

# Unveiling Chimidas 1884 Solera: A Deep Dive into a Rare Lanzarote Malvasia

## I. Introduction: Uncorking a Lanzarotan Mystery

### A. The Enduring Allure of Canary Island Wines

The Canary Islands, an archipelago forged by volcanic fire and shaped by Atlantic winds, possess a viticultural history as dramatic and unique as their landscapes. For centuries, wines from these islands, particularly the famed Malvasia known historically as "Canary Wine" or "Canary Sack," commanded international attention.<sup>1</sup> Esteemed by figures from Shakespeare to Nelson <sup>4</sup>, these wines traversed the seas, gracing the tables of European aristocracy and playing a significant role in the islands' economy.<sup>4</sup> Though subsequent centuries saw declines due to disease and changing markets <sup>4</sup>, recent years have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of interest. Wine enthusiasts and connoisseurs are rediscovering the distinctive character of Canary Island wines, born from unique grape varieties, ancient pre-phylloxera vines, and starkly beautiful, often extreme, volcanic terroirs.<sup>9</sup>

### B. The Specific Quest: Fermín R. Bethencourt's Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia

This report delves into a particularly intriguing and elusive piece of this rich history: a wine identified as **Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia**, bearing the additional descriptors "seco" and "selecto," and attributed to a producer named **Fermín R. Bethencourt** from the island of Lanzarote. Initial investigation reveals a scarcity of readily available information, positioning this wine as a historical enigma demanding careful reconstruction from fragmented clues.

### C. Report Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this report is to provide the most comprehensive analysis possible of this specific wine and its producer, placing it firmly within its historical, geographical, and oenological context. The investigation follows a structured approach, examining:

1. The unique viticultural environment of Lanzarote.
2. The characteristics of the Malvasia Volcánica grape.
3. The identity and background of the producer, Fermín R. Bethencourt.
4. A detailed deconstruction of the wine's label terminology ("Chimidas," "1884 Solera," "Seco," "Selecto").
5. An assessment of the wine's likely profile, rarity, availability, and potential market significance.

Crucially, this investigation adheres to the specific requirement of consulting Spanish

and Portuguese sources alongside international wine knowledge databases and historical records. The findings presented herein represent a synthesis of available evidence, aiming to construct the most complete and accurate picture possible of this rare Lanzarotán artifact.

## **II. Lanzarote's Volcanic Vineyards: A Landscape Forged by Fire**

### **A. Geological and Climatic Context**

Lanzarote, the easternmost of the Canary Islands, presents one of the world's most visually striking and challenging viticultural landscapes. Situated in the subtropical zone near the African coast, its climate is profoundly arid, marked by low rainfall and persistent trade winds ('alisios').<sup>13</sup> The island's defining characteristic, however, is its volcanic origin. Catastrophic eruptions, particularly those spanning 1730-1736, dramatically reshaped the island, burying vast tracts of fertile land under layers of lava and volcanic ash.<sup>3</sup> This geological upheaval, while devastating initially, paradoxically created the conditions for a unique form of viticulture to emerge.<sup>15</sup> The historical scarcity of water has always been a defining challenge for agriculture on the island.<sup>13</sup>

### **B. The Role of 'Picón': Volcanic Ash Viticulture**

The key to Lanzarote's viticultural survival and distinctiveness lies in the thick mantle of black volcanic ash, known locally as 'picón' or 'lapilli', that covers much of the cultivable land.<sup>13</sup> This seemingly infertile layer possesses remarkable properties crucial for grape growing in an arid environment. Its porous nature allows the scarce rainwater to filter through rapidly to the soil underneath, minimizing loss through surface runoff.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, the 'picón' acts as a protective mulch, drastically reducing evaporation from the soil surface.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, these volcanic particles are hygroscopic, capable of absorbing atmospheric moisture, particularly overnight dew, providing a vital supplementary water source for the vines.<sup>13</sup> The dark colour also helps absorb heat, while the layer overall provides a thermoregulatory effect, maintaining a more stable soil temperature.<sup>13</sup> It was the gradual understanding and harnessing of these properties that allowed agriculture, including vine cultivation, to re-establish itself after the 18th-century eruptions, transforming a disaster into a unique agricultural system.<sup>15</sup>

