

CARRON RESTAURANT



FROM SPEYSIDE TO JEREZ



Sherry casks have been used to age Scotch whisky for well over 200 years. But what are distillers looking for when choosing casks, and how are they able to produce specific flavours? Does the type of wood also play a role?

The wood makes the whisky: is an insight into Gordon and McPhail's philosophy in matching wood to spirit

**GORDON &
MACPHAIL**

— ESTABLISHED 1895 —



European oak – Quercus Robur

European oak is the wood type traditionally used to manufacture sherry casks.

European oak contains up to three times the tannin levels compared to American oak, giving a spirit a dry astringency in the early stages of maturation. Over time, lignin compounds break down slowly, releasing more intense notes of spice and toffee into the spirit

European oak is a much faster growing variety of oak, which leads to a wide grain.

The wide grain results in a whisky with a highly developed complexity and character



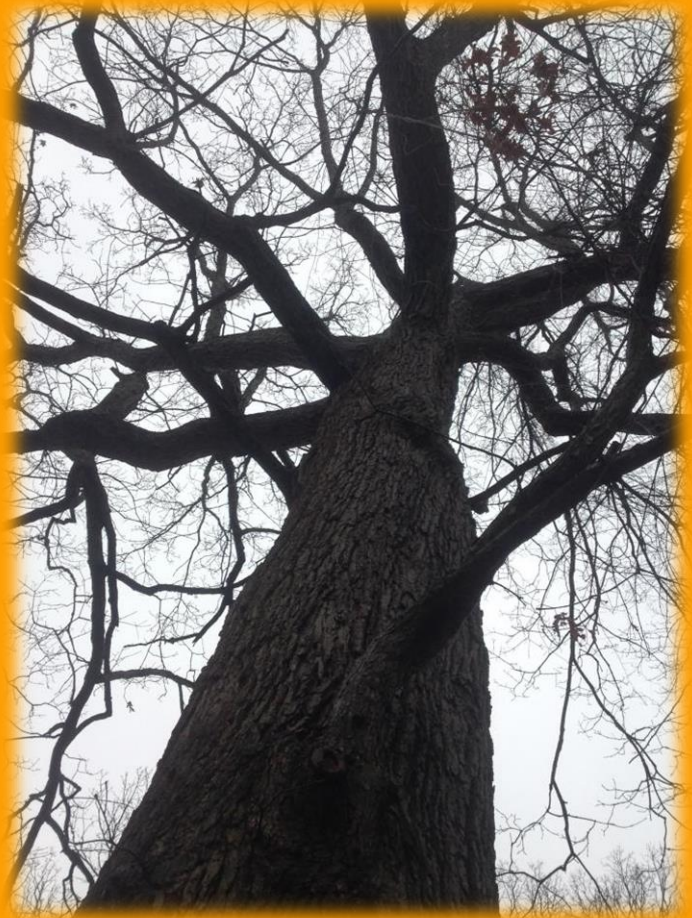
American white oak – Quercus Alba

United States of America law decrees that every American Bourbon barrel must be manufactured from Quercus Alba. Perhaps more surprisingly, the majority of newly produced Sherry casks are also imported from American oak.

It is estimated that up to 97% of new casks used to mature Scotch Whisky are currently made from Quercus Alba, whether ex Bourbon or ex Sherry.

Quercus Alba is high in compounds called oak lactones, which help to deliver a sweet fragrant aroma, characteristically found in American Bourbon and often described as coconut, vanilla or citrus notes.

Quercus Alba is a slower growing species of oak, which thrives in the US climate. It has a tighter grain than the European oak, which means a spirit extracts sweet and delicate flavour compounds.





CASK CONTENTS

Contents	Type	Alternation of Taste	Alteration of Colour
Bourbon	Whiskey	Vanilla, sweetness, caramel, creamy	golden
Burgundy	wine	Very fruity, lightly sweet, lightly dry	dark red
Madeira	Fortified Wine	Spiciness, light fruitiness, sweetness, dryness	dark amber
Port (sweet)	Fortified wine	Sweet, dried fruit, spiciness	red
Oloroso	Sherry	Deep, dark, nutty, dark ripe fruits	Red amber
Pedro Ximenez PX	Sherry	Very sweet, dark fruits, raisins, syrup	amber
Fino	Sherry	Light fruits, sweetness, dryness, light wood	bright
Manzanilla	Sherry	Salty, dryness, sea flavours, fresh, some fruit	bright
Amontillado	Sherry	Sweetness, nutty, dry, fresh, acid	amber
Palo Cortado	Sherry	Rich, sweet, dry, sweet spices, fruits	brown
Bordeaux (red)	Wine	Strong red fruits, grapes, berries	red
Ruby Port	Fortified wine	Very fruity, dark fruits, berries	red
Barolo	wine	Fruits, tannins (bitter) dried fruits, heavy aromas	red
Chardonnay	wine	Lean, crisp, acidic, tropical fruits	bright
Rum (white)	spirit	Sweet, molasses, vanilla, tropical fruit, almond	bright
Rum (dark)	spirit	Sweet, syrup, dark fruits, oak, caramel, vanilla	amber
Marsala	Fortified wine	Sweet, complex spices	Dark red

WHY SHERRY

The Scots loved sherry. The first record of it being drunk in Edinburgh was in 1548, but it was the late 18th Century when it became a fashionable drink, Sherry and Rum punches were the preferred drinks of the trend setters of the day.

