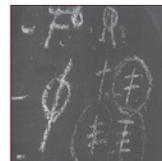


jerez-xérèz-sherry y manzanilla



Sherry 101: All About Sherry



D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry y Manzanilla

The D.O. of Jerez-Xérès-Sherry y Manzanilla is the home of Spain's most famous wine: sherry. While the climate here on the southern end of Spain is largely Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean creates a unique microclimate in Sherry Country. The Denomination is situated near Cadiz bounded by the 3 towns of Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa Maria, and Sanlucar de Barameda. This area is on the west-facing side of a large cape, and the Atlantic Ocean moderates the hot winds blowing down from the central plateau. This climate, along with the chalk-heavy soils that glaze over in the heat of the summer to trap in the moisture from the spring, creates perfect conditions for grape vines.

Grapes

Palomino for dry Sherries

Moscatel and Pedro Ximénez for the sweet Sherries.

Flor

Fine Sherry can be dry or sweet. The best dry Sherry is made from the Palomino grape grown on chalky soil called albariza, which resembles that of Cognac and Champagne. Following fermentation of the Palomino grapes to complete dryness, the young wine is transferred to used, 500-liter oak butts (barrels). There, a phenomenon occurs that is unique to Jerez: some butts develop a thick white layer of yeast called *flor* (flower), which covers and seals the wine. A wind called the Poniente, which comes from the west, brings cool moist air from the ocean creating the conditions favorable for the *flor* to grow. This prevents the wine beneath from oxidizing or turning into vinegar. *Flor* cannot be reliably induced or controlled. Wines that are aged exclusively under this for are known as wines that have undergone a biological aging. Wines where no such *flor* is present are known as oxidative wines. There are also wines that undergo both biological and oxidative aging.

Types of Sherry

Biological Aging	Oxidative Aging	Both Types of Aging
Fino Manzanilla	Oloroso Pedro Ximénez Moscatel	Amontillado Palo Cortado

Fino

If it seems the *flor* will remain, the wines of greatest delicacy and finesse are then fortified (by an addition of brandy) to about 15% alcohol. If as they mature these wines fulfill their promise of elegance, they will ultimately be classified as 'Fine.'

Serving Temperature: 45 degrees

Manzanilla

The coastal town of Sanlucar de Barrameda produces a special 'Fine' called Manzanilla. Because of its unique microclimate the wines aged in Sanlucar are lighter in texture and are distinguished as separate type of wine.

Serving Temperature: 45 degrees

Since Fino and Manzanilla remain unoxidized, due to the protective layer of *Flor*, they should be served cold and need to be consumed as soon after bottling and opening as possible.

Amontillado

While under *Flor*, some of the more robust Finos may be reclassified for development over time as Amontillado, a special type of aged Fino that has been allowed to oxidize, taking on characteristic bronze tones and hazelnut aromas and flavors.

Serving Temperature: 58 degrees

Oloroso

If the *flor* seems unlikely to remain, or the wines lack the delicacy requisite of Fino, some producers immediately fortify them to about 18% alcohol, to be classed after aging as Oloroso or the rare Pale Cortado, and then possibly blended to make Cream Sherry, for which demand remains strong.