### **C. Traditional Cultivation: Hoyos, Zocos, and Human Effort**

Adapting to this unique environment required the development of ingenious and labor-intensive cultivation techniques. Instead of conventional planting, vines are typically grown in hand-dug pits, known as 'hoyos', or sometimes in trenches ('zanjas').<sup>13</sup> These excavations penetrate the 'picón' layer, allowing the vine's roots to

access the underlying fertile soil and retained moisture.<sup>16</sup> Each 'hoyo' often contains only a single vine, which creeps low across the bottom of the pit.<sup>1</sup> To protect the vines from the relentless, drying trade winds, low, semi-circular walls ('zocos' or 'abrigos') are constructed from volcanic rocks around the windward side of each pit.<sup>13</sup>

This method results in a landscape of extraordinary beauty but also reflects extreme viticultural challenges. Planting density is exceptionally low, sometimes as few as 200 vines per hectare in areas with deep ash layers.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, yields are naturally very small.<sup>13</sup> Virtually all vineyard work, from digging the pits and building the walls to pruning and harvesting, must be done meticulously by hand.<sup>13</sup> The extreme nature of this viticulture, born directly from the necessity of adapting to the post-eruption landscape, is fundamental to the character of Lanzarote wines. The concentration derived from low yields and the unique interaction between the vine roots, the underlying soil, and the overlying 'picón' contribute significantly to the wines' profile, often described as having a distinct "volcanic" or "mineral" signature.<sup>1</sup> It is highly probable that a historical wine like Chimidas, produced from grapes grown under these very conditions, would have strongly exhibited this terroir-driven character.

#### **D. Denominación de Origen (DO) Lanzarote**

Formal recognition of Lanzarote's unique winegrowing area came relatively late compared to its long history. The Denominación de Origen (DO) Lanzarote was officially established in 1993<sup>22</sup>, with its regulations approved and ratified shortly thereafter.<sup>22</sup> The Consejo Regulador (Regulating Council) is the body responsible for overseeing viticulture and winemaking practices, ensuring the quality and authenticity of wines bearing the Lanzarote DO designation.<sup>6</sup> While the Chimidas 1884 Solera predates the formal DO by over a century, the establishment of the DO acknowledges the long-standing tradition and unique characteristics of winemaking on the island.

### **III. Malvasia Volcánica: The Aromatic Soul of Lanzarote**

#### **A. Origins and Identity**

Malvasia Volcánica stands as the emblematic white grape variety of Lanzarote, intrinsically linked to the island's wine identity.<sup>19</sup> It accounts for a significant majority, around 70%, of the island's grape production.<sup>19</sup> While its ultimate ancestor, Malvasia, likely originated in the Greek islands or Mediterranean basin<sup>1</sup>, Malvasia Volcánica is considered a distinct variety unique to the Canary Islands, particularly Lanzarote.<sup>19</sup> Research suggests it may be a natural cross between Malvasia Aromatica and Marmajuelo, another indigenous Canary variety.<sup>19</sup> It adapted remarkably well to Lanzarote's challenging post-eruption conditions, thriving in the volcanic 'picón'

soils.<sup>14</sup> Notably, like many Canary Island vines, it is often grown on its own rootstock, having been spared from the phylloxera epidemic that devastated European vineyards in the 19th century, meaning many vines can be exceptionally old, sometimes pre-phylloxera.<sup>26</sup>

## B. Sensory Profile

Modern examples of Malvasia Volcánica consistently reveal a highly aromatic and expressive profile. Dominant notes often include tropical fruits like mango, pineapple, and passionfruit, intertwined with citrus elements such as lemon.<sup>14</sup> Floral hints (white flowers) and sometimes subtle herbaceous or aniseed nuances add complexity.<sup>1</sup> A defining characteristic, frequently highlighted in tasting notes, is a pronounced minerality, often described as flinty, stony, or saline, directly reflecting the volcanic soils and maritime influence.<sup>1</sup> On the palate, the wines are typically balanced and elegant, often perceived as fresh despite potentially moderate analytical acidity.<sup>1</sup> Some descriptions note a lanolin or buttery hint, particularly in unoaked versions.<sup>20</sup>

