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Manzanilla

Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Spain

ESTATE

La Guita is the top selling manzanilla in Spain, and is made by Hijos de Rainera Pérez Marín in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Founded in 1852 by Domingo Pérez Marín, the estate has long made manzanilla their singular focus. The wine is made in two bodegas, and the smaller of the two, Bodega Misericordia, dates to 1526. Located in the heart of Sanlúcar, it was once the Hospital de San Juan de Dios. The larger bodega, Pago Sancarlar Viejo, is located on the road to Jerez and accounts for about 80% of La Guita's production.

WINE

La Guita is the manzanilla from Sanlúcar and the most popular wine in the region. Aged under highly active flor for four and a half years, La Guita develops intense complexity while retaining beautiful freshness. They bottle six times a year, as opposed to once or twice as many other houses, to capture as much freshness as possible.

VINEYARD

Palomino grapes used in La Guita are exclusively grown in Sancarlar, with the vast majority of them coming from the historic pago of Milaflores, which appears in vineyard classifications as far back as 1868, and more recently in 1951 when Manuel Barbadillo ranked the top sites in the region. Milaflores is notable for the purity of its chalk dominated albarazía soil and its proximity to the sea. Legally, manzanilla can be made from grapes anywhere in Jerez, as long as they are aged in Sancarlar, but La Guita believes it's native terroir is an important aspect of their quality.

WINEMAKING

Variety: 100% Palomino

Fermentation: Like it's more famous cousin fino, manzanilla is simply a palomino based sherry aged under flor. However, due to its proximity to the ocean, temperatures in Sancarlar remain more stable than in the rest of the region. This allows for more vigorous yeast activity, which imparts more flavor, and also allows the capataz to perform more sacas. The saca is the process in which sherry is extracted from the barrel, and the more frequently this is done, the fresher the final product. While a typical bodega in Jerez might bottle once or twice a year, La Guita often bottles six or seven times annually.

Fortification: With distillate from the same local palomino grape

Aging: The minimum aging requirement for manzanilla is two years, but La Guita far exceeds that and won't release anything younger than four or five years of age.

Alcohol: 15%

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"Unique aromas of dried apples, lemon blossom, almonds and cream. Hints of seaweed. Full-bodied, yet focused and tight with lively acidity and a beautifully composed finish of fruit and flavor. Always a winner here." - J.S., 7/2019

91 Wine Spectator

90 Wine Advocate