There was also an element of patriotism involved, with many Scots either working for or owning Sherry houses. Arthur Gordon established Bodegas Gordon, George Sandman's Port and Sherry interests were handled in Scotland by his relative Thomas from his base in Perth.



In those days, Sherry would have been shipped to Glasgow and Leith in casks. This coincided with a dramatic expansion of the whisky industry.

The logo for González Byass is written in a fluid, cursive script. Below the signature, there is a horizontal bar divided into three distinct color segments: brown on the left, green in the middle, and purple on the right.

As there was no domestic forests in Scotland to use for casks, distillers turned to those being landed on the docks. These included rum & wine, as well as Sherry, but it was the latter that became the preferred option.



SHERRY

Sherry starts as a dry white wine from the Palomino grape. This is then fortified and aged. The style falls into two camps.



The first contains Fino, its subset Manzanilla and amontillado. In these, the wine is lightly fortified and aged in a complex system known as *Solera*.

A thick blanket of yeast, known as flor, begins to grow on the surface of the liquid, protecting the wine from the air. As a result the sherry is pale in colour with a light crisp character, aromas of almond, chalk, green olive and, in Manzanilla's case a distinctly salty tang.

If this flor is allowed to die, then some oxidation takes place; the wine darkens in colour, and becomes an amontillado.



The second camp is contains Oloroso and Palo Cortado. The same base wine is used, but this is fortified to a higher strength, thus killing any chance of Flor growing. Ageing is in a *Solera* and, because there is contact with air, the wines become darker and more nutty, with some dried fruits.

Pedro Ximenez (PX) – is a separate style, Made from the eponymous grape. After harvesting, the grapes are dried in the sun to concentrate the sugars and then fermented, fortified and aged, this naturally sweet wine with a huge raisined impact.



WHAT DOES A SHERRY PRODUCER WANT FROM A CASK

The Butts used in the solera system are not made from active wood, so the wood has little impact on the sherry. The taste of Fino is caused by the Flor, the nuttiness of Oloroso by oxidation and the sweetness of PX by the raisining effect.



WHAT DOES A SCOTCH PRODUCER WANT FROM A CASK

A distiller wants a cask to contribute flavour to the maturing whisky: vanilla, coconut, spice and chocolate from *American oak*; tannin, resin, clove and dried fruits from *European oak*.



So in Sherry wine production the flavours are driven by oxidation rather than by oak, while in the whisky maturation process, it is the other way around.

THE THREE MOST COMMON CASK SIZES USED IN SCOTCH WHISKY INDUSTRY MATURATION:

BUTT – 500LITRES

.Smallest surface area per litre

Slowest maturation

More time for alcohol to break down flavour compounds, more oxygen available to oxidise, less woody flavours, more complex tobacco, fig and spice flavours



HOGSHEAD – 250 LITRES

There are two types of Hogshead casks:

A Remade Hogshead is traditionally made by Scottish Coopers by adding staves to barrels to increase the size resulting in sweet vanilla flavours.

A Sherry Hogshead is the smaller brother of the Sherry Butt producing similar fig and spice flavours



BARREL – 200 LITRES

Generally ex American Bourbon

Largest surface area per litre

Fastest Maturation

Likely to yield sweet, fruity flavours



BENROMACH SINGLE MALT AGED 10 YEARS

Pour yourself a Dram of Benromach

Swirl the liquid around the glass and notice the aroma without Water, Nose the glass in other words, take a sniff. Indulging in several little inhalations is the best way to pick up all the different notes ... rich sherry with fruit & nut chocolate, delicate spice, green apples, malty biscuit and a touch of light peat smoke.

Now sip your dram, roll the whisky around your mouth and enjoy the taste without water....

Juicy raspberries and brambles, sherry, creamy malt and a light peat.

Next take in the aroma with water It's a wee bit nutty with a touch of charred oak and malt, and there's also some fancy pineapple and kiwi.

Add a drop or two of water to release the full flavour. Savour the succulent mouth coating and taste the toasted malt, delicate peat smoke and lingering sweet sherry

Classic Benromach Speyside style of single malt whisky

Enjoy a sample what aromas do you taste....

Tell us what you think





BARBADILLO

THE SOLERA SYSTEM



The method of ageing all Sherries and Manzanillas. Younger vintages are progressively blended in to older ones via a series of barrels. This ensures consistent quality one year after another and is essential for Finos and Manzanillas as the younger wine feeds the Flor.