## C. Versatility and Styles

Malvasia Volcánica demonstrates considerable versatility, capable of producing a range of wine styles:

- **Dry ('Seco'):** This is a prominent style, typically fermented in stainless steel to preserve freshness and aromatic intensity.<sup>1</sup> These wines are generally crisp, vibrant, and intended for consumption within a few years of the vintage.<sup>14</sup>
- **Sweet ('Dulce'):** Historically significant, these can range from naturally sweet wines made from late-harvested, overripe grapes ('vendimia tardía')<sup>2</sup> to potentially fortified styles, echoing the traditions of the old "Canary Wine".<sup>2</sup> Sweet Malvasias can possess considerable aging potential.<sup>19</sup>
- **Sparkling ('Espumoso'):** High-quality traditional method sparkling wines are also produced from Malvasia Volcánica, often aged on lees for extended periods and sometimes released with zero dosage.<sup>20</sup>
- **Other Styles:** The grape is also used for semi-dry or semi-sweet wines ('semiseco'/'semidulce')<sup>14</sup>, wines aged on their fine lees ('sobre lías') for added complexity and texture<sup>16</sup>, oak-aged versions<sup>2</sup>, and even skin-contact 'orange' wines.<sup>29</sup>

## D. Historical Significance

The historical importance of Malvasia from the Canaries cannot be overstated. It formed the backbone of the "Canary Wine" trade that flourished for centuries.<sup>1</sup> Malvasia Dulce, in particular, is often referred to as the "historic wine" of the Canary

Islands, a style that involved specific production methods, sometimes including fortification and solera aging, to ensure stability during long sea voyages.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1: Malvasia Volcánica Profile Summary

Feature	Description	Supporting Snippets
Origin	Unique Canary Island variety, likely cross of Malvasia Aromatica & Marmajuelo. Adapted to Lanzarote's volcanic terroir. Pre-phylloxera vines.	1
Typical Aromas	Intense; tropical fruit (mango, pineapple), citrus (lemon), white flowers, mineral/flinty/saline notes, sometimes herbal/aniseed.	1
Palate Features	Balanced, elegant, fresh, pronounced minerality, good structure, sometimes perceived low acidity despite good pH/TA levels.	1
Common Styles	Dry (Seco), Sweet (Dulce - natural/fortified), Sparkling (Espumoso), Semi-sweet/dry, Lees-aged (Lías), Oak-aged, Orange wine.	1
Terroir Influence	Distinct mineral, volcanic, or saline character derived from volcanic soils ('picón') and Atlantic proximity.	1
Historical Note	Key grape for the historically famous "Canary Wine" / "Canary Sack". Malvasia Dulce considered the "historic wine".	1

## IV. Fermín R. Bethencourt: The Man Behind the Label

### A. Identifying the Producer

The name associated with the Chimidas wine, Fermín R. Bethencourt, points to a recognized historical figure in Lanzarote. Research identifies **Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt** primarily as a prominent doctor on the island during his time.<sup>29</sup> Some sources also mention him as an architect; a repurposed mansion belonging to him and his wife now houses the Museo Arqueológico de Lanzarote.<sup>33</sup> It is important to distinguish him from other individuals named Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt mentioned in historical documents related to different properties or activities on the islands.<sup>34</sup>

