

Sherry

November 17, 2017

What is it & where is it from?

(map from WineFolly)



(A lot of text from Wikipedia, slightly edited)

Sherry (English: /ˈʃɛri/, Spanish: *Jerez* [xeˈreθ] or [xeˈres]) is a fortified wine made from white grapes that are grown near the city of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, Spain. Sherry is produced in a variety of styles made primarily from the Palomino grape, ranging from light versions similar to white table wines, such as Manzanilla and Fino, to darker and heavier versions that have been allowed to oxidise as they age in barrel, such as Amontillado and Oloroso. Sweet dessert wines are also made from Pedro Ximenez or Moscatel grapes, and are sometimes blended with Palomino-based Sherries.

The word "Sherry" is an anglicisation of Xeres (Jerez). Sherry was previously known as *sack*, from the Spanish *saca*, meaning "extraction" from the solera. In Europe, "Sherry" has protected designation of origin status, and under Spanish law, all wine labelled as "Sherry" must legally come from the Sherry Triangle, an area in the province of Cádiz between Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and El Puerto de Santa María. In 1933 the Jerez *Denominación de Origen* was the first Spanish *denominación* to be officially recognised in this way, officially named *D.O. Jerez-Xeres-Sherry* and sharing the same governing council as *D.O. Manzanilla Sanlúcar de Barrameda*.

After fermentation is complete, the base wines are fortified with grape spirit in order to increase their final alcohol content. Wines classified as suitable for aging as Fino and Manzanilla are fortified until

they reach a total alcohol content of 15.5 per cent by volume. As they age in barrel, they develop a layer of flor—a yeast-like growth that helps protect the wine from excessive oxidation. Those wines that are classified to undergo aging as Oloroso are fortified to reach an alcohol content of at least 17 per cent. They do not develop flor and so oxidise slightly as they age, giving them a darker colour. Because the fortification takes place after fermentation, most sherries are initially dry, with any sweetness being added later. In contrast, port wine is fortified halfway through its fermentation, which stops the process so that not all of the sugar is turned into alcohol.

Wines from different years are aged and blended using a solera system before bottling, so that bottles of sherry will not usually carry a specific vintage year and can contain a small proportion of very old wine. Sherry is regarded by many wine writers as "underappreciated" and a "neglected wine treasure".

What kinds of sherry are there?

- **Fino** ('fine' in Spanish) is the driest and palest of the traditional varieties of Sherry. The wine is aged in barrels under a cap of flor yeast to prevent contact with the air.
- **Manzanilla** is an especially light variety of Fino Sherry made around the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda.
- **Manzanilla Pasada** is a Manzanilla that has undergone extended aging or has been partially oxidised, giving a richer, nuttier flavour.
- **Amontillado** is a variety of Sherry that is first aged under flor and then exposed to oxygen, producing a sherry that is darker than a Fino but lighter than an Oloroso. Naturally dry, they are sometimes sold lightly to medium sweetened but these can no longer be labelled as Amontillado.^[12]
- **Oloroso** ('scented' in Spanish) is a variety of sherry aged oxidatively for a longer time than a Fino or Amontillado, producing a darker and richer wine. With alcohol levels between 18 and 20%, Olorosos are the most alcoholic sherries.^[13] Like Amontillado, naturally dry, they are often also sold in sweetened versions called Cream sherry. As with Amontillado "Sweet Oloroso", "Rich Oloroso" and "Oloroso Dulce" are prohibited terms.^[14]
- **Palo Cortado** is a variety of Sherry that is initially aged like an Amontillado, typically for three or four years, but which subsequently develops a character closer to an Oloroso. This either happens by accident when the flor dies, or commonly the flor is killed by fortification or filtration.
- **Jerez Dulce (Sweet Sherries)** are made either by fermenting dried Pedro Ximénez (**PX**) or Moscatel grapes, which produces an intensely sweet dark brown or black wine, or by blending sweeter wines or grape must with a drier variety.
- **Cream** is a type of sweet sherry first made in the 1860s by blending different sherries, usually including Oloroso and Pedro Ximénez.