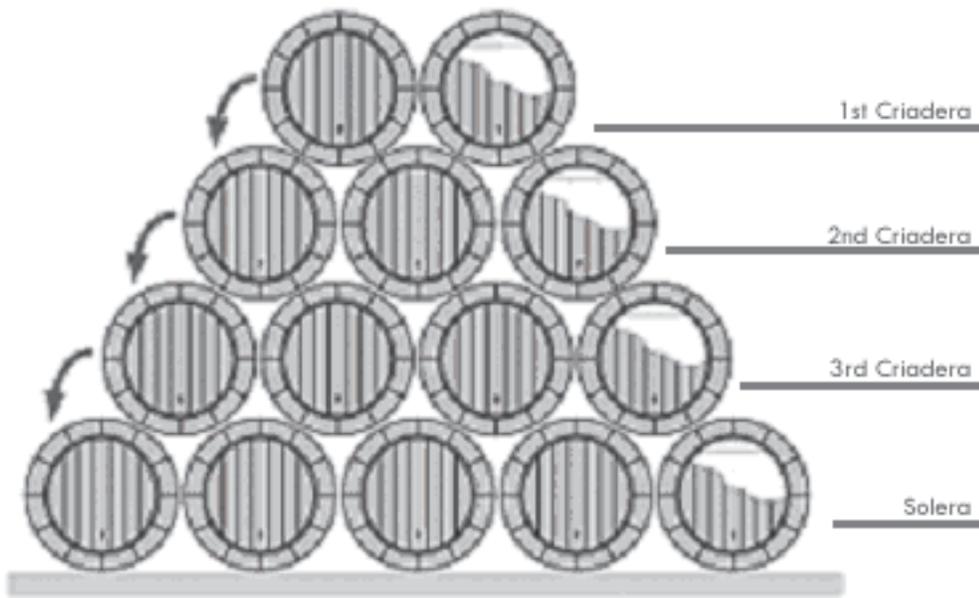
Serving Temperature: 58 degrees

Pedro Ximénez & Moscatel

The grapes used for unblended sweet wines are usually Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel, grown on clay or sandy soils. These dark, raisiny, extraordinarily concentrated wines, made from shriveled grapes dried on wicker racks following the harvest, can acquire enormous complexity with long cask age-up to 50 years! Cream Sherries, an English invention, are sweet blends, usually of dry Oloroso base wine with Pedro Ximénez.

Serving Temperature: 48 degrees

Solera



The maturation of Sherry is unique. Sherry was once and occasionally still is aged according to its vintage. But as trade with England reached its height in the 19th century, shippers made a useful discovery about these aging wines: by withdrawing just a small portion from each butt for bottling, and replacing it with an equal portion of younger wine of similar quality and style, they were able to create in 3-4 months a wine identical to the original. This accounts for Sherry's remarkable consistency.

Each lot of similar wines is called a solera and might be maintained in four or five stages called scales. Wine for bottling is drawn only from the oldest scale, often also referred to as the solera. Several times a year, as much as 30%, but more typically 5-10%, of the contents of the oldest scale is bottled. This is replaced with wine from the next oldest, which itself is then replenished with younger wine, and so on successively for all of the scales within the solera. This process is called "running the scales"

Some Fino and Manzanilla soleras consist of hundreds of butts in many scales and are bottled as often as twice a month, to assure freshness. Very old soleras of other styles might consist of only two butts and may be bottled as seldom as once a year. It is a brilliant, flexible system for maintaining consistently high quality. It allows the shipper to draw on an infinite number of styles.

Almacenistas

In the city of Jerez de la Frontera, and the coastal towns of Sanlucar de Barrameda and Puerto de Santa Maria, the larger shippers are not the only producers of Sherry. For years, a tenacious group of professionals called almacenistas (stockholders) have maintained their own small cellars, supplying the shippers with stocks of rare and unusual, uncompromising, completely dry wines for blending purposes. In 1997 the laws changed allowing for almacenistas with small stocks to bottle wines.

Each year, the major houses offer limited-production selections from several top almacenistas who mature their wines according to the same high quality standards. These come from small soleras bottled as seldom as once a year. A label designation such as 1/20 indicates that the bottling is from a solera consisting of only 20 butts! These are consummate expressions of fine, handcrafted, traditional dry Sherry. These are Sherry's greatest wines.

VOS/VORS

Very old sherries can receive a special designation indicating an approximate age of the soleras. There are two designations; one is VOS for wines at least twenty years old and the other is VORS for wines at least thirty years old. VOS stands for Vinum Optimum Signatum or in English Very Old Sherry and VORS is Vinum Optimum Rare Signatum and in English Very Old Rare Sherry.