### B. The El Grifo Connection

Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt's link to winemaking appears intrinsically connected to **Bodegas El Grifo**, one of the oldest and most venerable wineries not just in the Canary Islands, but in all of Spain, with continuous production dating back to 1775.<sup>29</sup> The crucial connection comes through his marriage to **Manuela García [-Durán] Parrilla**.<sup>29</sup> Manuela's father, **Manuel García Durán**, acquired full ownership of El Grifo by purchasing shares from previous owning families (descendants of the De Castro family) during the decade of 1870-1880.<sup>36</sup> Manuel García Durán himself had inherited property in the El Grifo area, which likely spurred his interest in acquiring the winery.<sup>36</sup> Upon Manuel García Durán's death in 1912, his daughter Manuela inherited Bodegas El Grifo.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt became directly associated with the winery through his wife's inheritance. His descendants, the Otamendi family, are the current proprietors of El Grifo.<sup>32</sup> His prominent house in Arrecife was even known to have space dedicated to storing barrels of El Grifo wine.<sup>32</sup>

### C. "Bodegas Fermin R. Bethencourt" and the "Chimidas" Brand

Direct evidence links Fermín R. Bethencourt's name to wine marketing. Advertisements, likely dating from the mid-20th century based on their style, explicitly promote "VINO MALVASIA DE LANZAROTE '(HIMIDAS FERMIN R. BETHENCOURT)'".<sup>42</sup> This branding is further corroborated by the official registry of the Denominación de Origen Lanzarote, which lists "**Chimidas**" as one of the brands associated with Bodegas El Grifo.<sup>37</sup>

### D. Interpreting the Relationship

The evidence strongly suggests that "Fermin R. Bethencourt" was not an independent winery operation established by the doctor himself prior to his connection with El Grifo. Rather, it appears to have been a specific brand or product line produced and

marketed by Bodegas El Grifo, leveraging the name and social standing of Manuela's husband, Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt. The timing is critical: the García Durán / Bethencourt family lineage became associated with El Grifo around 1880. The appearance of advertisements under his name much later <sup>42</sup> and the official DO listing linking the Chimidas brand directly to El Grifo <sup>37</sup> reinforce the interpretation that this was an integrated brand within the El Grifo portfolio, likely initiated sometime after the family connection was established. This connection provides essential context for interpreting the "1884 Solera" date found on the wine label.

**Table 2: El Grifo Ownership & Bethencourt Timeline**

Period	Ownership / Key Figures	Relevant Events	Supporting Snippets
1775	Antonio de Torres Ribera (Ribera family)	Founding of El Grifo winery; construction of original buildings (lagar, bodega, house).	29
ca. 1775-1820	Ribera family (Antonio de Torres & nephew Bartolomé)	Initial decades of operation.	29
ca. 1820-1880	De Castro family (3 generations)	Ownership for approximately 60 years.	29
1870-1880	<b>Manuel García Durán</b>	<b>Acquires full ownership from De Castro heirs.</b> Had previously inherited land at El Grifo. Kept account books (late 19th/early 20th C).	29
Post-1880	<b>Manuela García [-Durán] Parrilla &amp; Fermín R. Bethencourt</b>	Manuela inherits El Grifo upon her father's death (1912). Fermín R. Bethencourt (doctor/architect)	29



		associated through marriage.	
Mid-20th C. (?)	Bethencourt / Otamendi families	Advertisements appear for "Chimidas Fermin R. Bethencourt" Malvasia.	42
Present	Otamendi family (Descendants of Fermín R. Bethencourt)	Current proprietors of Bodegas El Grifo.	32

## V. Deconstructing the Label: Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Selecto

The label description "Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto" provides several key pieces of information that require careful interpretation within the context of Spanish wine traditions and the history of El Grifo.

### A. The Solera System Explained

The term "Solera" refers to a specific and dynamic system of aging and blending liquids, most famously used for Sherry in Andalusia, Spain, but also applied to Port, Madeira, Brandy, Rum, vinegar, and occasionally other wines.<sup>43</sup> The process involves fractional blending:

1. **Tiered Barrels:** Wine barrels are arranged in tiers or groups called 'criaderas' (nurseries), with each tier containing wine of a similar average age.<sup>43</sup> The bottom tier, containing the oldest wine ready for bottling, is called the 'solera' (literally 'on the ground').<sup>43</sup>
2. **Saca y Rocío:** Periodically, a fraction (typically no more than one-third to 40% annually by law for Sherry <sup>43</sup>) of wine is withdrawn from the solera barrels for bottling (the 'saca').<sup>49</sup> The headspace created in the solera barrels is then replenished ('rociar') with wine from the next oldest tier (the first 'criadera').<sup>43</sup> This process continues up the tiers, with the youngest criadera being topped up with new wine from the latest harvest ('sobretabla').<sup>45</sup>
3. **Continuous Blending:** Because barrels are never fully emptied <sup>43</sup>, the final bottled wine is a complex blend containing traces of wine from every vintage added since the solera system was established.<sup>43</sup>
4. **Purpose and Effect:** The primary goals are to achieve remarkable consistency in



style and quality year after year, smoothing out vintage variations, and to develop complex aging characteristics.<sup>43</sup> The average age of the wine in the solera gradually increases over time, eventually reaching a stable average.<sup>43</sup> For biologically aged wines like Fino Sherry, the regular addition of younger wine also provides nutrients to sustain the protective layer of yeast known as 'flor'.<sup>44</sup>

The use of Solera systems is documented for Canary Island wines, particularly historical sweet Malvasias.<sup>2</sup> Bodegas El Grifo itself currently produces a highly regarded sweet Solera wine called "Canari"<sup>29</sup>, and Bodegas Los Bermejós also produces a Malvasia Dulce using a Solera system<sup>2</sup>, demonstrating the technique's relevance in Lanzarote.

### **B. The Significance of "1884"**

Given the nature of the Solera system, the date "1884" on the label should not be interpreted as a vintage year (the year the grapes were harvested). Instead, it almost certainly signifies the **year the Solera system itself was established or founded**.<sup>43</sup> This interpretation aligns perfectly with the historical timeline of Bodegas El Grifo. As established in Section IV, Manuel García Durán, the ancestor of the current owners and father-in-law of Fermín R. Bethencourt, consolidated his ownership of the winery between 1870 and 1880.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of a new, potentially premium, Solera system in 1884, shortly after this transition and under the influence of the family lineage that includes Fermín R. Bethencourt, is historically logical and highly plausible. It likely represented a new venture or a specific classification of wine initiated by the family at that time.

### **C. "Chimidas"**

The brand name appears with a slight spelling variation: "Chimidaqs" in the initial query versus "Chimidas" in the advertisements and the official DO Lanzarote registry.<sup>37</sup> Based on the documented evidence, "**Chimidas**" is the more probable historical spelling. The name itself likely refers to a specific place in Lanzarote. Geographic references mention a location called **Chimidas**, situated near the dramatic Risco de Famara cliffs and accessible from Tegui. <sup>55</sup> Historical records also list Chimidas as one of the 'pagos' or districts within the municipality of San Bartolomé, near El Grifo.<sup>57</sup> Naming the wine after a local place or estate associated with the winery is a common practice.

### **D. "Malvasia"**

This clearly indicates the grape variety used, which, in the context of Lanzarote, would

be **Malvasia Volcánica**, as detailed in Section III.

### E. "Seco"

'Seco' is the Spanish word for **"dry"**.<sup>58</sup> In winemaking terms, this indicates a wine with very little or no perceptible residual sugar, typically less than 5 grams per liter.<sup>17</sup> While Solera systems are often associated with sweet or fortified wines like Sherry, Madeira, or sweet Canary Malvasias<sup>2</sup>, producing a dry wine ('vino seco') via a Solera is technically possible. Examples exist within the Sherry category (e.g., Fino, Manzanilla, some dry Olorosos<sup>62</sup>). An aged, dry Malvasia Solera from Lanzarote would be less common than a sweet version but represents a distinct stylistic choice, likely developing complex oxidative and nutty characteristics over its long aging period, alongside the inherent aromatic and mineral profile of the Malvasia Volcánica grape.

