

## Bernabe Osorio

## Nicaragua

Farm(s):	Finca Buenos Aires
Region:	Cerro Kilambé Natural Reserve, Plan de Grama, Jinotega
Country:	Nicaragua
Association:	Sajonia Estate
Altitude:	1100-1200 masl
Varieties:	Parainema, Catimor
Process:	Washed

Finca Buenos Aires is in the Cerro Kilambé Natural Reserve, one of 78 protected reserves in Nicaragua. The farm is situated close to the small town of Plan de Grama in the department of Jinotega and owned by Bernabe Osorio. Finca Buenos Aires is a member of the *Los Campesinos* project, a regional smallholder engagement initiative developed by Sajonia Estate in nearby Matagalpa that focuses on increasing quality, support and financial remuneration for regional smallholder coffee producers located in Nicaragua's areas of natural reserve. The project provides micro financing, agronomical assistance and post-harvest support for producers to provide access to quality premiums and markets, whilst protecting the natural forest ecosystems. As a member of the project Bernabe delivers his coffee to Sajonia's agency in Plan de Grama, benefitting from support in-the-field and off-site processing of his coffee.

Bernabe inherited Finca Buenos Aires from his parents who became too old to manage the farm themselves. Finca Buenos Aires has been handed down through the generations, being in the Osorio family for over 30 years. Today the farm, which sits in a privileged location within the Cerro Kilambé reserve, is managed and run by Bernabe and his wife, sons and brothers. Like all of Nicaragua's reserves, Kilambé is renowned for its biological diversity as well as its socio-cultural and environmental significance to the communities living within the area. Despite its environmental and cultural importance, the Kilambé is threatened with deforestation and soil degradation and is currently considered an ecosystem that is in danger of extinction. Farms such as Finca Buenos Aires, that manage their land in harmony with the natural forests, are so important to keeping the natural ecosystems alive. The farm has excellent environmental management, with over 30 hectares of surrounding natural jungles that support a rich diversity of both fauna and flora.

Surrounded by the wilderness of the national park this small farm of just 10 hectares is perfectly situated for high quality coffee. The microclimate and diverse flora surrounding the farm creates both a unique environment for the coffee to grow but also increases stability and strength. The use of intercropping of plants such as banana and citrus, trees helps create nutrient cycles and provides shade and climactic stability for the coffee, which is essential for creating microclimates in the low altitude coffee growing areas of Nicaragua. The soils on Finca Buenos Aires are sandy loam, which have good nutrient and water-holding properties. The farm has an average temperature range of 10°C to 30°C and annual rainfall levels of 2000mm. Due to high humidity pruning and maintenance of shade-giving trees is essential to prevent against disease in the coffee.

The two main varietals cultivated on Finca Buenos Aires are Parainema, a common variety throughout Jinotega, and Catimor. These varieties are kept separate on the farm and, depending on the variety itself, each hectare can support anywhere between 1800 to 3500 coffee trees. On the farm 4 hectares of land is engaged in coffee cultivation, with 6 hectares being left as natural forest. Finca la Porra does not require any permanent members of staff due to the support that Bernabe's family provides, however employs up to 10 workers at peak harvest. These workers are provided with free meals each day, as well as access to bananas and oranges that grow in the field. The farm also sets aside plots of land for the for the workers to plant grains, a common practice seen on coffee farms in Nicaragua, which can be used to compliment income or consumed as food. Workers are paid each week using the local wage table for each *lata* of coffee picked, which is a local measurement volume of 10" x 10" x 12.5" that equates to around 20 litres, or 14kg of cherry.

During harvest workers selectively handpick coffee by lot, choosing the beans for their maturity and colour. Coffee is then delivered to the farm's micro mill for processing. At the mill coffee is sorted, washed, pulped and fermented for anywhere between 15 to 40 hours, depending on temperature and humidity. Due to high humidity levels at the farm drying coffee can be challenging. Typically, Bernabe transports freshly Washed coffee to the Sajonia collection agency in Plan de Grama. From here coffee is sent the same day to the Sajonia's dry mill in nearby Matagalpa for

drying on patios or raised beds. Each lot of coffee delivered to Sajonia Estate is checked for quality, cupped, scored and assigned either as a regional blend or separated as a micro lot. The mill has recently developed an open-source mobile software traceability system for producers in which coffee results are inputted and published in real-time, creating immediate feedback for producers and supporting agronomists during harvest.

The relationship with Sajonia is very important for Bernabe. Due to the current political situation in Nicaragua access to credit is hard to come by and recent low markets has reduced farm gate prices in the country. Lack of investment in road infrastructure in coffee-growing regions also creates barriers for producers to transport their coffee easily to agents. Through his involvement with the Los Campesinos project Bernabe has been able to access credit through the Local Development Fund and agronomical assistance with the help of the Nitlapan UCA Research and Development Institute, enabling him to better invest in his farm infrastructure and develop quality through good farming practices. The introduction of the nearby collection agency in Plan de Grama has also reduced the distance Bernabe needs to travel to transport his coffee after harvest and support in post-harvesting has opened up opportunities to develop higher quality microlots, whilst engaging with external markets.

