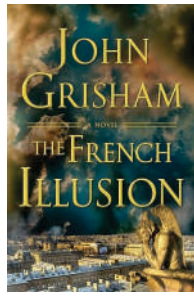
Agrippa stirs up the past in his memoirs, which he is writing at age 50. Power and friendship: can they coexist? That is the question and theme.

Robert Harris' books are very readable and offer glimpses into the political yet personal aspects of the histories he writes. I have become a recent fan of this prestigious writer of histories. His *Pompeii* hooked me as a new fan and follower.



**The French Illusion by John Grisham**  
(publication date September 29, 2026)

Faithful readers to the genre have been reading John Grisham's legal thrillers since 1991 when *The Firm* became an overnight sensation, spending 47 weeks on *The New York Times* best-seller list. I remember vividly when it hit the shelves, touted as different and sketching new material and characters for a novel. Law school admissions may have risen at this time.

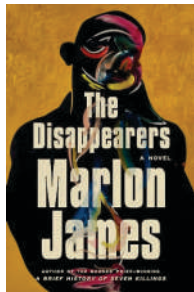


Grisham's latest veers a little off the legal thriller genre, being more an international suspense novel. It's clear Grisham enjoys reading the spy stories of John Le Carre, Ken Follett, and Robert Ludlum. This is his first attempt in following the "craftsmanship of some of these international suspense novelists."

This new plot starts with the kidnapping of a newlywed couple in the French countryside, which rapidly turns into an international espionage plot.

**The Disappearers by Marlon James**  
(publication date September 1, 2026)

It would be difficult to forget James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, which brought James the recognition he deserved when his novel won the Man Booker Prize in 2015. This new story continues in the genre. Again taking place in Jamaica, it begins with eight gay men in Jamaica during the 1980s.

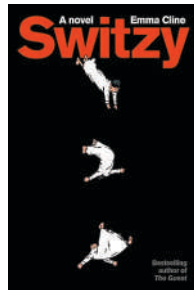


These eight men, actors, are unfamiliar to each other but share the experience of being gay, including the hatred and bigotry they endure. How they handle it varies among them: some try to forget, others embrace their rage, and still others simply vanish.

James' novels are enormous in every aspect.

**Switzzy by Emma Cline**  
(publication date October 9, 2026)

What is a life? What remains when your goals and accomplishments have been realized? These appear to be the unanswerable questions Cline explores in this story of an aging man.

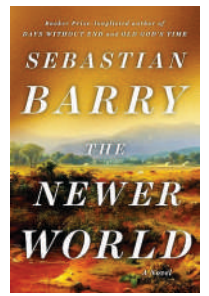


It is quite an original story, probing the depths of human consciousness, "revealing what a man is left with when the accomplishments and compromises that have defined him, and the illusions he's relied on, vanish."

The book follows its main character, David, with his thoughts and memories, as he flies to Zurich with stops in Paris, England, etc. The unusualness of the premise is alluring, especially when tackled by a writer as deft as Cline, who we remember for her novel *The Girls*, which was based on the Charles Manson entourage of the 70s.

**The Newer World by Sebastian Barry**  
(publication date September 8, 2026)

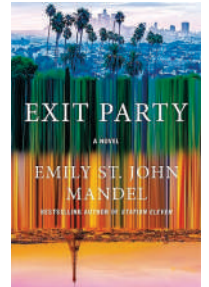
My book club in Mexico City, whose members represent a number of nationalities, enthusiastically embraces any book written by the Irish writer Sebastian Barry. His novels appeal to not only the Irish and Brits, but also to Americans and Mexicans.



Barry is a consummate storyteller. His newest takes place in the 19th century, starting in rural Tennessee where the main character, a Confederate soldier and wanted man, heads for Nashville but finds himself on a detour to Victorian England. It's a story of how we survive and at what cost along the way.