### F. "Selecto"

'Selecto' translates to **"select," "choice," "distinguished,"** or **"selected"** in Spanish.<sup>59</sup> Unlike terms such as 'Crianza,' 'Reserva,' or 'Gran Reserva' which have specific legal definitions regarding aging in certain Spanish wine regions (like Rioja), 'Selecto' does not carry such regulated meaning across Spain.<sup>62</sup> On a wine label, particularly a historical one, it functions as a qualitative descriptor. It likely indicated that this specific Chimidas bottling represented a **premium selection** from the Solera, perhaps drawn from specific barrels deemed superior, or was intended to position the wine as a higher-tier offering within the El Grifo portfolio at the time.

Synthesizing these elements, "Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto" describes a very specific product: a dry white wine made from Malvasia Volcánica grapes, aged in a Solera system established in 1884 at Bodegas El Grifo (under the influence of the García Durán / Bethencourt family), and marketed as a premium or selected quality offering under the Chimidas brand, likely named after a local place. The combination of the 1884 Solera date and the "Seco" descriptor points to a potentially unique and historically interesting wine, distinct from the more commonly known sweet Malvasia Soleras of the Canaries.

## VI. The Elusive Vintage: In Search of Tasting Notes and Reviews

### A. Research Scope

A thorough search was conducted across available resources to locate specific information regarding the sensory profile, critical reception, or market history of the Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto. This included querying wine databases, searching historical archives (with attention to Spanish and Portuguese sources as

available through the provided materials), examining wine forums, reviewing auction house records, and scanning relevant publications.

## **B. Findings (or Lack Thereof)**

Despite the specific identifiers associated with this wine (producer name, brand name, Solera date, grape, style), the search yielded **no concrete results** pertaining to tasting notes, professional reviews, or detailed historical mentions beyond the basic branding evidence already discussed (advertisements<sup>42</sup> and the DO brand listing under El Grifo<sup>37</sup>). Searches for auction records or mentions by collectors also proved fruitless regarding this specific wine.<sup>66</sup>

## **C. Acknowledging the Information Gap**

The complete absence of documented sensory evaluations or market presence for the Chimidas 1884 Solera is a significant finding in itself. It underscores the wine's profound obscurity. While the branding confirms its conceptual existence within the El Grifo portfolio at some point, the lack of any further trace in accessible records suggests it may have been produced in extremely limited quantities, perhaps only for family consumption or local clientele, or was discontinued long ago without achieving wider recognition or distribution. It is possible that records exist within the private archives of Bodegas El Grifo, potentially in their museum collection<sup>30</sup>, but such information has not surfaced in publicly available domains. This silence in the historical record transforms the wine from merely rare to genuinely enigmatic.

# **VII. Rarity, Availability, and Potential Market Value**

## **A. Assessment of Rarity**

Based on the available evidence, the **Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto must be considered exceedingly rare, potentially to the point of being mythical in terms of extant bottles**. Its existence as a brand and concept linked to Fermín R. Bethencourt and Bodegas El Grifo is documented.<sup>37</sup> However, the complete lack of subsequent mentions, reviews, or market appearances strongly suggests that bottles are unlikely to have survived in any significant number, if at all, into the modern collecting era.

## **B. Current Availability**

It can be stated with near certainty that **this wine is not commercially available through any standard channels**. Locating a bottle would be an extraordinary event, likely requiring the discovery of a previously unknown private cellar containing historical Canary Island wines or, hypothetically, accessing the historical cellar or

museum collection of Bodegas El Grifo itself, assuming such a bottle exists and is identifiable within their archives.<sup>54</sup> Standard rare wine retailers, brokers, and major auction houses show no public records of this specific wine being traded.

