

### FORTIFIED BEVERAGES



Fortification is a process whereby a distilled beverage (usually brandy) is added to fermented beverages (usually wine). Fortified wines are simply wine that has had a spirit added to it. Many different styles of fortified wine have been developed, including Port, Sherry, Madeira, Marsala, Commandaria wine and Vermouth. The original reason for fortifying wine was to preserve it, since ethanol is a natural preservative. Although grape brandy is most commonly added to produce fortified wines, the additional alcohol may also be neutral spirit that has been distilled from grapes, grain, sugar beets, or sugar cane.

When added to wine before the fermentation process is complete, the alcohol in the distilled beverage kills the yeast and leaves residual sugar behind. The end result is a wine that is both sweeter and stronger, normally containing about 20% alcohol by volume (ABV). During the fermentation process, yeast cells in the must continue to convert sugar into alcohol until the must reaches an alcohol level of 16%–18%. At this level, the alcohol becomes toxic to the yeast and kills it. If fermentation is allowed to run to completion, the resulting wine will (in most cases) be low in sugar and will be considered a dry wine. The earlier in the fermentation process that alcohol is added, the sweeter the resulting wine will be. For drier fortified wine styles, such as sherry, the alcohol is added shortly before or after the end of the fermentation and then the resulting sherry allowed to age.

### POPULAR FORTIFIED DRINKS

#### SHERRY

15.5-22% ABV (Alcohol by Volume). Sherry, originating from the town of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, Spain, is a fortified wine made from white grapes - in particular the palamino variety. Sherry is available in sweet and dry varieties and is usually served as an apéritif or desert wine.

#### PORT WINE

18-20% ABV (Alcohol by Volume). Port is a fortified wine originating from the Douro Valley in the northern provinces of Portugal. It is typically known as a desert wine but is also available in semi-sweet and dry varieties. Port is produced by halting the fermentation half way through with the addition of distilled grape spirits, which kill the yeast before the sugar residue can be metabolized resulting in a sweeter wine with a higher alcohol content than normal wine.

The colour of port can also be an indication of how long it has been aged in casks. Normally the darker the colour the older the drink.

#### MARSALA

15-20% ABV (Alcohol by Volume). Marsala is a fortified wine produced in Marsala, Sicily. Marsala was originally fortified with alcohol in order to preserve it during long trade journeys. Traditionally Marsala is served between the first and second courses of a meal. It is available in varying degrees of sweetness including 'secco' which contains 40g of sugar per litre, 'semi-secco' containing 41-100g of sugar per litre and 'sweet' which contains over 100g of sugar per litre.

#### Sherry (small) 25ml

$$\frac{25\text{ml} \times 22(\%ABV)}{1000} = 0.55 \text{ Units}$$

#### Sherry (Schooner) 50ml

$$\frac{50\text{ml} \times 22(\%ABV)}{1000} = 1.1 \text{ Units}$$

#### Port, Marsala, Madeira (typical) 50ml

$$\frac{50\text{ml} \times 50(\%ABV)}{1000} = 1 \text{ Units}$$

#### Vermouth (Typical) 50ml

$$\frac{50\text{ml} \times 15(\%ABV)}{1000} = 0.75 \text{ Units}$$

#### Madeira

18-20% ABV (Alcohol by Volume). Madeira is a fortified wine originating from the Portuguese Madeira Islands in the eastern Atlantic ocean. A unique process is used in the production of Madeira dating back centuries, making Madeira a long lived wine, even after uncorking.

#### Vermouth

Approx. 15% ABV (Alcohol by Volume), Vermouth was first produced in Italy using a grape wine as its base to which various herbs and spices were added together with a spirit to fortify. In recent times, Vermouth has mostly been used in cocktails like Martini.