the history of Chiclana

extraordinary ecological Virgin Sea Salt and Flor de Sal they sell.
There are also photographs, audiovisual resources, and various tools on display. The third area, WINE (four sections), describes viticulture in Chiclana, which also began with the Phoenicians. In the 16th and 17th centuries, it became a thriving component of the economy as part of trade with the Americas. The panels, photographs, audiovisual resources, and tools tell the story of grape cultivation and the history of wineries in Chiclana, which are still artisanal family businesses. A description is given of the production and ageing of fortified wines: Fino, the wine that sustains local production even today, Moscatel and others, such as Cream. They are all made by wineries in Chiclana and included in the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry Denomination of Origin.

Why have a Wine and Salt Interpretation Centre?

Wine and salt have been fundamental to the social, economic and urban development of Chiclana since its Phoenician origin and especially from the 16th century, through trade with the Americas, until the second third of the 20th century. Wine, the centuries-old tradition of grapevines and wineries, was the reason King Alfonso XII granted the title of "city" to Chiclana in 1876. At that time, it had over 3,500 hectares of Palomino, Rey and Moscatel grapes.
Well into the 20th century, about 1970, the city still had about eighty wineries and over 3,000 hectares of vineyards. Nowadays, though there are barely over 200 hectares, viticulture is still an artisanal family tradition closely linked to Chiclana's identity. With its extraordinary Finos and renowned Moscatel wines, it is part of the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry Designation of Origin.
The coastal marshes, the majority of which are located in Cadiz Bay Natural Park, occupy one third of the 203 square kilometres of the municipal area of Chiclana. In the mid-19th century and up to 1919, there were 38 salt works and five tide mills. Nowadays, only a few artisanal salt works remain; many others have been abandoned or transformed into fisheries.

AYUNTAMIENTO DE Chiclana

Centro de Interpretación del vino y la sal Chiclana

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AYUNTAMIENTO DE Chiclana

Photo: Juan Antonio Guerrero.

Wine and Salt define

The Wine and Salt Interpretation Centre is located in the former Bodegas Primitivo Collantes winery, now owned by the Chiclana Town Council. The building was built between 1962 and 1964 on marsh land, like the entire neighbourhood of Las Albinas where it is situated, and reflects the construction style of Chiclana's wineries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: pine roof trusses, a series of arches that distribute the weight of the roof, and high windows. Inside, there are three large areas. The first, THE SEA, is a large central multi-purpose hall. The second, SALT (three sections), contains information on salt works in Chiclana from the periods of Phoenician and Roman colonization to the boom years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In these areas, we learn about today's artisanal salt works, located in Cadiz Bay Natural Park, and the

Salt Area

Nothing is more useful than salt and the sun.
Pliny the Elder

"S" SECTION

The salt marshes and salt works, an ecological paradise

Salt works have been conceived, built and preserved by human hands to make the most of shifting water levels as these wetlands are flooded and drained by ocean tides. Over the past three thousand years, the malleability of the mud has made it possible to shape these marshes. Their value far exceeds their historical and ethnographic significance. They are an ecological paradise for flora and fauna, with a unique landscape. Created in 1989, Cadiz Bay Natural Park co-exists with a few artisanal salt works. Since 1970, salt works have been continuously abandoned. Some have dried out and others have been converted into fisheries. The adaptation of the perimeter walls into nature paths has created routes with considerable scenic and environmental value, an observation area for over seventy species of water birds: herons, terns, flamingos, stilts, spoonbills, and many more.

Chiclana in Phoenician times and the shaping of Cadiz Bay

Human transformation of the marshes started three thousand years ago. Back then, the geological evolution of Cadiz Bay was still undergoing changes. Today's Chiclana would have been navigable as far as the Castillo (Castle) hill, where the Phoenicians placed their settlement, at the firm ground closest to the Temple of Melqart. Gradually, sedimentation in the Guadalquivir and Guadalete rivers consolidated the marsh landscape.

The salt industry, the 16th century and the Duke of Medina Sidonia

Very few traces remain of maintenance of coastal salt works during the Muslim invasion period. They started up again in the 13th or 14th centuries, with the Reconquest. In the 15th century, notary documents show the existence of numerous salt works in the Bay area, doubtlessly linked to the rise in fishing and trade with the Americas. Salt works in Chiclana, by the 16th century, were among the biggest in Andalucía. Linked to the jurisdiction of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, they also supplied tuna fish processing activities in Conil and Vejer.

"A" SECTION

Salinity defines the ecosystem

Photo: Juan Antonio Guerrero.

A salt works shapes the coastal wetlands to create a circuit of sea water that allows for maximum evaporation, thanks to the action of the sun and the winds. And where, as the water gets shallower, salinity increases. The Atlantic Ocean has 36 grams of salt per litre of water. As the water runs through the Caño de Sancti Petri, the inlet channel that feeds Chiclana's salt works, salinity reaches 45 grams per litre. When it enters the sluice gate into the supply pond, salinity goes up to 66 grams, and a lot of young fish also enter: sole, gilthead bream and sea bass. From the first evaporation pond on, salt works have irreversible hypersalinity, where only microorganisms like Artemia salina can survive. The salt works are divided into evaporation areas (80-225 grams) and crystallizing ponds (250-280 grams). This is the kingdom of algae of the genre Dunaliella and salt-loving bacteria, which colour the briny water with rosy pigments.

