

Yuri Martin Alvarado Cuadra

Nicaragua

Farm(s): El Talisman
Region: La Grecia, San Ramon, Matagalpa
Country: Nicaragua
Association: Sajonia Estate, Finca Coffee Collection
Altitude: 850 masl
Variety: Catimor and Marsellesa
Process: Honeys and Naturals

Situated in the region of Matagalpa, Yuri Cuadra runs his coffee farm, El Talisman. Although the farm has 20 hectares of land, only 13 of those hectares are used for coffee cultivation, with 7 hectares being used for the cultivation of grain. Situated in La Grecia, San Ramon where you will find majestic, sheer rock cliffs and massive trees that reach up to the mist at about 30 metres or more. As a result of the rising warm air which cools quickly, cloud forests are a year-round phenomenon. This provides an ideal climate for the incredible lush vegetation found in the area, from giant ferns to delicate orchids. This densely forested area provides an ideal habitat for an abundance of unusual and endangered fauna and flora. Amongst these, you will find the magnificent Quetzal, a splendid and elusive, jade coloured bird that blends into the forest's foliage with ease.

Don Cuadra's coffee is part of the Finca collection of coffees, supported by Sajonia Estate in nearby Matagalpa. This programme focuses on increasing the quality of the coffee harvested and offers support for smallholder coffee producers. 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. Coffee is delivered directly to the processing facility at Sajonia Estate.

The farm dates back to 1974 and has been in the Cuadra family since 2015. The farm, divided into lots to distinguish between quality, variety and processing. El Talisman has been reforested under the supervision of Don Cuadra and as an environmentally aware farmer, he has put water management processes into place from the wet mill to avoid any possible oversight or contamination. Approximately 40% of the coffee farmed is grown under shade. Yuri intercrops banana, orange and lemon trees within the farm which creates shade for both coffee trees and coffee workers. The shade trees also keep the sandy loam soils of the farm, which have good nutrient and water retention properties, cool through the hotter parts of the day and prevents soil erosion. The temperature on Finca el Talisman ranges between 15°C to 20°C and annual rainfall levels sit around 2200mm.

Yuri works on the farm with his wife, Johana and six permanent staff members throughout the year. This number increases to at least 20 during peak harvest to with picking and processing. Pickers are paid in accordance with local wage tables for each *lata* of coffee they pick, which is a local measurement volume of 10" x 10" x 12.5" that equates to around 20 litres, or 14kg of cherry. On average, each picker collects between 6 and 8 *lata* per day to receive 240 cordobas as payment. They receive payment every fourteen days. In addition to payment they are also given access to loans with low interest rates and repayment terms. They also receive social benefits, performance and Christmas bonuses.

There are roughly around 2800 trees per hectare on Finca el Talisman, all of which are Catimor and Marsellesa. The farm produces around 200 quintales of coffee on average each harvest, which equates to around 9,200kg. During harvest coffee is handpicked, with cherries being selected for colour and maturation and then it is pulped to remove the outer skin, before being fermented for 72-90 hours, Thereafter, the coffee is transported to Sajonia Estate where it is slow dried in a covered tunnel.

At the dry mill coffee is quality checked, cupped, scored and assigned either as a regional or microlot coffee. Recently Sajonia 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 agronomists during harvest for quality and consistency.

Through his involvement with Sajonia's Finca collection project, Yuri has been able to access credit through the Local Development Fund and agronomical assistance with the help of the Nitalpan UCA Research and Development

Institute, enabling him to better invest in his farm infrastructure and develop quality through good farming practices. This has meant he is better equipped to produce high quality microlot coffee, access new markets and receive better remuneration for his output. This support is vital in smallholder farming communities. Low coffee prices are a challenge for Yuri, but with the support of the Finca project, he hopes to increase the quality of his coffee and thereby receive better prices.

