

EXPERIENCE

The New England Seacoast

IN OUR EXPERIENCE | vino

WINE UNCORKED

Drinking wine has always held a certain amount of pomp and circumstance: The bottle is inspected, cork is popped, and glass is swirled before the velvety liquid even reaches your lips. But when the bottle reeks of wet cardboard, the romance of your evening quickly evaporates into the night sky. That moldy smell is the telltale sign of "corked" wine—trichloroanisole (TCA) bacteria has infiltrated the cork and spoiled the wine, and it's why many of the world's top winemakers are replacing the pop of a cork with the twist of a screw cap.

Experts estimate that five to 10 percent of all wine suffers from cork taint and that up to 30 percent shows some signs of TCA oxidation, which those of us with less-refined palates just assume is bad wine. All of this means fewer profits for the winemakers, so a change was imminent.

"Twenty-five years ago when wine was \$10 a bottle, you might get a bottle or two that was undrinkable. It was kind of part of the deal. But now, when you're uncorking a \$200 or \$300 bottle, the novelty wears off really quickly," says John Conover, general manager of Napa Valley's PlumpJack Winery, who sells their 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon as a two-bottle set for \$370; one sealed with cork and one with a screw cap to show drinkers there is no difference between the two.

Today, it's hard to find a New Zealand sauvignon blanc without the new-age closure. Other early adapters like PlumpJack and a number of Germany's top Rieslings are giving way to a broader acceptance of it as well. Even a number of full-bodied reds laid down for years are testing the closure. The final and possibly toughest challenge then lies in getting the general public to accept the screw cap when the cork has come to embody wine drinking for centuries. But as New England Wine

Festival Director Michele Duval suggests, that time is upon us: "Unless the cork industry finds a way to take the TCA out, I can't imagine that we'll continue to use cork. And as for lost romance with a screw cap, that's silly. The romance is in the wine, not the closure." ::

The specter of cork taint has compelled many of the world's top winemakers to find an alternative closure:

THE SCREW CAP

WINE FESTIVALS FOR EVERY SEASON

New England Wine Festivals offer opportunities to celebrate all things grape during three events spread throughout the calendar year. Taste rare wines with the winemakers themselves, join in special night nights and wine dinners, and travel the world with themed nights featuring the food, entertainment, and, of course, wine from around the globe.

SUMMER WINE FEST

July 13-14, Samoset Resort
Rockport, Maine

BAR HARBOR FOOD AND WINE CLASSIC

September 14-15, Bar Harbor Club
Bar Harbor, Maine

WINTER WINE FESTIVAL

March 16-18, Wentworth by the Sea
New Castle, New Hampshire

newenglandwinefestivals.com