

## Transcript

### Sherry is not just for Christmas

#### Peter Taylor:

I'm Peter Taylor, Professor of Organic Chemistry here at The Open University. And I want to talk to you a little bit about some sherries. Sherry is a really interesting wine. When I was a kid, all I ever knew about was sweet sherry. But as I've got older, I've become to love some of the lovely dry sherries that come out of Spain. And they're only from a very small area in southern Spain around Jerez. And Jerez in 2014 is the European city of wine, so it's really good time to talk about some sherries.

So I've got four sherries here. I've got a Fino, Manzanilla, Amontillado, and Oloroso. And you'll notice that the Fino and the Manzanilla are nice and light, whereas the Amontillado and Oloroso is quite dark. And that's all due to the way that they're made. Now as I said, sherry is a wine. So they take the Palomino grape, and they ferment it. And that gives them the wine with about 11% or 12% alcohol in it.

And then they select what's going to happen to the wine next. So some wines are chosen to become this light Fino, and other wines are chosen to become the darker Oloroso. And there are some wines which really aren't up to standard, so they're taken away and distilled to give us alcohol. Then the alcohol is used to increase the concentration of alcohol in the Fino or in the Oloroso to make the sherry taste that we know today.

So the Fino, it goes up to about 15.5% by volume. And in the Oloroso, it goes up to about 17% by volume. Now that's a really critical difference. Because in the 15.5% percent barrels, a yeast can grow on the surface of the maturing wine called a floor. And that prevents any oxygen from the air getting into the wine, and so it prevents the oxidation.

It also allows some really subtle taste to move from the yeast into the wine, and so we get the lovely clear light color and the very delicate fragrances of the Fino. With the Oloroso which is 17%, the yeast can't grow on the surface. So we get a certain amount of oxidation. And that's why it's darker, and you get a different range of flavours. So next time you buy sherry, don't think of sweet sherry. Think of some of the lovely dry sherries coming out of Spain.