How is it made?

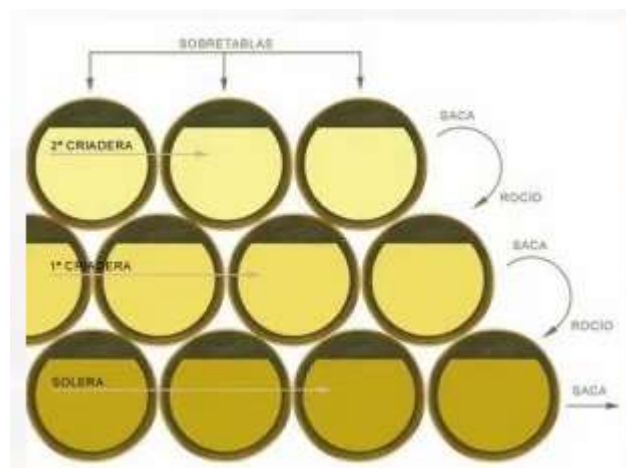
The grapes are harvested in early September, and pressed lightly to extract the must. The must from the first pressing, the *primera yema*, is used to produce Fino and Manzanilla; the must from the second pressing, the *segunda yema*, will be used for Oloroso; the product of additional pressings is used for lesser wines, distillation, and vinegar. The must is then fermented in stainless steel vats until the end of November, producing a dry white wine with 11–12 per cent alcohol content. Previously, the fermentation and initial aging was done in wood; now it is almost exclusively done in stainless steel, with the exception of one or two high-end wines.

Immediately after fermentation, the wine is sampled and the first classification is performed. The sherry is fortified using *destilado*, made by distilling wine, usually from La Mancha. The distilled spirit

is first mixed with mature sherry to make a 50/50 blend known as *mitad y mitad* (half and half), and then the *mitad y mitad* is mixed with the younger sherry to the proper proportions. This two-stage procedure is performed so the strong alcohol will not shock the young sherry and spoil it.

The fortified wine is stored in 500-litre casks made of North American oak, which is more porous than French or Spanish oak. The casks, or *butts*, are filled five-sixths full, leaving "the space of two fists" empty at the top to allow flor to develop on top of the wine.

Sherry is then aged in the solera system where new wine is put into wine barrels at the beginning of a series of three to nine barrels. Periodically, a portion of the wine in a barrel is moved into the next barrel down, using tools called the *canoas* (canoes) and *rociador* (sprinkler) to move the wine gently and avoid damaging the layer of flor in each barrel. At the end of the series only a portion of the final barrel is bottled and sold. Depending on the type of wine, the portion moved may be between five and thirty percent of each barrel. This process is called "running the scales" because each barrel in the series is called a scale. Thus, the age of the youngest wine going in the bottle is determined by the number of barrels in the series, and every bottle also contains some much older wine than is stated. Sherry is aged in the solera for a minimum of three years. A large solera system may consist of scales that require more than one barrel to hold. The word 'solera' means 'on the ground'; this refers to the stacking system that was, and sometimes still is, used, with the youngest barrels at the top and the oldest scale, also somewhat ambiguously called 'the solera', at the bottom.



(Image from azahar-sevilla.com)

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Savory & James	Fino	\$12.99
Alvear	Fino en Rama 2008	\$12.99
Tio Pepe	Fino Muy Seco Palomino Fino	\$19.99
Valdespino	Manzinella Deliciosa en Rama	\$12.99/375ml
Barbadillo	Amontillado (blend)	\$10.99
Hartley & Gibson	Amontillado (blend)	\$11.99
Leyenda	Oloroso	\$9.99
Harveys	Bristol Cream	\$12.99
Alvear	Solera 1927 Pedro Ximenez	\$24.99/375ml