

Palo Cortado

Read any book about sherry and there will be a special chapter on the “miraculous” category of Palo Cortado. The problem is there is no clear definition of what it is. According to one theory, it is a Fino that spontaneously decided to become an Oloroso, killing its flor. Another says that it is an Oloroso that had ambitions of tasting like a Fino, with more finesse and less oxidation than its peers. These definitions are contradictory, and you will quickly learn in Jerez and Sanlúcar that every winery has a slightly different approach to Palo Cortado. For Barbadillo, it is a “mainly oxidative” wine, while Hidalgo defined it as a “full-bodied Amontillado.” In any case, Palo Cortado is almost always a premium wine, with many old, rare soleras on the market now—though often at a price.



Emilio Hidalgo • Palo Cortado Privilegio «1860»

D.O. Jerez-Xérès-Sherry • 20%

Drawn from the actual solera casks that are as old as the Emilio Hidalgo business, this is a splendid Palo with a myriad of characters as in a Balzac novel: blonde and brown oak, beurre noisette, PX-like treacle, hazelnut spread, leather, dried citrus, incense... They all appear separately in succession while you smell the wine in abandon, but then on the palate blend seamlessly into a unique Gestalt, invigorated by refreshing rather than punitive (as in many sherries of this age) acidity. There is a pronounced bitter edge from the very old wood but with a suave je ne sais quoi to balance that. It is almost too much to drink and irresistible at the same time. A very rare and expensive wine, but superlative throughout.