**Exit Party by Emily St. John Mandel**  
(publication date September 15, 2026)

This timely novel by the noteworthy author of *Station Eleven* and *Sea of Tranquility* should gain widespread attention in the literary world this fall.



Starting out in Los Angeles 2031 with the collapse of the US, the story continues not only from a splintered America but also expanding to include Paris and Greece and a colony on the moon.

Story is the lifeblood of a novel, and this year appears to be packed with novels that are faithful to this premise.

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# Los días sin ternura

By Jordan Sánchez Armenta



Mis lentes favoritos están rotos,  
mi cartera guarda pocos billetes,  
la libreta azul rebosa de notas,  
de pequeños sigilos y ciegos poemas  
que no me sirven para un carajo.

Hoy desperté pensando:  
“nada para mí que no sea para los demás”.  
Me sacudí la pereza de los ojos  
y comencé a cantar al sol.

El canto salió torcido,  
pero era mío.  
El viento me lo devolvió  
con un murmullo  
y en él escuché a alguien reír,  
como si la risa también se le contagiara.

A veces escribir es barrer el polvo,  
otras, solo mirar cómo vuelve.  
Pero sigo,  
porque el silencio también tiene hambre  
y yo tengo pan para compartir.

Repartí mis canciones  
como sombra,  
mis manos como promesa,  
y entendí que la pobreza  
no siempre está en los bolsillos,  
sino en los días sin ternura.

Así que sigo,  
con los lentes rotos,  
la libreta llena,  
viendo el mundo a través de sus grietas,  
tal vez  
por eso lo entiendo mejor.

*Jordan Sánchez Armenta is a photographer from Cuautla, Morelos, currently based in the Riviera Maya. Passionate about storytelling, he seeks to tell stories in the simplest way possible, using whatever medium is available to him.  
Instagram: @jrdn.sa*

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# Mexico's Bottled Thirst

## How Mexico Became Dependent on Bottled Water

By Estefanía Camacho

“And just for a second, while picturing her loved ones back home in New York, she forgot where she was and opened her mouth.”

There is a scene in *Sex and the City: The Movie* in which one of the characters, Charlotte, avoids drinking tap water or eating certain foods in Mexico at all costs because of the stereotype that every foreigner who visits the country, inevitably gets sick. It is a thing, and it's colloquially called Montezuma's revenge, although it is usually mild and short-lived.

What these fears often overlook is that simply leaving your routine and the familiar circle of your own microbiome can make your body more sensitive. New foods, different bacteria, changes in climate, stress, travel itself: all of these can affect digestion.

On the other hand, the idea that a few drops of shower water will immediately send someone running to the bathroom is wildly exaggerated. It is true that people in Mexico generally do not drink tap water, not because of a stereotype, but because water coming through municipal systems is often not considered safe for consumption in much of the country, there are some exceptions but there are as well information gaps.

You would likely have to drink an actual glass of untreated tap water to experience discomfort and, again, it would rarely be serious.

Most Mexicans who have family roots in rural areas or the countryside have at least one older relative who talks about drinking directly from a stream coming down the mountain, from a well, a nearby river, a reservoir, or even melted snow in higher elevations. For many families, this was not some distant past. In some places, it still isn't.



### The Four Reasons That Built Mexico's Bottled Water Industry

Cities followed a different story.

After the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, the idea spread that the city's pipes could no longer safely carry drinking water. In many ways, this was true. Decades of neglected infrastructure collapsed alongside buildings, and parts of the system remained damaged for years. Yet the reconstruction of reliable drinking water systems never fully arrived.



Mexico's National Water Commission (Conagua) describes the earthquake as an accelerator of the bottled water industry:

“After the earthquake there was no water in many people's homes. There were people in the streets. There was no water pressure. The biggest problem at the time was that there was no drinking water. In some homes there was a bad smell — the smell of contamination. The pipes had broken and the water was contaminated, so people couldn't drink water from the tap.”

