SCREW CAPS AT BENTON–LANE WINERY

Beginning in 2005 with the launch of our exciting new 2004 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris in April, and followed by the release of the 2003 Estate Pinot Noir in September, Benton-Lane Winery has transitioned to the use of screw cap closures on our wines instead of corks.

The following information aims to explain our reasons for making the change, how screw caps work, as well as answer some of the questions that we hear people asking about screw caps.

WHY CHANGE FROM CORKS?

Corks have been used to seal wine in bottles for hundreds of years, so why change?
There are a number of good reasons.

- Elimination of "cork taint";
  "Cork taint", or 2,4,6 trichloroanisole (TCA), is a product of mold growing in and on cork. It imparts a musty, dank, wet cardboard character to wine.
  The rate of TCA contamination in corks varies, but wine industry research indicates 5% to 7% of all wines sealed with a cork are affected to some degree by cork taint. Expensive corks are just as prone to TCA contamination as are inexpensive ones. We consider this level of inconsistency in a closure unacceptable, and we know that it would certainly not be tolerated in any other food or beverage industry. Screw caps cannot taint a wine with TCA.

- Other effects of corks:
  On top of this level of cork taint, perhaps another 5% of wines are affected by cork in other ways. This includes "flavor scalping", where the cork absorbs flavors from the wine, premature oxidation of the wine due to the cork allowing air into the bottle and the transfer of woody or dusty flavors from the cork into the wine. Screw caps eliminate all of these problems.

- Convenience:
  Wine bottles with screw caps can be stored in any position. Screw caps require no special tools or strength to open, and are much more easily resealed than corks, helping to conserve the wine once it has been opened.

In short, inserting a piece of tree bark into the neck of a bottle is simply no longer the best option available to Benton-Lane or the wine industry in general for sealing wines. We are determined to use a closure that meets the same high standards that we seek to employ in every other aspect of our winemaking.

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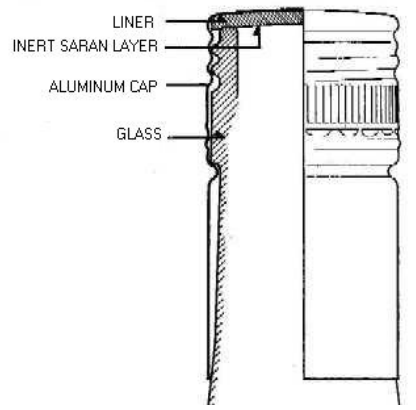
HOW DO SCREW CAPS WORK?

Corks, either natural or synthetic, are cylindrical type closures that are compressed before insertion into the bottle neck. All cylindrical stoppers rely on the elasticity of the material to provide the seal between the closure and the glass. Due to the inherent lack of uniformity in a piece of tree bark, the effectiveness of this seal can be extremely variable.

Screw caps seal the bottle in a completely different manner.

A screw cap consists of two parts:

- A drawn aluminum cap, printed on the outside.
- An inert, multi-layer liner inside the top of the cap.



Screw caps are applied to the bottle by a rotating head, which forms the aluminum cap tightly around the threads that are molded into the glass. The seal is formed between the liner and the top of the bottle. The integrity of the seal is maintained by the elasticity of the expanded foam section of the liner. The only part of the screw cap that comes into contact with the wine is the layer of saran film, which is totally inert and will never impart any flavors or aromas into the wine.

Benton-Lane is confident that switching to screw cap closures will enable us to:

- Eliminate TCA “cork taint”.
- Reduce bottle variation.
- Preserve greater fruit freshness.
- Make the packaging of our wines easier to use for consumers to use.

Screw caps will allow us to deliver our wine to consumers as we intended it, more fully reflecting the hard work and passion for making the best possible wine all of us at Benton-Lane share.

FREQUENTLY ASKED WINE CLOSURE QUESTIONS

Q: Corks have been used for hundreds of years. Can we be confident that screw caps will be reliable?

A: Screw cap technology has existed for over 30 years, and extensive research during this time, particularly in Australia, shows that screw caps are a reliable way of sealing a wine bottle for even an extended period of aging. Hundreds of millions of bottles of other beverages including; juices, soft drinks, bottled water, spirits, etc… are sealed with screw cap closures every year all around the world.

Q: What will happen to the cork forests in Europe if wineries start switching to screw caps?

A: Only a small proportion of annual cork production is used for making wine corks, the vast majority of cork is used in building materials. The total area of cork forest is actually increasing worldwide by around 4% per year.

Q: Aren't wineries simply using screw caps as a way of cutting costs?

A: While screw caps are a cost-effective way of sealing a wine bottle, Benton-Lane's first and foremost priority is to deliver our wines to the consumer the way we intended them to taste, and screw caps help us to achieve that goal. The reduction in flawed wines due to cork problems will benefit consumers immensely.

Q: Are screw caps recyclable?

A: Screw caps are made from aluminum, which is easily and endlessly recycled without quality loss. The screw cap can be removed from the neck of the bottle after use for recycling collection.

Q: How can I be assured that the wine stored in a bottle sealed with a screw cap has not been tampered with?

A: The technical term for screw cap closures is "Roll On Tamper Evident" (ROTE). The tiny metal "bridges" that connect the top of the screw cap to the body, which make the distinctive "click" noise when the screw cap is opened, are evidence that the integrity of the seal had not been compromised.

Q: Will red wine age properly under screw caps? Doesn't the slow passage of air through a cork help wines age and develop bottle bouquet?

A: The prevailing wisdom in the wine world has always been that the aging process of red wines in bottle was a process of slow oxidation. However, recent studies have proven conclusively that oxygen is not a vital component for the ongoing evolution and maturation of red wines in bottle. Red wine will continue to evolve through reactions that do not require air. In reality, the best corks are those that allow the least amount of air into a bottle. Additionally, the practice of dipping the neck of a bottle of age-worthy red wine in wax aims to exclude air from entering the bottle as much as possible. Screw caps provide a reliable, nearly airtight seal every time.

Wine will age more slowly under screw caps than under cork, looking like wine that has been aged in a very cold cellar. This ability to maintain the vibrancy and freshness of a wine for longer in bottle is absolutely perfect for Pinot Noir.