

Performing Seals

Reporting from his experiences in



DO SCREWCAPS have an Achilles heel? Taking a look at test results coming from New Zealand, plus my own personal experiences with that country's wines, increasingly, it looks like they may not be any more perfect as wine closures than the corks they replaced. In a paradoxical twist of the cap, producers who have opted for screwcaps may have simply swapped one set of problems for another.

As part of ongoing reviews for *Australian Gourmet Traveller WINE* and Wellington's *Dominion Post*, I've blind tasted hundreds of wines throughout the past two years. During that time, I've encountered enough problems with screwcapped wines to suggest they can deliver faulty wine just as readily as cork-sealed wines.

One example appeared during a blind tasting of the second pair of three sets of 2001 Jackson Estate Sauvignon Blanc, bottled under both cork and screwcap. Ironically, this was part of an ongoing trial sent to journalists by the New Zealand Screwcap Initiative in September 2001 to demonstrate that screwcaps were superior to corks. After sampling these with two other professionally qualified judges, contrary to all expectations, the wine under screwcap showed signs of oxidation and excessive forward development, whereas the cork-sealed wine was deemed to be young, fresh and relatively underdeveloped. Rather worryingly, where in the past I have seen instances of dented or creased screwcaps, in this case there was no visible sign of leakage.

Equally troubling, at a blind-tasting survey of 30 bottles of 2002 New Zealand gewürztraminer a couple of months ago, judged with two other professionally qualified judges, it was