

BODEGAS ALVEAR

Montilla-Moriles, Spain



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The Alvear family has its roots in the mountains of Burgos, dating back to the early 16th century. After relocating from Rioja to Montilla, just south of Cordoba, in the late 17th century, Juan Bautista García de Alvear y Garnica married a Cordobese noblewoman, and several years later, the couple had their first son, Diego de Alvear y Escalera, the founder of Bodegas Alvear in 1729. Over the course of the following decades, Diego and his son Santiago became some of the largest landholders in the city, and the bodega began exporting to England in the late 19th century. One of Diego's most famous heirs was Diego de Alvear y Ponce de León, who combined his winemaking career with a successful military and political career, establishing the family's political roots in Argentina. Alvear is Spain's oldest continuously operated family-owned winery and the oldest winery in Andalucía, making them the oldest company for the production of vinos generosos or "sherry style" wines in Spain. The family's rich history and the founding of their bodega almost 300 years ago make them one of Spain's most historic families. While the impact of El Marco de Jerez is inarguable in the history of Andalusian wine, Alvear's history as the oldest producer of wine in Andalucía proves the origins of vinos generosos lies not in Jerez but in Montilla-Moriles. Historically, bodegas in Montilla-Moriles shipped their wines south to the port of Cádiz to be exported internationally. Over the centuries, international (and domestic) companies production and warehousing (almacenista) facilities were established in and around the port of Cádiz to facilitate global logistics and exportation of these wines. DO Montilla-Moriles differentiates itself from El Marco de Jerez in two significant aspects: First, it has an extreme continental Mediterranean climate (in contrast to Jerez's Atlantic climate) characterized by intense sunlight and extremely high temperatures during the growing season. Second, Montilla-Moriles is the worldwide birthplace of the grape known as Pedro Ximénez (referred to as PX moving forward), and to this day, the region relies almost exclusively on PX for the production of all its wines. Unlike the neutral Palomino in Jerez, PX is perfectly adapted to this intense climate and can naturally reach 15-16% alcohol by volume on the vine. The wines' naturally high levels of alcohol mean that in Montilla-Moriles, fortification of wines that undergo biological aging under the velo de flor (Finos & Amontillados) is not practiced and is legally prohibited by the D.O. Further to this, in Montilla-Moriles, the Amontillado style retains its' original definition of a very old Fino that has undergone biological aging to the point where the velo de flor consumes all the relevant nutrients in the wine., subsequently dying, sinking to the bottom of the



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vat, undergoing autolysis, and exposing the surface of the wine in the bota to oxygen. While a subjective conversation, at JOS, the lack of fortification results in more elegant and seamless wine given that most of the distilled spirits used for fortification in Spain today are lower quality bulk spirits mass distilled in La Mancha. Finally, when drinking an Amontillado from Alvear or other iconic houses in Montilla-Moriles, one can enjoy the original style of Amontillado (a very old Fino!) in contrast to the more commercial, double-fortified style widely produced in Jerez today. Alvear does employ fortification for their Olorosos (and one of their two Palo Cortados) as this is, by definition, an oxidative style, and fortification prevents the growth of the velo de flor. Alvear is no stranger to pushing the envelope - on top of being the first bodega in Spain to release a vintage-dated PX sweet wine, Alvear was the first winery to release a vintage-dated Fino en Rama (also at Jorge's urging), and they also revolutionized the production of dry table whites aged under flor in Andalucía with the 3 Miradas project. Like many of Earth's most significant wine producers, Alvear's greatest asset is their ability to innovate while maintaining an almost 300-year-old tradition as Spain's oldest family-owned winery.

www.alvear.es/en/alvear/