The earthquake became the first of four major factors cited by researchers that created the conditions for the bottled water boom. Today, Mexico is one of the world's largest consumers of bottled water, reaching approximately 286 liters per person each year.

The remaining factors came later. The cholera epidemic between 1991 and 1999 further cemented public distrust in municipal water supplies. Economic crises during the same period made infrastructure investments more difficult, while aggressive marketing by bottled water companies transformed bottled water from an emergency solution into an everyday necessity.

Before this shift, many Mexican households routinely drank tap water, boiled it, or treated it with chlorine before consumption. Now, Conagua shares statistics on how many contaminants are present in the surface water, by analyzing in 2022 1,723 sites, of which 42.5% were classified in green and 39% in red. Hence the perception that drinking tap water may not be safe, since habitants have no way of making this analysis in their homes.

However, according to the National Survey of Government Quality and Impact, only 20.9% of households nationwide consider the water delivered to their homes through the public network to be drinkable as of 2023. The situation varies by state, ranging from 49.1% in Tlaxcala to 1.9% in Tabasco, according to the 2025 investigation *The impact of bottled water on household expenditures in Mexico: is it a public policy problem?* published in the *Official Journal of the World Water Council*.

### Politics and Private Enterprise: A Partnership Without Consequences

I remember that sometime after the early 2000s, Bonafont became one of the loudest promoters of the idea that everyone should drink two litres of water a day to stay healthy, while this was not yet a truly spread and well-known idea in Mexican households. Conveniently, the company sold bottles in exactly the sizes needed to make sure you met that goal.

Once bottled water and refillable jugs became normalized in Mexican households, also as a part of a certain high-level kind of life, it was only a matter of time before soft drink companies entered the business. Coca-Cola, whose presence in Mexican family life is almost impossible to overstate, expanded aggressively into the water market.



Mexico loves Coca-Cola so much that one of its former executives, Vicente Fox Quesada, became president of the country in 2000. But the other side of the story is often left untold: Coca-Cola may love Mexico back, but it arguably needs Mexico even more.

Revenues for Coca-Cola FEMSA, the company's Mexican subsidiary, tripled during Fox's administration. Between 2002 and 2003 alone, FEMSA reported extraordinary growth, doubling revenues from approximately \$2 billion to \$4 billion, while its bottled water business expanded dramatically.

Nor was Coca-Cola alone. Bonafont, owned by Danone and once a relatively unknown brand, became the country's leading bottled water company.



In Mexico there is a saying: *a nadie se le niega un vaso de agua* — no one should ever be denied a glass of water. The phrase works both ways: we offer it, and we ask for it. Yet institutionally, drinking a glass of water from the public system often feels almost forbidden.

Bottled water also represents a significant expense for many families. Lower-income households generally spend a larger proportion of their income on water, including both piped supplies and bottled alternatives.

And, as always, inequality runs through the entire system.

It is estimated that households without daily access to piped water spend a total of 503 million USD on bottled water. These households consume bottled water out of necessity. Households with daily access to piped water spend up to 902 million USD on bottled water, which they consume for pleasure or due to mistrust of the quality of piped water.

Researchers at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM Azcapotzalco) argue that water insecurity becomes even more unequal when examined by income levels. "When designing public policies regarding household water consumption," they write, "it is imperative to consider not only accessibility and frequency of use, but also affordability."

### The Sinkhole That Exposed Water Stress in Puebla

The prioritization of private interests over public needs, together with decades of resource extraction and limited oversight, became visible in the town of Santa María Zacatepec, Puebla.



In 2021, residents occupied a Bonafont bottling plant in protest, arguing that the company had been extracting groundwater for more than two decades while local wells gradually dried up.

That same year, a massive sinkhole nearly 50 feet wide suddenly opened nearby. Although the exact causes remain debated, many residents connected the event to the long-term extraction of groundwater.



