

The Greatest Sherries in the World

February is traditionally our month to pour Port wines. However, this year we travel south on the Iberian Peninsula to Jerez and Sanlucar, where another extraordinary fortified wine is produced. I am, of course, referring to Sherry. We will explore almost the entire range of styles, omitting only the sweetest. All of the wines are predominantly from the Palomino grape, most 100%. We have two special guest speakers, Barry Brown and Derek Kranenborg who will lead us through the tasting.

When we planned this tasting, the objective was to find the BEST example of each of the various styles and we have exceeded even our own expectations, featuring a couple of styles that we don't think have ever been shown in Canada before.

Oversimplifying, the driest sherries are matured in casks that are 'infected' (some say blessed) with a yeast called *Flor* that floats on the surface of the wine and protects it from oxygen, while feeding on the wine sugars through to dryness. The flor flavour is imparted to the wine and gives sherry its characteristic base taste. The most common result (at this stage) is a *Fino* sherry, but because the flor is also influenced by the climate, it develops slightly different characteristics in Sanlucar, which is more humid, being closer to the ocean. This style, often described as saltier is known as *Manzanilla*.

In certain situations, either naturally or by design (increasing alcohol to about 17.5%) the flor 'dies off' and slight oxidation can occur. This style is *Amontillado*. People with enquiring minds might well ask 'Is a Manzanilla/Amontillado any different from a Fino/Amontillado?' Come to our tasting and find out – we have both (and the Manzanilla/Amontillado is the first of our rarities).

The above styles come principally from EQUIPO NAVAZOS. This group of sherry connoisseurs was aware of old stocks of "forgotten" wines and arranged to have them bottled privately and sold to a small circle of partners and friends. These are very rare, small bottlings. Derek Kranenborg, of Rob Groh Agency is the person who brought us these wines and he will attend to help guide you through them.

CONTINUED OVER

As always with our tastings, this event will be strictly non-smoking, and we request your cooperation in not wearing any scented after-shave or perfume.

Date: Wednesday, February 8, 2012
 Time: 6:30 p.m.
 Limit: 122 people

North York Memorial Community Hall
 5110 Yonge St. (under library)
 North York Centre Subway

Cancellations accepted up to February 3, 2012 — David Hutchison (416-690-0281 **evenings**). **No reservations by phone, please.** No confirmations will be issued — you will be contacted only if we are sold out. First come basis. Non-members may attend at guest rates, but preference will be given to members.

You can register online using a credit card at www.winetasters.ca, or send in this form with a cheque.

Tear and Enclose

Cheque payable to:
 Winetasters Society of Toronto
 c/o Dave Hutchison
 270 Glen Manor Drive West
 Toronto, Ontario
 M4E 2Y2

Names: _____

Phone: (____) _____ W (____) _____

Cheque Enclosed for: BEST SHERRIES

_____ Members @ 64.00 each _____
 _____ Guests @ 77.00 each _____

Yes, I wish to sit at a New Members Table
 with an expert to answer my questions.

Total _____

Equipo Navazos La Bota de Manzanilla 'Navazos' No. 22 is drawn from a solera averaging 6 years using only selected barrels which emphasized the saltiness. This wine is from Bodega Sanchez Ayala. It was bottled in May 2010. Only 4500 bottles produced.

Equipo Navazos La Bota de Amontillado 'Bota NO' No. 23 is also from Bodega Sanchez Ayala and is our Manzanilla/Amontillado. Age is unknown as some of the source wine is from a solera that has not been refreshed for decades. Bottled May 2010. Less than 1000 bottles total.

The Fino/Amontillado is from Williams & Humbert and is the Rare Old Dry, Jalifa, 30-yr-old Especial Solera. Under 'normal' circumstances, the '30-yr-old' category is the highest category of sherry and implies that the average age of the solera is over 30 years (but could be much more).

In contrast to the 'fino-based' wines above, there is another class of sherry, similarly made from the palomino grape, where the flor influence is absent (or minimal). These are known as *Oloroso* and these are often used as the base for the sweeter Sherries. However, the base oloroso style is also a dry wine – it lacks the influence of flor and the resulting oxidation tends to give much nuttier flavours. But before describing our crowning oloroso (which will be the sweetest), we will explore *Palo Cortado*. One of the rarer styles, this is originally aged under flor (as for Fino) but the flor 'disappears'. This gives a wine that still possesses flor character – but modified by the oloroso style. Some say these are the most complex style, but the rarity has encouraged some producers to mimic this style by blending a Fino with an Amontillado. This should be detectable on the palate as a Palo Cortado should have the 'mouth feel' of an oloroso, somewhat richer in texture. 'Authentic' Palo Cortados are traditionally identified by a white crossed chalk mark (in Spanish "Cortado") on the barrel, which must then be removed from the Fino Solera – and may then become part of a Palo Cortado solera (and would be fortified to about 17.5%). Rarely, a wine will develop further towards an oloroso and this barrel will be marked with a second chalk cross, and become a *Dos Cortados* (usually being fortified a little more). And it is theoretically possible for this evolution to continue further to create a *Tres Cortados*, although these are almost mythical – even within the Sherry trade hardly anyone has ever tasted one – to our knowledge NEVER produced commercially.

We have all three styles – Palo Cortado, Dos Cortados and Tres Cortados!

Our Palo Cortado is the Equipo Navazos La Bota de Palo Cortado 'Jerez' No. 21. We don't know the age but this originates in an old Palo Cortado solera from Valdespino (again). Bottled in February 2010 with a production of 1700 bottles.

The Dos Cortados is from Williams & Humbert and has an average age of over 20-years. This was regularly seen in Vintages, but has been missing for a few years now.

The 'mythical' Tres Cortados originated from Domecq. Our bottling was 'specially produced by Domecq for Christies Auction House to celebrate their joint 250th anniversary' (in 1980) and was acquired at auction – at Christies. Our other guest speaker (Barry Brown, who has astounding access to Domecq) contacted Domecq (the oldest Bodega in Jerez) to find out some more details. We'll let him speak for himself at the tasting, but suffice it to say that the wine was a surprise to them – no records existed, but they 'guessed' it was made/selected by the famous Don Jose Ignacio Domecq, who died in 1997, known as 'El Nariz' (The Nose) for his amazing sense of smell, and who was the acknowledged king of sherry tasters.

So finally we reach Oloroso. And you'll find few who will challenge this as being the greatest oloroso ever! Maybe earlier bottlings from the same solera could claim the crown.

The Imperial Corregidor from Sandeman is truly legendary as the solera was discontinued about 20 years ago and the remaining wine bottled. Whoever made that decision should plead insanity!

One Winetasters Director rates this as the best wine he has EVER tasted, with a second agreeing it's one of the best wines he's ever had. A third has deemed this an 'Honorary Madeira' because it shows similar complexity to venerable vintage Madeira. At our (First) Once In A Lifetime Dinner a few years back, this was voted the best wine of the evening!

Just enjoy this one and listen, on 8th Feb to the multitude of stories that surround it.