

APRIL 19, 2007

Piloncillo -- Sweetness in a Cone



A cone *shape*, that is. Piloncillo (pee-lon-SEE-yoh), is an unrefined cane sugar that is traditionally used in Mexican cooking and has been in existence for at least 500 years. It is made from pure sugar cane juice from cane that has been hand cut, crushed by machine, and then heated to reduce its water content. The name refers to the cone shape in which it is produced. Although Piloncillo can be used in any recipe in which sugar is called for, it is much harder than brown sugar -- in order to use it, it needs to be either scraped with a serrated knife, crushed with a mortar and pestle, or melted.

We had the pleasure of being invited to taste a piloncillo-based menu created by Chef Richard Sandoval at one of his restaurants, Maya. The smoky, molasses-like sweetness was infused in everything from the spicy-sweet chile vinaigrette on the salad, to the adobo-piloncillo short ribs perched on a crispy corn tostada, to the Café de Olla (pictured), sweet Mexican coffee with cinnamon and orange zest as a cap to the meal. These dishes, and others laced with Piloncillo, can be found on Maya's menu.

Piloncillo is available at Mexican grocery stores or [online](#).

Maya

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