Coincidentally or not, only weeks after the occupation forced the plant to suspend operations, local residents reported that water levels in wells and streams had begun to recover. Investigations also uncovered irregularities involving municipal permits and concessions that Bonafont claimed to possess.

The peaceful occupation, which included cultural events, artistic activities, and community gatherings, was eventually dismantled by the National Guard and state police. Bonafont later resumed operations.

### **“The More Polluted the Water, the More People Will Buy”**

I cannot help but think of *The Lorax*, where a businessman becomes wealthy by selling encapsulated air after destroying the environment around him.

The comparison may seem exaggerated, yet there is something strangely familiar about it. In some regions, bottling companies extract groundwater from local aquifers, sell it back to nearby communities at a markup, and position themselves as the solution to a problem that increasingly appears impossible to solve without them. What would people drink otherwise?

But perhaps the more important question is not directed at the companies themselves. Where were the political actors who allowed private companies to gain access to public resources instead of prioritizing infrastructure, investment, and public policies capable of guaranteeing access to safe drinking water?

After all, access to water is not simply a market opportunity. It is a human right, one that is also recognized in the Mexican Constitution.

***Estefanía Camacho is a freelance Mexican journalist working across media and digital magazines. She is a specialist in gender, SMEs, economics, and business.***

## **What Can You Do? Small Changes That Make a Difference**

Mexico's water challenges can feel overwhelming, but individuals and communities can take meaningful steps to reduce waste, support sustainable water use, and lessen dependence on bottled water.

### **Carry a Reusable Bottle**

When possible, refill a reusable bottle using filtered water at home, work, or public refill stations. Reducing single-use plastic bottles helps lower waste and decreases demand for disposable packaging.



### **Support Businesses That Offer Refills**

Restaurants, cafés, hotels, and offices that provide filtered drinking water help reduce reliance on individual plastic bottles. Supporting these businesses encourages others to follow suit.

### **Fix Leaks Quickly**

A dripping faucet may seem insignificant, but even a slow leak can waste hundreds of liters of water each month. Regularly checking taps, toilets, and pipes is one of the easiest ways to conserve water.

### **Use Water Efficiently at Home**

Shorter showers, turning off the tap while brushing teeth, and running full loads of laundry and dishes can significantly reduce household consumption.

### **Choose Native and Drought-Tolerant Plants**

Gardens filled with native species generally require less irrigation than imported ornamental plants and help support local ecosystems.

### **Stay Informed About Local Water Issues**

Water management decisions often happen far from public attention. Learning where your water comes from and how it is managed helps communities advocate for better infrastructure and long-term solutions.

