

# Fino

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One of the two basic categories of classic sherry, Fino has been the mainstay of Jerez production for several decades, and the wine with the most direct gastronomic appeal in Spanish restaurants. It is also the category that has most suffered from the decline in sherry sales. This is a paradox, as the quality of Finos on the market has never been higher, with better grape selection, more careful handling, and cleaner oak. Sherry lovers can take consolation from the boom in premium Fino offerings, boosted by the En Rama movement of bottling unfiltered wines. There are now also many older Finos with outstanding character on the market, and it is definitely a category worth digging into.

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## Emilio Hidalgo • Fino La Panesa

D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry • 15%

This extraordinary wine from Emilio Hidalgo has long been a favourite of mine. From a solera established in 1961 that sees relatively little movement, it is one of the oldest Finos on the market, estimated at 15 years old and exploring what Fernando Hidalgo describes as "the limits of biological ageing." It can be freely described as Fino Amontillado, Amontillado Fino (either now disallowed) or Tres Palmas. Unfolding like an opera, the first act is similar to a great white Burgundy, with its seamless balance of leesy richness, oak structure, and steely minerality. In the second, the plot thickens as Amontillado-like spicy complexities flicker. In the final act, the chalky, briney heritage of Fino comes back with majestic authority. Memorable.