

Glossary of Sherry Terminology

Albariza

The chalky soils on which the best Palomino is grown.

Almacenista

Small Sherry stockholder. Historically, almacenistas would sell their wines to the big Sherry houses, where they would be blended into soleras to create the house style. In 1997, laws that prevented almacenistas from bottling their own Sherry were changed, making it possible for small producers to sell their own wine.

Amontillado

A Sherry that starts its aging under a layer of flor, but then loses it, and thus finishes its aging process oxidatively. The result is a pale brown wine with a nutty aroma.

Aroba

The traditional unit of measurement used in Jerez. One aroba equals 16.6 liters.

Aspilla

A dipstick that is used to measure how much liquid there is in a barrel.

Bota

The name used for a barrel in Sherry country.

Copita

The tulip-shaped glass in which Sherry is traditionally drunk.

Capataz

The cellar-master, who keeps track of all the barrels and designates which barrels are going to make which style of Sherry.

Cream sherry

An English innovation, Cream Sherry is a blend of dry Oloroso Sherry and sweet Pedro Ximénez.

Criadera

Each level or tier in a solera system is called a criadera (the word literally translates to nursery).

Fino

A style of Sherry that is aged entirely under flor, and therefore not oxidized. Finos are dry, golden in color, and best served cold.

Flor

The layer of yeast that spontaneously forms on top of the wine in some barrels of Sherry.

Llamada

The specific markings written on the barrels by the capataz usually indicating the solera and the number of botas in it.

Manzanilla

A special type of fino that is produced only in the town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda. It tends to be more delicate and fragile than other finos.

Moscatel

A grape varietal usually used for making sweet styles of Sherry. Different strains of Moscatel are actually grown all over the world. In Sherry, it finds its greatest expression in the town of Chipiona, where it produces a Sherry with strong floral aromas.

Oloroso

A style of Sherry that ages oxidatively, without any flor. Olorosos are fortified to around 18% alcohol to kill off any flor that might try to form.

Palo Cortado

A rare style of Sherry, Palo Cortado is usually described as being halfway between Amontillado and Oloroso.

Palomino

The dominant grape of Sherry, Palomino is a white grape that produces a fairly neutral, low-alcohol wine that is used as the base for the creation of most styles of Sherry.

Pedro Ximénez (style)

A sweet wine made from the Pedro Ximénez grape. It is made by first drying the grapes in the sun to concentrate their sweetness.

Pedro Ximénez (varietal)

A grape varietal grown in Sherry country. It is usually used to make a sweet wine, but can be used in the creation of any style.

Saca

A bottling of the oldest wine of a solera.

Sobretabla

The youngest wine that feeds the first criadera of a solera, it comes from just one vintage.

Solera

System of fractional blending used to age Sherry and produce a consistent, non-vintage product. Essentially, small amounts of younger wine are gradually blended into older wine, and the final product is bottled from the barrel with the oldest wines.

Venencia

The tool that is used to pull samples of Sherry from barrels without disturbing the flor.

VOS/VORS

Very old Sherries can receive a special designation indicating an approximate age for the soleras from which they are drawn. VOS is for wines at least 20 years old, and VORS is for wines at least 30 years old. VOS stands for Vinum Optimum Signatum, or Very Old Sherry, while VORS stands for Vinum Optimum Rarum Signatum, or Very Old Rare Sherry.