

## **HOW DOES THE MANNER IN WHICH SHERRY IS CONSUMED DIFFER BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE U.K?**

On visiting Jerez for a second time, I was struck by how much the approach to drinking Sherry varies between Spain and the U.K. In Spain, and obviously particularly in Jerez, Sherry consumption is part of every day life for many people and is embedded in the culture. The bodegas are dotted widely throughout the town and sherry is easily available in many different styles and formats. It is popular amongst all age groups and is approached more as a still wine, to be consumed with food, and with modern methods of serving and presentation. This varies greatly to the U.K. where Sherry is consumed by a much smaller part of the population, predominantly the older generation, and has an image that associates it with older consumers and traditional, if not outdated, methods of consumption.

Fino sherry, dry, refreshing and zesty, is consumed on a much larger scale in Spain than the U.K. Naturally it is a great match for seafood and tapas, particularly at lunch or early evening, and is enjoyed served delightfully chilled to refresh from the hotter temperatures. In Spain it also has a much more modern twist, with especially younger consumers enjoying it served together with ice and a mixer, such as lemonade, tonic or soda water, much like a white wine spritzer. This is something I have never encountered in the U.K.

Amontillados and Olorossos are also consumed more widely in Spain, where they are matched with the cuisine. Amontillados pair perfectly with Jamon, Chorizo, cheese, some of the more strongly flavoured fish tapas dishes and paella. Olorossos are consumed with the main meal and are a great accompaniment to meat dishes such as duck, lamb and steak. In the U.K. these two styles are rarely drunk with food, and served predominantly as an aperitif or digestif. There is also a preference for the sweeter styles, whereas in Spain the drier styles are more popular. Interestingly, in Spain much more women prefer to drink Amontillado while more men favour Fino or Manzanilla.

Cream Sherry is also enjoyed in Spain where Canesta is the lead brand in the market. Harvey's Bristol Cream is made predominantly for the export market, where the U.K. features as a key importer. When we visited Harvey's we were given a glass of Harvey's Bristol Cream, served in a small tumbler, on the rocks with a slice of orange. A modern approach to serving sherry, it was thoroughly refreshing, the flavours of the sherry complimented by the orange, and a great aperitif, bearing in mind it was still the morning! This is a serving method that will hopefully catch on throughout Spain, and possibly in the U.K., and is particularly appropriate in the heat of the Spanish sun.

Pedro Ximinez, rich, velvety and lusciously sweet, is consumed more in the colder months in Spain, as the high temperatures of summer in Spain don't induce an appetite for puddings and sweet wines as the colder weather does in England, combined with the English palate. When consumed, it is usually sipped after a meal, or poured over ice cream. In addition it can be chilled, which makes it more refreshing. This is similar to how it is enjoyed in Britain,

however, in Spain it is also used more often as a cooking ingredient, making up part of a sauce or garnish. We sampled it drizzled over tender pieces of duck breast, and it was a lovely addition to the flavours of the meat. Again, an example of how the Spanish combine more the consumption of sherry with food.

I was also fortunate enough to sample some different Brandies de Jerez, of varying levels and age. In Spain, the basic brandies are commonly and popularly consumed with a mixer, with brandy and coke being the main example. The more premium brandies, that are generally older and more complex, are intended to be sipped as a digestif, much like in Britain, but here Cognac and Armagnac tend to dominate the market, with brandy de Jerez in particular being much harder to come by, especially quality examples.

Consumption of Sherry between Spain and Britain also differs in regard to the time period over which it is served. In conjunction with their approach to consuming sherry more like a wine than a liquor, a bottle is likely to be consumed within a few days of opening. Fino and Manzanilla sherries especially should be treated in this manner, as like a normal white wine, their freshness and flavour quality deteriorates the longer they are opened. They are always refrigerated and often served at the table in an ice bucket. With the oxidised styles this is less important, but ultimately they are at their best enjoyed nearer to the time of opening. In addition, sherry is much more easily available in smaller formats, so it can be enjoyed fresh without the need to open a full 75cl bottle. This approach needs encouraging more in the U.K. where far too often bottles are left opened for long periods, not served at the correct temperature, and not available in smaller formats.

The glass in which Sherry is served also varies between Spain and the U.K. Traditionally, in Britain, Sherry was served in a small glass called a schooner. This is very short and small, complimenting the idea of sherry as a pre-dinner aperitif. However, in Spain, they much prefer to serve sherry in a copita or normal wine glass, these are larger, more appropriate for detecting the full aromas and flavours of the wine, and which re-enforce the idea of sherry as a normal part of every day consumption, and as an accompaniment to a meal.

Considering all of the above, Sherry consumption differs vastly between the two countries. I much preferred the Spanish approach to its consumption, where it is viewed in a much more modern light, naturally paired with food, used in experimental and modern methods of serving and consumption, and approached more as a wine for everyday enjoyment. The Sherry bodegas are keen to change the image of Sherry in the U.K. and I would definitely support a new attitude and approach to Sherry consumption here in the U.K. I would like to see this unique and quality wine enjoyed on a much wider scale and by a more varied age group as it has so much variety, style and value to offer the consumer.