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 Cádiz bounded by the 3 towns of Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa María, and Sanlúcar de Barrameda. 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 summer to trap in moisture from the spring, creates perfect conditions for grape vines.

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 fortified to 15% alcohol by volume and transferred to used, 500L 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 in from the west, brings cool moist air from the ocean, creating 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 flor 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: Fino, Manzanilla
Each lot of similar wines is called a solera and is maintained in multiple stages called scales or criaderas. 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 until one reaches the sobretabla, or top criadera composed of un-aged wine. The solera will have at least three criaderas but may contain more depending on the wine and the style. This process of refilling criaderas from the younger barrels 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 ensure 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 Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María, 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 almacenistas with small stocks to bottle wines.

**Aging Designations**

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 Sherries 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.

Old sherries can receive a special designation indicating an approximate age of the soleras. There are four designations:

- **12-Year**
  Wines that have an average age of 12 years in solera.

- **15-Year**
  Wines that have an average age of 15 years in solera.

- **VOS (Vinum Optimum Signatum/Very Old Sherry)**
  Wines at least twenty years old.

- **VORS (Vinum Optimum Rare Signatum/Very Old Rare Sherry)**
  Wines at least thirty years old.
Bodegas César Florido was founded in 1887 and is currently maintained by César Florido, a descendant of the founder. The winery is the oldest bodega in the town of Chipiona, located near Sanlúcar within the Jerez denomination of origin. Bodegas César Florido is one of only two bodegas in Chipiona that are still operating outside of the cooperative. Chipiona is an area dedicated to growing Moscatel, but most of the wine produced here is sold in bulk to the Sherry houses of Jerez, El Puerto de Santa María and Sanlúcar. Bodegas César Florido, by contrast, is one of the few bodegas that is estate bottling.

Moscato Dorado 375ml

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Chipiona</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varietals</td>
<td>100% Moscatel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine Age</td>
<td>15 - 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Lutte Raisonnée</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sweet Style
1 year in solera Aging
600 cases Production
Drinks at 45º F Serving

Moscato Especial 375ml

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
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<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Lutte Raisonnée</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sweet Style
Arpa added after fermentation, 1 year in solera Aging
600 cases Production
Drinks at 45º F Serving

Moscato Pasas 375ml

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Lutte Raisonnée</td>
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Sweet Style
Grapes are sun-dried on straw mats, aged 9 years in solera Aging
300 cases Production
Drinks at 45º F Serving

César Florido Fino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Chipiona</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varietals</td>
<td>100% Palomino from Balbina and Almalfi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Albariza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine Age</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Lutte Raisonnée</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fino Style
3 years in solera Aging
800 cases Production
Drinks at 45º F Serving

Oloroso Cruz del Mar

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<tr>
<th>Village</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varietals</td>
<td>100% Palomino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Albariza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine Age</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Lutte Raisonnée</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Oloroso Style
Aged 12 years in solera Aging
400 cases Production
Drinks at 68º F Serving

Peña del Aguila Palo Cortado

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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Palo Cortado Style
Aged 38 years in solera Aging
50 cases Production
Drinks at 68º F Serving
Bodegas La Cigarrera is located in the heart of Sanlúcar de Barrameda. This almacenista began operations in 1758, and cellar master Ignacio Hidalgo began bottling his own Manzanilla in 1997. Ignacio is a ninth-generation cellar master, whose family’s wines were previously sold to famous Sherry houses, including Lustau, for bottling. La Cigarrera refers to the cigarette/tobacco women who used to sell on the sidewalks of Sanlúcar. It is a tribute to the pride, beauty, and history of this town.

The key to the quality of La Cigarrera is the exceptional raw materials and the location of the winery. La Cigarrera Manzanilla is produced exclusively from vineyards in the Jerez Superior Denomination of Origin. Only wines aged in Sanlúcar de Barrameda are labeled as D.O. Manzanilla. The unique microclimate of Sanlúcar de Barrameda creates a very special “flor”, or yeast, that grows year round on the wines, protecting them from the atmosphere. Hence, the wine goes through what is termed a “biological aging,” with the wine aging and breathing through this layer of yeast. This growth is actually affected by subtle differences in location within the town. La Cigarrera is located in the ideal center with proximity to the ocean, giving the wine its distinctive character.

Bodegas Grant, located in the heart of the town of El Puerto de Santa María, has been owned by the same family since 1841. Edmundo Grant and his son Edmundo are the current caretakers of the bodega. The Grant family are former almacenistas who only recently began to estate bottle. Although they do not own any vineyards, they primarily source grapes from the famed Pago Valvaina. Their label, La Garrocha, refers to a famous dance performed with a stick while on horseback.
A winery founded in 1832 by José Antonio Sierra, who had been a master carpenter. As such he was responsible for building barrels for all the major Sherry houses. Recognized as one of the top cooperers in the area, he longed to become involved in the Sherry trade itself. Eventually he set about building a small winery with the aim of making the best Sherries possible. As this business was dominated by the nobility, a start-up such as his was not very welcome. After many hardships he was able to establish and grow his business, becoming one of the top almácenistas (stockholders) of high quality Sherries. Poking fun at his struggle, the label depicts a fox hunt of that time period with the “nobles” hunting the fox (El Maestro Sierra).

