



### Arrope -Grape Must Sauce

*Producer: Aecovi-Jerez SCA*

*Region: Jerez, Spain*

*Employees: 12; represents over 1200 small producers.*

#### **Authenticity**

*The product or recipe is native to the producer's region and has historically been part of the regional food culture.*

Arrope harks back to the time of the Romans. In the first Roman gastronomic journals, arrope appears under the name of *defrutum*, and was principally used in the natural conservation of certain types of foods. Many families, who had produced more than was needed for the home, sold their product to the pastry shops and markets. Arrope became widely accepted in all the European wine growing areas of surrounding the Mediterranean. The word Arrope comes from the arab "arr-ubb", the word given to the product during the centuries of Arab civilization on the Iberian Peninsula.

#### Board Response & Questions:

*Love the trail of products like this that go from an overabundance of product to a "pantry item" over the years. This is long-standing item in the area's distinct food culture.*

#### **Local Ownership**

*The producing company is privately or worker-owned with a majority of the owners actively participating in the company.*

Aecovi-Jerez, SCA, a Sociedad Cooperativa Andalucia, is a cooperative business founded in 1989. It is formed by four cooperatives representing more than 1200 small grape cultivators and wine makers. The four cooperatives are: Ntra. Sra. de la Angustias SCA, Cooperativa del Campo Vitivinicola Sanluqueña SCA, Unión de Viticultores Chiclaneros SCA, and Católico Agrícola SCA.

These more than 1200 small producers account for 20% of the total production of the geographic zone of Jerez. The company's mission is to reduce individual risk and create alternative business opportunities for the member producers who all cultivate and produce using traditional artisan methods.

#### Board Response & Questions:

*It's impressive that so many small producers are represented through these 4 cooperatives. Perfect example of the cooperative spirit. Great use of the collective to create strength & economy.*

*Who are the heads of each cooperative who act as liaisons or spokespeople to Aecovi-Jerez on behalf of their cultivators and wine makers? How does this relationship work or how are the four cooperatives structured?*

Aecovi response: Each of the four cooperatives has its own president and manager, both of whom are in direct contact with the manager of Aecovi. The individual coops' presidents take an active role in the Aecovi decision-making process. The group holds coordination meetings once a month.

*Is there some oversight of the processes used (i.e. no chemicals used, etc.), and standardized procedures to ensure uniformity of product.*

Aecovi response: Each winemaker makes a commitment to the environmental guidelines of the association, and this is strictly controlled by Aecovi's technicians. In terms of must quality, there are grape selection and production protocols developed by the Aecovi oenologist that are followed to ensure product quality and uniformity.

### **Local Sourcing**

*A majority of all ingredients are purchased within the region in which the company is located (region is defined as bioregion or country depending on the size and geographic make up of the area), AND is either grown directly by the producing company or is purchased direct from the farmer or a farmer organization at fair prices.*

**Ingredients:** 100% must from palomino and moscatel grapes

All of the ingredients are sourced from member producers.

### **Board Response & Questions:**

*Meets Local Sourcing Criteria*

### **Social Responsibility**

*The company's social and financial practices and policies are designed to ensure maximum benefit to the company's employees and to the local community and economy.*

**Employees:** The Company employs twelve full time employees, 67% of whom are from the immediate community, and the rest are from the surrounding area. All employees are under official contract, allowing them the benefits established by Spanish Law, including paid vacations. At times, the company may contract with temporary workers when there is un-projected demand for the product. Because of the cooperative structure of the business, all profits are reinvested back into the company to improve its services to its members.

Aecovi abides by the agreements achieved by the trade unions to set employee salaries. On average, their salaries are 150% higher than government minimums. The company offers all employees training and educational programs throughout the year to improve their skills and the quality of their work.

**Community:** The Company's main impact on the community is its association with over 1200 small producers that represent 20% of the region's cultivation capacity. Its mission is to serve the best interests of these small producers and to protect their artisan methods and way of life. The Cooperative acts as a marketing and sales arm at a national and international level for a selection of products from the producers, bringing these products to markets that the small producers would be unable to reach on their own.

The company does not participate with any other community organization.

Board Response & Questions:

*Collectively representing 1200 producers, with the intention of preserving their artisan production methods and way of represents a huge contribution to the local community/region. Commendably meets criteria*

**Environmental Stewardship**

*The company's environmental practices and policies are designed to minimize environmental impact through the elimination of chemicals and waste, and the reduction of resource use.*

The Cooperative has several objectives in serving their artisan members which ensures stewardship of the land. They have a mission to improve upon and introduce Integrated Agricultural methods (to protect and restore the environment), and a technical team works with all members to reach this goal. In addition, the Cooperative took upon itself to reintroduce the native Pedro Ximenez grape, and they have several research and development projects under way to restore other native species and traditional products.

*Cultivation:* All of the grapes are cultivated using Integrated Agricultural practices which is a whole systems approach to farming that uses less resources, reduces or eliminates the use of pesticides, and mitigates the impact of agriculture on the land. The company is also working with their farmers to produce an organic line of products in 2010.

During cultivation, the Aecovi agricultural technicians regularly visit each farm to ensure proper methods are being used, and to offer assistance to member farmers. The fields are planted in November for harvest the following September, which is done by hand. The farmers use a system called “aserpiado” to maximize the use of rainwater during cultivation.

Through the efforts of the Cooperative, these small-scale farmers have been able to retain their land, artisan methods, and way of life - resulting in great diversity and a healthy bioregion that would not be possible with mono-cultural agro-industry.

*Production & Facility Management:* The arropo is produced from unfermented grape must, the freshly pressed grape juice that contains the skins, seeds, and stems of the fruit. So that they are able to work with the must year round, it has been “azufrado,” meaning that natural sulfur dioxide has been added to inhibit fermentation. The must is heated to remove water, reducing 1000 liters down to 300 liters. The heating process removes all traces of sulfur from the product. Because the product is quite dense it is difficult to filter, and thus a process of settlement is down to remove any particles.

The manufacturing facility has ISO 9001 certification for good manufacturing practices.

*Packaging:* The product is packaged in glass bottles with cork tops. They are master packed in carton boxes.

### Board Response & Questions:

*Much attention is paid to production. It appears that the company is working diligently with the cooperatives to ensure healthy and environmentally conscious growing, harvest, and production practices.*

*Do the Aecovi agricultural technicians actually “file” a site report of some kind after they visit the farms? What’s the recording method or tracking system employed to ensure adherence to outlined methods?*

Aecovi response: Site visits are documented thoroughly, noting the progress of the harvest and any guidance given to the winemakers. All of this information is transferred to a database provided by the Andalusian Board of Agriculture. In addition, there are periodic analyses to ensure that the technician’s suggestions have been implemented. Consistent flouting of the rules results in expulsion from the cooperative.

*What is done with the settlement byproduct?*

### **Overall Board Assessment**

*This unique artisan product, made by a coop that’s part of the area’s food culture, has many different applications and a wonderful “Story” behind it. It is a wonderful product and worthy of the Rooted Foods certification.*