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CORK A KEY TO SUCCESS IN US MARKET

The preference for natural cork as a wine closure in the United States has been underlined with the release of two new studies as well as the outstanding success of a cork-sealed New Zealand wine in this major market.

Leading US trade publication *Wine Business Monthly* again highlighted the positive perceptions of natural cork among US wineries in its 2009 Closure Report.

The publication says its latest survey of 229 US wineries, published in the June edition, shows that natural cork remains the highest rated closure in terms of 'overall perceptions'.

The best 'overall' rating was achieved by natural cork's top rating in several categories including consumer acceptance, performance on the bottling line and product performance.

Companies exporting to the US also consider American consumers' preference for cork closures when developing their packaging strategies for this market.

As reported by *Decanter.com*, a New Zealand wine recently became the best selling sauvignon blanc in the United States with the use of a natural cork closure seen as a major factor in the wine's sales success.

The *Decanter.com* report said the company had packaged the brand specifically for the US consumer by sealing the wine under cork, a move that meant going against the screwcap trend in New Zealand.

Several studies published over the last five years have highlighted US consumers' preference for natural cork as a wine seal.

A recent consumer perceptions study conducted by Nelson Barber, Christopher Taylor and Tim Dodd of the Texas Tech University titled *Twisting Tradition: Consumers' Behavior Toward Alternative Closures*, suggests that 71 per cent of US consumers prefer natural cork closures.

In a presentation on the study the researchers said that “packaging can be of considerable value as a competitive marketing strategy” and that the “style of closure adds directly to the look of the product and is considered by consumers as a direct reflection of the quality of the wine”.

They suggested “consumers still consider screwcaps to be an indication of cheap wines and cork and indication of quality”.

This study indicates little has changed in terms of US consumer perceptions since a survey in 2005 by Tragon Corporation showed that US consumers prefer to buy wine sealed with natural cork ahead of all other closure types.

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ABOUT CORTICEIRA AMORIM, SGPS, S.A.

Tracing its roots to the 19th century, Corticeira Amorim has become the largest cork and cork-derived company in the world, generating over Euro 450 million in sales throughout more than 100 countries. Corticeira Amorim and its subsidiaries are an integral part of a conservation effort to guarantee the survival of hundreds of thousands of cork oak trees throughout the Mediterranean Basin. We are proud of our contribution to the correct utilisation of these important forests that represent a key role in CO₂ retention, preserving biodiversity and preventing desertification. We encourage you to learn more by visiting informative websites such as www.corkfacts.com or www.realcork.org or www.corticeiraamorim.com