



**For Immediate Release**

August 25, 2009

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**2009 Sherry Harvest Begins in Earnest**  
*Shipments to the U.S. Increase*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The first grapes of the 2009 Sherry Harvest in Jerez, Spain were picked this week, announced the Sherry Council of America. Beginning this week and continuing in earnest through the second week of September, 8,000 workers will descend on the Sherry triangle in southern Spain to begin harvesting the grapes that make one of the most affordable wines available in America – Sherry.

“Harvest is a great time for people to start learning more about Sherry,” said Lisa Mendelson, Assistant Director of the Sherry Council of America. “There is a great deal of excitement surrounding this year’s harvest because of the growing popularity of Sherry wines in the United States, with shipments to the U.S. increasing by 50 percent so far this year.”

Weather can change some aspects of the harvest but this year factors have remained fairly constant which should make for a robust and successful season. Winter saw a bit more rain than normal in southern Spain, followed by a hot and humid summer with fresh poniente, or ocean winds. The switch to levante winds, a dry wind from the east, at the end of the season, should produce larger grapes requiring them to stay on the vine a few days longer before they can be picked. Overall, experts in Spain expect a high-quality wine produced from this season’s harvest, which will be blended with wines from previous harvests in the Solera system of aging.

The harvest will begin in the vineyards closest to Jerez de la Frontera and move out toward the cities closest to the sea, Sanlúcar de Barremeda and El Puerto de Santa Maria. Palomino Fino are the earliest grapes to be picked and are also the grapes used in most styles of dry Sherry. Moscatel and Pedro Ximénez grapes are picked later in the three week process and are used for blending in some Amontillados and Olorosos, and for the sweet, dessert styles of Sherry, which usually carry the name of the grape on the label.

Annually harvested in September, 90 percent of the grapes are hand picked to guarantee quality – a process that helps ensure consistency. Grapes that will be used to produce dry wines are then transferred to the wine-making plants to be pressed. Those that will produce sweet wines are laid in the sun on grass mats to dry out and sweeten.

Renewed interest in Sherry has been driven by a number of factors. The Sherry Council recently launched the Secret Sherry Society, a not-so-secret club of Sherry enthusiasts linked through a highly fortified website (only members know that the password is password), [www.secretsherry.com](http://www.secretsherry.com). This summer the Sherry Council also saw an uptick in the number of outdoor bars and restaurants serving refreshing Sherry cocktails, such as the Washington Cobbler, featured at this year's James Beard Awards. The Washington Cobbler and dozens of other cocktail recipes are featured on the Society's website.

For more information about Sherry harvest season, additional information about Sherry wines, or to learn about the Sherry Council of America, contact Shannon Maurer at (202) 777-3530 or [smaurer@clsdc.com](mailto:smaurer@clsdc.com).

*Sherry Council of America is the official U.S. representative of the Federación de Bodegas del Marco de Jerez (Fedejerez), the trade organization for all Sherry producers of the Jerez region of Spain. Based in Washington, D.C., the Council works to expand knowledge of the unique geographic characteristics, rich cultural traditions, and generations of winemaking expertise that are central to creating the distinctive range of flavors found in Sherry wines. The Council also works to raise awareness among U.S. policymakers, consumers, and other audiences about the importance of protecting the Sherry name.*

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