

**Just Who is this Misunderstood Sherry?**  
**Steven Olson**  
**25th October, 1999**  
**for Restaurant Business "The Wine Seller"**

Who is this misunderstood lass named Sherry? How can she be at once so popular, and yet so often disregarded, even disrespected, just plain dissed? We Americans do indeed love and adore her, yet we rarely, if ever, get to learn what she is all about. Poor girl--she can be so cool, but we too often see her when she is frustrated and all heated up. She wants to be at her best for us, she wants to be fresh, but we always seem to catch her when she's tired. She loves to be around food and her friends, but we prefer to make her drink alone. Rarely does Sherry get to show off her true character. It just isn't fair. Imagine how popular she would be if she were treated with a little respect.

Sherry is the drink of choice of many Americans today, in spite of the conditions in which she is served. Many of us have never actually tasted what a great dry Sherry can be like. Fresh Sherry, from a freshly arrived, freshly opened bottle, served chilled, with food---this might be begin your long-awaited journey to Nirvana.

Sherry is spirited, but she is NOT a spirit. She is a wine, a fortified wine, and the best examples can be delicious, complex, exciting, scintillating, and refreshing. She should not be purchased for long term storage, (unless you should choose to harbor a cask of Amontillado) she should not be left open without some sort of preservative gas, and she should never be found gracing the shelf above a cappuccino machine behind the bar.

Sherry should be served chilled, in a *copita*, the glass of choice for this elixir. Serving her in the appropriate three ounce pour helps to make this already amazing value even more highly profitable. She should also be fresh. Contrary to popular belief, her shelf life is not unlimited, and she should be preserved like all other wines.

She can be served as an aperitif, or some sweeter styles can serve as dessert, but she vastly prefers to be served next to a plate of food. As Spain's most famous wine, and perhaps its most notable contribution to the world of wine and food, Sherry is extremely versatile, and comes in a variety of styles (see box), one of which is appropriate for any occasion, and all of which are amazingly food-friendly.

In the province of Cadiz, in southwestern Andalucia, is the D.O. Jerez, or Xeres, the origin of this special wine, known by English-speaking people as Sherry.

The *albariza* soils of this region are extremely important to the unique characteristics of the wine, particularly its remarkable acidity. The grape of choice of this region, used in the production of all dry Sherry, is the Palomino Fino. Moscatel and Pedro Ximenez are grapes used for blending in some Amontillados and Olorosos, and for the sweet, dessert styles of Sherry, which usually carry the name of the grape on the label. The first phase of Sherry production is practically identical to other wines. The real differences all occur after the fermentation process has been completed.

The distinguishing elements of Sherry production, other than the grape varietal, the soils, and the climatic conditions, that separate her from other wines, are:

- 1) the development of *flor*, a film of yeasts that grow on the surface of the wine, feeding on the atmosphere of the Bodega, nutrients in the wine, and alcohol, while providing a protective layer against oxidation. It is thickest in fino and manzanilla wines.
- 2) the Solera process of blending and barrel aging in which young wines from a *criadera*, or batch of wine aging in barrels, is added to older criaderas, which not only provides needed nutrients to keep the flor alive, but also helps to keep the older wines consistent as the younger wines take on the characteristics of the old wines, while adding their vitality and youth to the mix.
- 3) the unique fortification process, which requires three different additions of 95.5 degree spirit, sometimes mixed 50% with young wine.

What does all of this mean to me? It means that we have discovered yet another wine that had not been considered for the menu, a wine that has been previously overlooked, particularly as a mate for the chef's cuisine. Although it is traditionally served with soups, most notoriously bouillon, I recommend that you expand your horizons a little; certainly Sherry is cozy with tapas and with all

natures of seafood and great appetizers, but try a Fino with sushi, put an Amontillado next to a roast, and see how Moscatel Superiore may be the world's greatest match for chocolate. Sherry is also highly appropriate for the upcoming Holiday season: before the meal, with the bird, (I dare you to try a Palo Cortado with Turkey!) or to warm the cockles of the soul after dinner is complete, when the fire is crackling and Sherry is sweet.

### **THE BOX**

#### **GET FAMILIAR WITH SHERRY'S STYLE**

##### **fino**

pale, dry & delicate, great with seafood and soups or alone as an aperitif. Fino matures beneath a protective layer of flor.

##### **manzanilla**

made in a seaside town called Sanlucar de Barrameda that is cool and damp which allows the flor to grow thicker. The result is a very dry sherry that has a unique, almost briny flavor.

...If finos and manzanillas are allowed to mature further in oak casks, they can develop into:

##### **amontillado**

amber in color, dry & robust in taste, possessing a slightly nutty smell. Great as an aperitif, with poultry, meat or after dinner.

##### **oloroso**

dark, full & exotic, while maturing they are subject to little or no growth of flor. Direct contact with the air makes them nutty & fragrant in character.

##### **palo cortado**

rare style with the nose of an amontillado and the flavor of an oloroso.

There are also older **Soleras** available; *almacenista* Sherry; Cream Sherry and sweet Sherry, including **Moscatel** and **Pedro Ximenez**.

### **SHERRY on the Cocktail Menu**

#### **Fino Mandrino Martini**

Absolut Mandrin Vodka, Grand Marnier, and Tio Pepe Fino Sherry shaken, chilled, up, orange twist

#### **Sherry in Manhattan**

Maker's Mark (or Crown Royal), dash of bitters, and Dry Sack Amontillado Sherry, shaken, chilled, up, cherry garnish

#### **Sock it to Sherry**

Onigoroshi Wakatake Sake, Tio Pepe Fino Sherry, shaken, chilled, up, cucumber slice garnish.

#### **Sherry Salsas**

Emilio Lustau Palo Cortado Sherry, fresh lime juice, Grand Marnier, shaken, chilled, up, garnish with orange slice

#### **Screwed-up Sherry**

Tio Pepe Fino Sherry, Grand Marnier, fresh orange juice over ice in Collins glass, orange slice

#### **Cava Cocktail**

#### **Sparkling Sherry**

fill flute with Spanish Cava, top with Dry Sack Amontillado Sherry

### **After Dinner Suggestions**

#### **Palo Cor Toddy**

3 parts Emilio Lustau Peninsula Palo Cortado Sherry and 1 part Lustau Moscatel Superiore Emilin Sherry, in a snifter, with 1-2 parts steaming hot water (to taste) garnished with a twist of orange and a cinnamon stick

#### **Sherry & Alexander**

Spanish brandy, Dry Sack Amontillado Sherry, Williams & Humbert 15-year Oloroso, creme de cacao, heavy cream, shaken, chilled, up, garnish with fresh grated nutmeg

for more info on Sherry, contact Wines from Spain at (212)661-4814, or [www.enjoyssherry.com](http://www.enjoyssherry.com)