

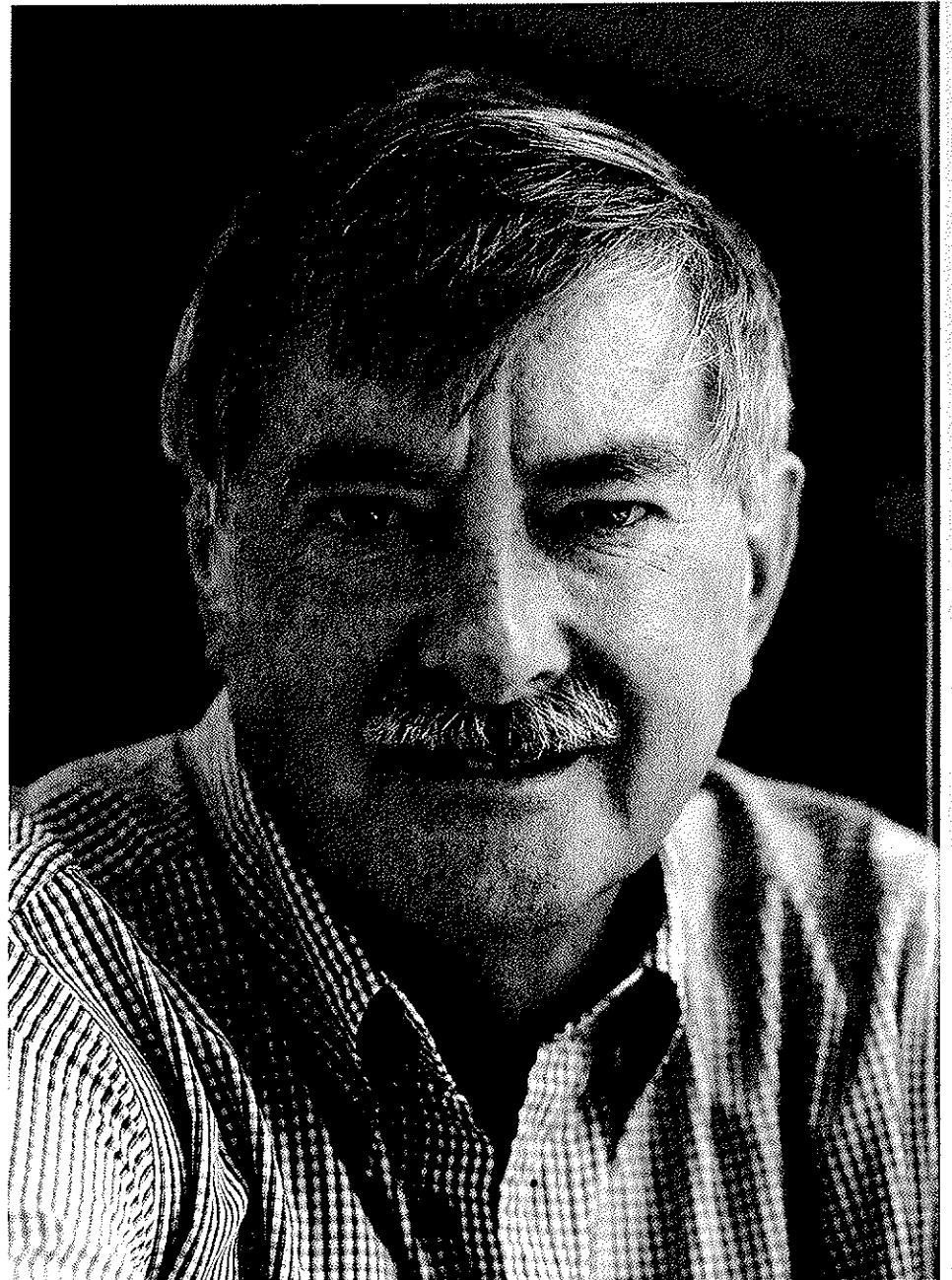
Closures: Croser's view

There are few Australian winemakers more respected within the global wine community than BRIAN CROSER. *WBM* asked him for his views on wine closures.

Thank you for your invitation to comment on wine closures. I will but briefly as far too much is written and spoken about closures at the expense of productive discussion of wine style and quality. Further, there is an unhealthy and uninformed vigilante approach to the subject and too much posing of partial knowledge of the science on both sides as most of the important issues are un-researched and will take decades to do because of the unique, long ageing characteristics of fine wine.

Tapanappa uses top quality, expensive cork and that does not insulate us from the appearance of corkiness (TCA) but on the basis of many bottles I have opened for tastings and personal use the incidence is low and certainly much less than the oft quoted figure of 5%. The choice of bottle is almost as important as the choice of cork and the bottles we use have very uniform bore.

I use cork because I like the ethos of cork as a natural, green and unique substance with a long tradition of sealing fine wine, most of it successfully over decades and even centuries of bottle age. My feeling is that cork contributes to the appropriate ageing of fine wine to achieve optimal complexity and some work points in that direction. Nor can the linear diffusion rates of synthetic closures emulate the complex diffusion pattern of cork as it goes through its own mechanical and time mediated ageing process. I do not want to risk throwing away those time



proven benefits and importing the known problems of synthetic closures and their unknown long term effects as well as their defined benefits.

When the science is clear I will make a more informed decision.

I am cognisant of the convenience, the low taint and defined diffusion characteristics of Stelvin but also wary of the reduction potential, mechanical susceptibility and the style of age achieved under the closure, having first used it in 1977. For immediate consumption, fresh wines, used with wariness of its potential problems, it is a good answer among many emerging alternatives and I respect the

decision to use it by many fine winemakers.

Perfection is not a concept compatible with biological systems and wine and its closure is a biologically derived system which exhibits all of the variation inherent in such systems and uniquely for biologically derived products over decades and centuries as expressed before.

I fear in the long term I will lose more than I gain by throwing cork away and nobody has yet proven I won't.

Brian Croser, who established Petaluma in 1976 and was named Man of the Year by Decanter in 2004, owns Tapanappa. Visit tapanappawines.com.au.