

Wine Wisdom

Cork Benefits Wine And The Environment

(NAPS)—The next time you pop a wine cork, drink a toast to the environment. That's because your choice of wine closures has a real impact on the health of the planet.

Cork is still the hands-down favorite closure for wines sold in the U.S. because it allows wine to age properly, and it is part of the romance of wine. (Have you ever heard of someone saving a screw-cap from a memorable dinner?) But corks are also the favorite closure for the environment.

Corks are made from the bark of a particular species of oak tree found in the Mediterranean Basin. There is no shortage of cork and the oak trees are never cut down for their bark. Instead, a portion of the bark is removed every decade, which actually improves the tree's health.

Corks are biodegradable and recyclable, of course, but their environmental benefits don't end there. The commercial use of cork for wine stoppers encourages the stewardship of the cork oak forests.

And these are not your average forests. They cover an area about the size of Maryland and prevent large portions of countries such as Spain and Portugal from turning into deserts. They also provide habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species and sustain generations of family farmers.

Moreover, the forests offset the emissions from 2.5 million vehicles every year by soaking up carbon dioxide, the primary gas responsible for climate change.

"Choosing wine enclosed with high-quality cork protects 7 million acres of extremely valuable



Cork forests are threatened, not by drought or disease but by artificial wine stoppers. Their disappearance could turn forest areas into deserts.

habitat that are vital to our biosphere," said Jim Bernau, founder and president of Willamette Valley Vineyards, in an interview posted on YouTube. "And it makes the wine taste just a bit better."

But the forests are threatened, not by drought or disease but by artificial wine stoppers.

"The increase in the market share of alternative wine stoppers, specifically plastic stoppers and screw-tops, could reduce the economic value of cork...leading to conversion to other uses...and finally (the) loss of one of the best and most valuable examples of a human-nature balanced system," according to a study by the World Wildlife Fund.

A growing body of evidence suggests there are health benefits to moderate alcohol consumption. In the case of wine, there's also a benefit to the health of our environment when it's sealed with a natural cork.