Pilar Pia Pechovierto currently owns El Maestro Sierra. She is assisted by Ana Cabestrero and Juan Clavijo who is the capataz (more below on the job description of a capataz). Doña Pilar is a widow whose husband was a direct descendant of the family. She has respected her husband’s wish that the winery remain in operation and over the last thirty years has been selling very limited stock to a few of the large Sherry houses. Because the wines have remained virtually untouched due to the very low business, the stocks at El Maestro Sierra are some of the oldest in Jerez.

Juan Clavijo has been the capataz of the winery for over fifty years. The capataz is essentially the cellar master, in charge of all the wines once they have been transferred into the casks for aging and designation. He is the one who decides which wines will become Finos, which will become Amontillados, and so on. He is responsible for tasting all the barrels and deciding when to rack the wines. Having been at El Maestro Sierra his whole career, he knows the treasure it contains. Juan does everything by hand according to the old traditions.

In 2003 Ana Cabestrero was brought on board to oversee the winery. She came to Jerez looking for a change from her family’s Ribera del Duero operation. In what many in Spain would consider a questionable move, she left the comfort of her home and moved away to find a job in viticulture. André had met Ana before in Ribera del Duero and she was and remains an independent and fiery person. To move to such a male-dominated area and for a job in a sector experiencing regressive growth was a bold undertaking. When she landed at Maestro Sierra she immediately recognized one of the great treasures of Spain. She has moved quickly to get the wines out into the market and attain the recognition they deserve.

The treasures of El Maestro Sierra are many. From the back of their building they have a clear view of the Atlantic Ocean (at El Puerto de Santa María). This unique location in Jerez is one of the keys to their terroir. Their situation allows for the flor at the winery to be present all year round, giving their wines a unique quality. They have been buying their grapes from the same suppliers for many decades and these growers are known as having the best terroir in the area.

Since the wines at El Maestro Sierra have seen little sales the stocks have remained virtually untouched for the last thirty years. The soleras at the winery are easily over 60 years old and some may be close to 100 years old. The larger houses have pillaged their old soleras, leaving them with little old wine. Unfortunately the legislation only allows for wines to be labeled as old as 30 years (VORS). They also maintain an in-house cooper to uphold their heritage. By anyone’s standard in Jerez, the crown jewel of Sherry is El Maestro Sierra.
El Maestro Sierra Amontillado 1830
Village: Jerez de la Frontera
Varietals: 100% Palomino
Soil: Albariza and chalk
Aging: 50+ years in solera
Production: 50 cases from 2,000L butts
Serving: Drink at 68º F

El Maestro Sierra Oloroso 1/14
Village: Jerez de la Frontera
Varietals: 100% Palomino
Soil: Albariza and chalk
Aging: 50+ years in solera
Production: 100 cases from 14 butts
Serving: Drink at 68º F

El Maestro Sierra Palo Cortado
Village: Jerez de la Frontera
Varietals: 100% Palomino
Soil: Albariza and chalk
Aging: 50+ years in solera
Production: 60 cases from 4 butts
Serving: Drink at 68º F

El Maestro Sierra Pedro Ximénez Viejísimo
Village: Jerez de la Frontera
Varietals: 100% Pedro Ximénez
Soil: Albariza and chalk
Aging: 50+ years in solera
Production: 100 cases from 14 butts
Serving: Drink at 68º F

El Maestro Sierra Oloroso 1/7
Village: Jerez de la Frontera
Varietals: 100% Palomino
Soil: Albariza and chalk
Aging: 50+ years in solera
Production: 20 cases from 7 butts
Serving: Drink at 68º F

Gutiérrez Colosía

Gutiérrez Colosía is located in the town of El Puerto de Santa María. Established in 1838 on the banks of the Guadalete River, it is today the only local winery that benefits from this placement. The combined effects of the river and the ocean breezes create a very active flor that remains on the wine year round, yielding special Sherry which illustrates the concept that in Jerez, location is everything.

Juan Carlos Gutiérrez currently runs the operations in this fabulous old bodega. Once an almacénista, Juan Carlos decided to begin estate bottling in 1997. The bodega had previously been selling its stock to the major Sherry houses. Juan Carlos’s wonderful solera hails from the beginnings of the winery, with butts ranging in size from 500 to 1000 liters.

Fino Elcano owes its name to Juan Sebastián Elcano, a Basque explorer who sailed with Magellan on his global circumnavigation and actually completed the voyage as captain following Magellan’s death. The expedition made final landfall at Sanlúcar de Barrameda on the Sherry coast, not far from El Puerto de Santa María. Gutiérrez’s Fino is characterized by its freshness and brightness, deriving from its sheltered crianza (aging) within the bodega walls, which lasts 4 years on the lees in successively older soleras. The ocean is palpable everywhere within the walls of this building, creating an especially luxuriant flor which extends even to the walls in the summer heat. All the fruit used at Gutiérrez Colosía is sourced from the best Albariza-soil vineyards within Jerez Superior.