### C. Speculative Market Value

Assigning a monetary value to a wine with no market history is inherently speculative. However, an analysis of its attributes allows for an informed discussion of its potential worth in the specialized collector's market:

- **Value Drivers:**
  - **Age/Solera:** The "1884 Solera" designation implies that the wine, if bottled relatively recently from a continuously maintained system (a hypothetical scenario), would contain fractions of incredibly old base wines, potentially dating back over a century. Even if bottled historically, it represents an artifact from that era.
  - **Producer Link:** The association with Bodegas El Grifo, a historic, respected, and continuously operating winery with a legacy dating to 1775, provides significant provenance and credibility.<sup>29</sup>
  - **Grape Variety:** Malvasia Volcánica is a unique, indigenous grape variety increasingly sought after by connoisseurs of rare wines.
  - **Rarity:** Extreme scarcity is perhaps the single most significant factor driving value in the ultra-rare wine market.
  - **Terroir:** The unique and challenging volcanic terroir of Lanzarote adds a layer of fascination and distinctiveness.
- **Comparables (Used with Caution):** While direct comparisons are impossible, points of reference can be considered. El Grifo's current "Canari" sweet Malvasia Solera commands a premium price (€125 per 50cl bottle <sup>29</sup>), indicating a high value placed on their aged Solera wines, although its average age is likely considerably younger than a continuously maintained 1884 Solera would imply. One might also look to the market for very old vintage or Solera Madeiras and Sherries from the late 19th century, which, depending on producer, provenance, and condition, can regularly fetch prices ranging from hundreds to many thousands of euros or dollars per bottle at auction.
- **Conclusion on Value:** The Chimidas 1884 Solera represents more than just a potential beverage; it is a historical artifact. Should an authenticated bottle surface, its value would be determined entirely within the context of a private sale or specialized auction. Factors such as the bottle's condition, fill level, label integrity, and documented provenance would be paramount. Given its combination of age, rarity, unique origin, and connection to a historic producer, its

potential value to a dedicated collector of Canary Island wines or exceptionally rare historical bottles could be substantial, reflecting its status as a tangible piece of Lanzarotan viticultural heritage rather than its (unknown) drinkability.

## VIII. Conclusion: An Enduring Lanzarotan Enigma

The investigation into Fermín R. Bethencourt's Chimidas 1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto illuminates a fascinating, albeit shadowy, corner of Lanzarote's rich wine history. The synthesis of available evidence, drawing from international, Spanish, and Canary Island sources, allows for several key conclusions:

- **The Producer:** Fermín Rodríguez Bethencourt was a prominent historical figure in Lanzarote (a doctor and architect) whose connection to winemaking stems directly from his marriage into the family that acquired Bodegas El Grifo around 1880.<sup>29</sup>
- **The Brand:** "Chimidas" was a brand associated with Bodegas El Grifo, likely leveraging Fermín R. Bethencourt's name, and probably named after a local place.<sup>37</sup>
- **The Wine:** The label "1884 Solera Malvasia Seco Selecto" describes a dry white wine from Malvasia Volcánica grapes, aged in a Solera system established in 1884 (plausibly coinciding with the new family influence at El Grifo), and designated as a premium selection.<sup>36</sup>
- **The Context:** This wine originated from the unique volcanic terroir of Lanzarote, cultivated using traditional, labor-intensive methods necessitated by the island's geology and climate. The Malvasia Volcánica grape provides its aromatic and mineral signature.

Despite these clarifications, significant unknowns persist. No specific details regarding the precise production methods, the volume produced, the duration of its existence, or, crucially, its sensory characteristics have been uncovered in accessible records. The wine remains an enigma, confirmed by branding but lost to detailed historical documentation accessible to the public.

The Chimidas 1884 Solera stands as a tantalizing data point in the long and often dramatic history of Canary Island wine.<sup>2</sup> It represents a specific moment in the evolution of Bodegas El Grifo, tied to the family lineage associated with Fermín R. Bethencourt. Its extreme rarity makes it a phantom bottle, a potential treasure for the most dedicated collectors of oenological history.

Unearthing further information would likely require direct engagement with Bodegas El Grifo, exploring the possibility of accessing their historical archives or museum

records.<sup>30</sup> However, the passage of time and the potential lack of detailed record-keeping for every historical product line mean that even this avenue may not yield definitive answers. The Chimidas 1884 Solera may well remain what it appears to be: a fascinating whisper from Lanzarote's vinous past.

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