Special Bird Protection Area

Cadiz Bay Natural Park is considered a Special Bird Protection Area (SBPA). It is a vital stopover for migratory birds on their routes between northern Europe and Africa. In the geographical area of the salt marsh, there are many bird species of basically three types, according to how they feed: Shorebirds (avocet, Kentish plover, stilt and curlew), Fish eating birds (Little tern, osprey, cormorant and egret) and Filter feeders (spoonbill, flamingo).

Photos: Rafa Izquierdo.

What is a salt work?

From the initial supply pond, the water moves into the three evaporation ponds: lucios, retenidas and vueltas de periquillo, increasingly shallow ponds, from 50 cm. to 20 cm. deep. In the tajería (crystallizing ponds), salt crystallizes over a thin layer of water (5-10 cm). During the extraction season (July to October), there are three harvests: once a month, where each square meter of the crystallizing ponds can produce between 70 and 80 kilos of salt.

Photo: Félix Alonso del Real.

"L" SECTION

The "despesque" or harvest from the fisheries ponds

In late October, "despesques" (fish harvests) are held where the supply ponds are gradually emptied through a net. The fish collected- sole, gilthead bream and sea bass, among other species- enters the saltwater channels as young fish at the start of the season. Many former salt works have transformed their businesses exclusively into extensive fish farming units.

Wine Area

Wine, teach me the art of seeing my own history as if it were already ash in the memory.
Jorge Luis Borges. *Romance del Vino*

"V" SECTION

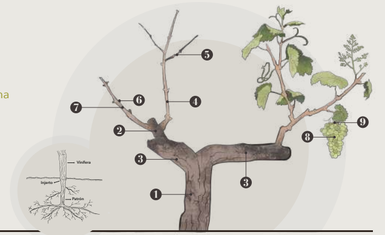
Land and sea create wine

Grapevines grow toward the sun, but in the Jerez wine region, they also spring from the sea. From the pale Albariza soil (white, in Latin) that once, in the distant Oligocene Epoch, was sea. An organic soil of chalk and limestone resulted that retains moisture from rain. Chiclana also has Barros soil, with salt water at a depth of a few metres penetrating into the Palomino grapes, and Arenas soil, the closest to La Barrosa beach. The Regulatory Council prohibits the watering of grapevines in the Jerez wine region, to achieve better quality grapes. Westerly winds blowing in from the ocean cool the vineyards, while easterly winds dry and protect them.

Parts of Palomino Fino grape vines

The variety known as "Palomino fino", although it has many other names, such as "Listán" or "Palomina blanca", occupies practically all of Chiclana's vineyards, over 90% of production. The rest is devoted to Muscat of Alexandria.

1. Trunk
2. Thumb
3. Cordon
4. Spur
5. Sucker
6. Bud
7. Stick
8. Bunch
9. Skin



Unlike Jerez, wineries in Chiclana forged the town centre, which means that not long ago, the entire city took part in the grape harvest. In early September, the grape skin darkens and the grape "yields"; that is, it becomes soft and sweet. It is time for the harvest. The grape's degree of maturity should be at least 10.5° Baumé (or potential alcohol). Chiclana's vineyards today are still a vestige of traditional family manual labour. So are the wineries, despite the progressive introduction of new technologies such as mechanized presses and steel tanks for cold fermentation.

"I" SECTION

The tradition of the grape harvest in the town centre

Photo: Félix Alonso del Real.

"N" SECTION

Ageing Fino

Photo: Félix Alonso del Real.

The fractional blending system for ageing wine, developed in the Jerez wine region since the 18th century, aims to unify and ensure its quality, year after year. And it adapts extraordinarily well to Fino, which is fundamental to Chiclana's winery tradition. After the grape must ferments and alcohol content has been brought up to 15 per cent, biological ageing is possible due to the film of "flor", a natural yeast (Saccharomyces ellipsoideus). Its presence –since it is aerobic: it needs oxygen– means the cask is filled only five sixths of the way and cannot be hermetically sealed. In Chiclana, due to the nearby salt marshes, the "flor" yeast has sufficient moisture to survive robustly during summer.

The "criaderas y solera" fractional blending system

Wine is moved among at least three rows of vats. Starting with the solera, the row at floor level, a third of the contents are taken out, no more than four times a year, and replaced with wine from the row above it. Then wine is added to fill the gap from the row above. And the procedure is repeated until the "sobretabla" (wine stored in casks before entering the solera system) is added.

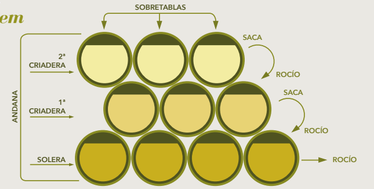


Photo: Pedro Leal.

Hundred-year-old wine vats and a vanishing trade

As a unit of transport, the oak cask ("bota") also became a measure of volume in the Jerez wine region. It contains 30 arrobas (499.80 litres). Vats used to age Fino wines are filled with only 22 to 25 arrobas, which may be over a century old. Other measurements exist: tonel (between 55 and 60 arrobas), bocoy (40), bota gorda (36), bota bodeguera (32), media bota (15) and a barril (from 8).

"O" SECTION

Moscatel and other wines from Chiclana

Although Fino comprises most of the production, local wineries also make an extraordinary naturally sweet wine: Moscatel. Depending on its ageing, it has a broad range of colours, from pale gold to amber to chestnut. Chiclana produces other wines included in the Designation of Origin, most notably Cream, a blend of Oloroso and Moscatel or concentrated rectified grape must. And extraordinary vinegar, included in the D.O. Vinegar from Jerez. It also produces table wines under the label "Vino de la Tierra de Cádiz", especially white wines built on Palomino Fino and other varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc.

Photo: Félix Alonso del Real.