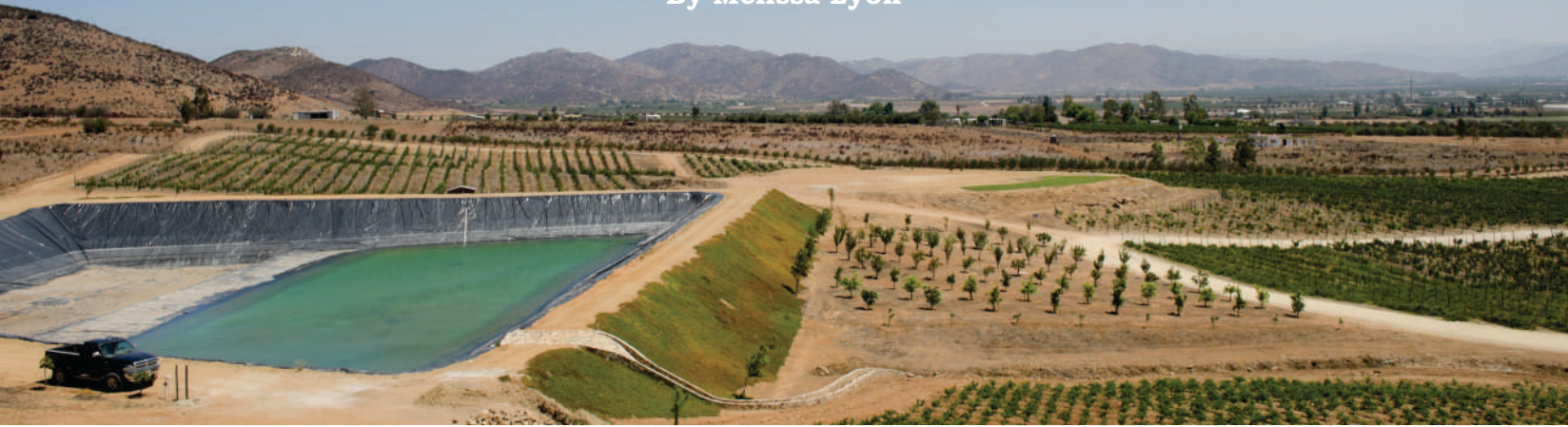
### **Think Beyond Bottled Water**

Bottled water may be necessary in many situations, but it should not become the only solution. Investments in reliable public infrastructure, filtration systems, and water quality monitoring can reduce dependence on bottled water while making safe drinking water more accessible to everyone.

Every drop matters. While no single action will solve Mexico's water challenges, millions of small decisions made every day can help protect one of the country's most important resources.

# Thirsty Vines: Water, Wine, and the Future of Mexican Vineyards

By Melissa Lyon



**M**exico's wine industry is enjoying a golden age, but behind the award-winning bottles and picturesque vineyards lies a challenge that is becoming impossible to ignore: water.

Historically, Mexican wines have thrived in the unique conditions found throughout the country, with lots of sunshine, patient vintners, and just enough water. But what happens when “just enough water” becomes increasingly difficult to find? Across Mexico's wine regions, from the sun-soaked valleys of Baja California to the high plains of Coahuila and the rolling vineyards of Querétaro and Guanajuato, winemakers are confronting an uncomfortable reality: climate change is reshaping the future of wine.

Of course, wine has always depended on weather. Too much rain, and grapes become diluted. Too little, and vines struggle. Just the right combination of temperatures and precipitation is like lightning in a bottle. The famous Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California, for example, enjoys warm days, cool nights, and a Mediterranean-like climate ideal for grapes. But recent years have brought hotter temperatures, prolonged drought, and increasing pressure on groundwater supplies. Water scarcity, once a seasonal concern, has become a year-round conversation.

Baja is not alone. In Coahuila, home to some of the oldest wineries in the Americas, including the renowned Casa Madero, producers face hotter summers and shifting rainfall patterns. Central Mexican wine regions such as Querétaro and Guanajuato are also experiencing increasing climate variability, including unexpected frosts, hailstorms, and heat spikes. For winemakers, this unpredictability is becoming one of the industry's greatest challenges. Grapes, after all, are fussy little creatures.

The good news? Mexican winemakers are famously resourceful.

Across the country, wineries are increasingly embracing sustainability, not only because it is environmentally responsible, but because savvy consumers demand it, and survival depends on it. Water conservation has become a major priority. Many vineyards now use drip irrigation systems that deliver precise amounts of water directly to the vine roots rather than wasting it through sprinklers or flood irrigation. Soil management techniques such as mulching and cover crops help retain moisture, reduce evaporation, and improve soil health.

