

Canadian Sherry

by Bob Finhert

I assume that this will be your first attempt so lets keep it conservative.

For one pail (18 – 20 liters) of Palomino juice you will need.

- 4 18 –23 liter carboys
- 1 thermometer (30 deg c)
- 1 plastic gallon jug (food grade)
- 1 refrigerator and freezer (5 days minimum)
- 1 heat source (bed side lamp is perfect with 60 watt lamp)
- several warm blankets or sleeping bags
- 1 sheet styrofoam (24" x 24") optional
- cotton wool (about two handfulls)
- fortifying alcohol
- 1 bottle flor sherry
- 2 pkgs Red Star Flor Sherry Yeast

I recommend that you order your Palomino without yeast. Your plastic gallon jug needs to be filled to 80 % with this juice. This is placed in the freezer and the balance of the juice is put in the refrigerator. This is left for a minimum of 4 days. On the fifth day freeze fractionate the gallon jug. The syrup from this procedure must be high enough in brix and quantity to raise the total amount of juice to 27 brix (25 absolute minimum). Repeat the procedure until these requirements are met. I suppose you could add sugar to your juice to achieve the same result. If you buy juice which is already fermenting then you MUST take pains to adjust the sugar levels to achieve a final alcohol level of 13.5%.

With all your juice in the plastic pail immerse the pail in hot water to raise the juice to 29 deg C. At the same time prepare your starter (2 pkgs = double strength).

While you are waiting for temperatures to rise and yeast development, you can build your estufa. Simply place your four carboys on the styrofoam (or insulating) pad with your lamp in the center. When the yeast is ready and the juice is at 29 deg C then the two can be combined.

Now fill each of the four carboys to an equal depth (about 6 inches). Use cotton wool to seal (not tightly packed) each carboy and cover it all with blankets to contain the heat.

Use your thermometer to check the temperature every twelve hours and adjust up to 29 deg C. Do not leave your estufa unattended during heating periods (fire precaution).

The resulting fermentation is violent, fast and smelly. All the sugar is consumed in 3 – 7 days.

Once the initial fermentation has stopped, remove each carboy to a cooler (20 deg C) area where it cannot be disturbed. Leave enough head room above the carboys for inspection without movement. As the flor develops it will cut down and finally eliminate any alcohol evaporation. The absence of the alcohol nose signifies flor development.

When the flor has been detected in all 4 carboys (about a month after initial fermentation) it is time to rack and fortify. Carefully rack into one carboy and measure the total volume.

Using the Pearson square determine the required amount of alcohol needed to reach 15.5 %.

Mix this amount of alcohol with a bottle of mature flor sherry first. The combined alcohol of this mixture should not exceed 44% (guesstimate).

Now add and mix this into the main carboy.

If all has gone well, according to schedule then, we have a problem. The flor sherry will not develop properly in a glass container. We cannot remain conservative any longer. This sherry MUST be moved into a five gallon oak barrel (Louisiana American oak is best). The barrel must be clean and sweet. This must be done ASAP.

The barrel must not be filled over 80% and never less than 30%. I use a rubber stopper without an air lock. The hole is covered by a piece of tissue paper held in place by a rubber band. When the wine has developed according to your expectations then it is removed a bottle at a time on a "need" basis. Never store this wine in glass.

If You Use Grapes

Crush (destemming not necessary) the grapes and separate the free run. The balance goes into the wine press. Use only your hands (or feet) and the weight of your body to press out as much juice as possible. If you have a bladder press use no more than 6 psi. This juice is added to the free run and only this juice can be used for flor sherry.

The balance can be hard pressed (bladder 37 psi max) and the remaining juice used for Oloroso sherry. Now follow the above procedure to make your sherry. Rack and fortify the oloroso to 18% directly after the must clears.

If the flor sherry is unfaulted but does not develop a flor after one year then it should be fortified to 18% and it will then become an oloroso.

In Closing

I would like to thank Don Mayne for all his help and inspiration. This procedure would not have been developed without his help.

(Bear this in mind if you decide to make flor sherry – your first attempt may be unsuccessful but I believe my guidelines will give you your best opportunity for success.)