

Meet the Mexican woman turning cactus leather into sustainable fashion



Her cactus leather fashion company landed Mexican Cristina Alfaro, a Tec de Monterrey graduate, on Forbes' 30 Under 30 list.

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Yazbeth Hernández

The next time you go shopping, bear in mind that the leather used to make a purse, wallet, or even sandals doesn't have to be animal or synthetic, it can be produced from **prickly pear cactus**.

One of the women responsible for this is Mexican **Cristina Alfaro**, founder of [OKA](#), a company aiming to transform the **fashion** industry through accessories hand crafted from this material that are 100 percent made in Mexico, according to Cristina herself.

She began developing her project while studying at [Tec de Monterrey](#). Her current career path has led her to be included in [Forbes](#) magazine's 30 Under 30 list.

In an interview with CONECTA, Alfaro shares details about the use of **cactus leather** and advice for those wishing to follow a similar path.

Cristina Alfaro, a Tec Santa Fe campus graduate, is the founder of Oka, a fashion brand that makes accessories from cactus leather. Photo: Yazbeth Hernández.



Transforming cactus leather into sustainable fashion

Cristina says that she decided to found OKA while studying for a degree in [Business Transformation and Strategy](#) at the [Tec's Santa Fe campus](#). Her goal was to tackle fast fashion pollution.

*"We make accessories from **cactus leather** because it's 100% vegan and a sustainable fiber. This helps us reduce our environmental footprint and promote Mexican products made by artisans", she explains.*

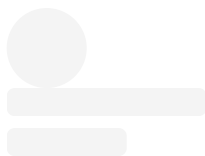
According to the company's website, the use of this material offers multiple **environmental benefits**: its cultivation doesn't need irrigation, saving large amounts of water; harvesting prickly pear cactus doesn't damage the plant; and no chemicals such as herbicides or pesticides are used.

"We aim to reduce our environmental footprint and promote Mexican products made by artisans".

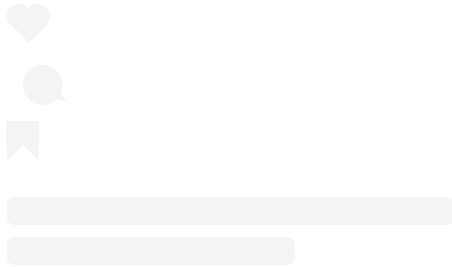
Thanks to these and other factors, the brand's products have received organic and vegan production **certifications** from institutions such as the [Mexican Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#), the [United States Department of Agriculture](#), and the animal rights organization [PETA](#).

After five years of development and overcoming challenges such as limited knowledge about **cactus leather** among both customers and suppliers, Cristina Alfaro has managed to consolidate both her presence and that of her company on multiple platforms.

They have appeared in online publications such as Food and Pleasure and Thunder MX, and Alfaro herself was included in Forbes' [30 Under 30 2025](#) list for Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Central America, and the Dominican Republic.



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His tips for successful entrepreneurship

The **entrepreneur** highlights two key elements to successfully developing her project over the years: having a support network and making the decision to begin.

She recommends that those still studying take advantage of the **guidance**, knowledge, and connections they can acquire at their educational institutions.

*“Studying at the Tec really helped me, mainly because of the support I received from my professors in areas such as law, finance, and marketing. I was able to work on my **business** through my course projects”, she says.*

Finally, the [Tec graduate](#) encourages those wishing to **start a business** to put their ideas into action, regardless of the stage they’re at.

“Do it today. *If you have an idea, start working on it today. Don’t wait until everything is ready. Problems will be solved along the way”, she concludes.*

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