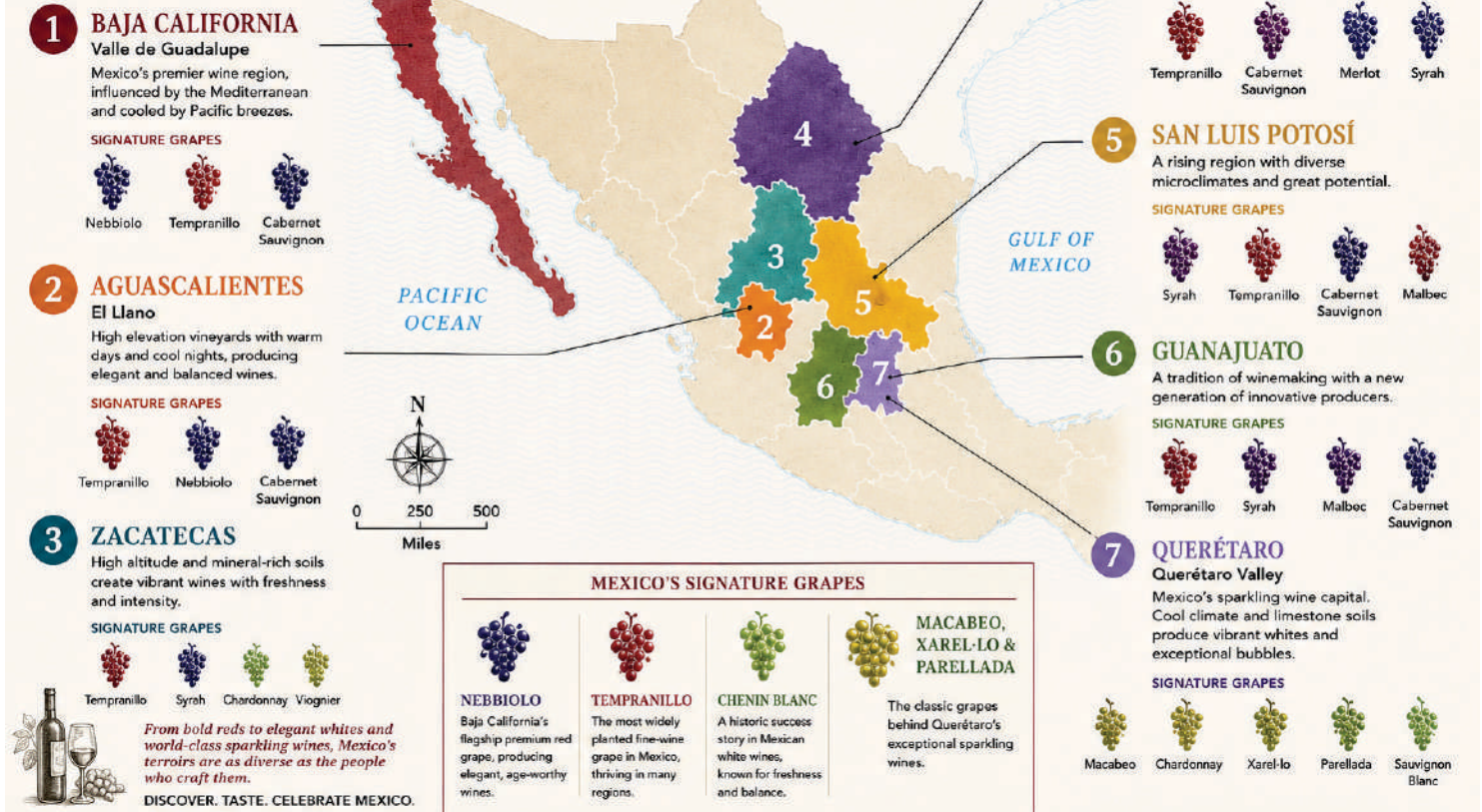
Some wineries are experimenting with dry farming, allowing vines to survive largely on natural rainfall once they become established. Others are investing in water recycling systems, treating and reusing water from cleaning processes or landscaping. Solar energy is becoming increasingly common as well, particularly in Baja California, where abundant sunshine makes renewable power a practical choice. Sustainability, in many vineyards, has shifted from trendy buzzword to practical necessity.



# WINE REGIONS OF MEXICO

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From the cool coastal valleys of Baja California to the high deserts of the interior, Mexico's wine regions are creating world-class wines with a true sense of place.



Then there is the grape question. Not all varieties respond equally well to heat and drought. Some grapes suffer in extreme heat, while others are perfectly happy basking under the Mexican sun.

Traditional French varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Grenache continue to perform well in parts of Baja California, particularly when growers carefully manage irrigation and canopy cover. Mediterranean grapes, however, are gaining increasing attention for their resilience. Varieties such as Mourvèdre, Tempranillo, Carignan, and Italian grapes like Nebbiolo tolerate heat and water scarcity better than more delicate varieties.

White wines are evolving too. In warmer conditions, grapes can ripen quickly, risking overly alcoholic wines with less acidity. To adapt, growers are experimenting with varieties that maintain freshness despite rising temperatures. Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Vermentino, and Viognier are showing promise in several Mexican regions.

Perhaps the clearest sign of climate change arrives during harvest season. Traditionally, grape harvests followed predictable schedules. Today, many vineyards are harvesting earlier, sometimes weeks earlier than in decades past. Rising temperatures accelerate ripening, meaning grapes can accumulate sugar faster. Harvesting earlier helps preserve balance and freshness in the finished wine.

Harvest itself is changing too. Some vineyards now pick grapes at night or during the cool hours before sunrise to protect delicate fruit from intense daytime heat. Workers equipped with headlamps gathering grapes beneath the stars may sound romantic, but it is also practical. Cooler grapes arrive at the winery in better condition, reducing energy needed for refrigeration and preserving flavor. So, what does the future of Mexican wine look like? In a word, *optimistic*.

Yes, climate change presents real challenges, particularly around water scarcity. But the Mexican wine industry has always been defined by adaptation and innovation. Unlike many European wine regions steeped in tradition and governed by centuries-old rules about what can be planted and where, Mexico's wine industry has flexibility. Winemakers are free to experiment with new techniques and varieties, and to rethink old assumptions.

As the industry evolves, the wines will too. New wine regions at higher elevations may emerge. Sustainable farming practices will likely expand and take root across the country.

And consumers will increasingly value the story behind the bottle, including how thoughtfully a winery manages its land, water, and resources.

And so, fear not, wine enthusiasts! The future of Mexican wine remains bright, sustained by innovative growers who are learning to make every drop of water count.

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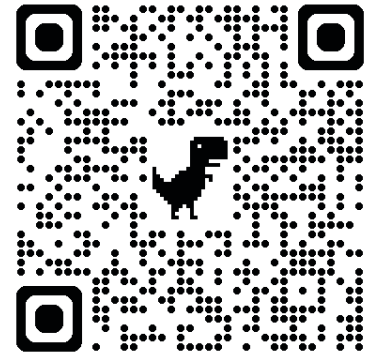
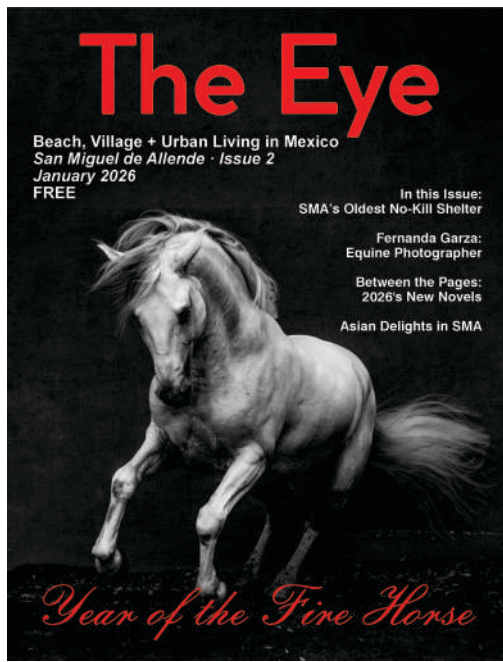
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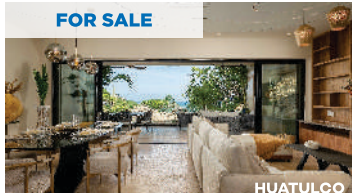
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