



CHANGES POINT TO QUALITY

Amorim is modernising and reorganising its operations to cement its position as the world's leading supplier of high-quality, competitively-priced cork closures.

"The changes we are implementing will mean better quality and better performance of all our cork closures, as well as lower costs," António Amorim, chairman of Corticeira Amorim, the holding company for the cork business of the Amorim Group, said.

"Our customers and the industry will benefit from that."

The sweeping changes in the way the business is organised and run have been instigated by António Amorim a year after taking the helm of Amorim's natural cork business.

The company will remain a cork specialist, reflecting its confidence in the natural product.

Production and sales have been reorganised into five product-specific business units. A sixth unit deals with overall purchasing, accounting, sales and administration. As part of the changes outdated plants are being closed.

"In real terms we have specialised each production unit," Mr Amorim said.

"This provides greater efficiency and allows Amorim to optimise production, product handling and delivery.

"It will help us remain cost-competitive, improve our service to customers and free-up resources for further research, development and innovation.

"If you are a product specialist there is one thing you focus on more than anything else and that is product development. That's the area we have attached the most importance to over the last two or three years.

"The combination of investment in product development and getting the right people for our R&D department has put us a step ahead of most players in the industry."

Mr Amorim said the company's R&D team had already made significant progress towards the company's over-riding goal of defeating TCA.

"We have the right people in place and



→ Corticeira Amorim chairman, António Amorim (right) with research and development head, Miguel Cabral.

they are doing the right things," he said.

"With the resources we are putting into increasing the technical capabilities of cork I'm sure we will win the fight against TCA in the very near future.

"The biggest challenge is time.

"That's why, in a year of cutting costs and a general investment slow down, the only area in which Amorim has

increased expenditure is research and product development.

"We want to be recognised as leaders of the cork industry — not because we are the biggest company, but because of the quality of our products and the integrity of our people."

An edited version of the full Bark to Bottle interview with Mr Amorim can be found on www.corkfacts.com



A NEW LOOK

With Amorim undergoing a program of modernisation across the board, it is timely to introduce a 'new look' to one of our most important communication tools, *Bark to Bottle*.

Since it was first published in 1998, *Bark to Bottle* has sought to inform and educate readers on matters relating to natural cork closures and to debate issues of concern to the global wine industry.

What started as a publication with a modest distribution in select markets has grown into a bilingual global newsletter with an extensive international circulation that continues to grow.

From this issue, for example, we will be expanding our reach in the North American market and we extend a warm welcome to new readers in the United States.

In many ways, this new more contemporary look for *Bark to Bottle* reflects Amorim's modern approach to its business and our focus on the technical aspects of cork production.

It is also consistent with the new distribution strategy for the newsletter.

From this issue, the publication will be available in an electronic format with recipients able to receive stories of interest directly via email. For many readers, this will be a much more efficient and convenient way to receive their copy of the latest issue.

Of course, this and past editions of *Bark to Bottle* are also available on the Amorim website at www.corkfacts.com.

We trust you enjoy reading the new look *Bark to Bottle* and, as the world's leading cork producer, Amorim looks forward to continuing to present you with interesting and newsworthy articles on the most effective of wine closures, cork.

Francisco Brito Evangelista
Editor

TWIN TOP® OUTRUNS SYNTHETICS

Amorim's technical cork, Twin Top®, appears to have outlasted all of the synthetic stoppers under trial in a major closure study by the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI).

Over 7000 bottles filled with a Semillon wine are under trial, with researchers investigating the relative performance of 14 closures against a range of physical, chemical and sensory parameters for up to 10 years.

In the 30 months since the AWRI trial began, just four of the closures appear to have provided what the researchers consider adequate protection against oxidation.

They are Amorim Twin Top®, a 44-mm natural cork, a cork-synthetic hybrid and a screwcap.

After 30 months, the wine sealed with Twin Top® corks recorded an average total sulfur dioxide concentration of 76 milligrams per litre, just one milligram less than the concentration at 24 months. Its free sulfur dioxide concentration of 14 milligrams per litre was unchanged from the 24-months result.

The AWRI researchers argue that sulfur dioxide concentration is a key indicator of closure performance and that browning and deterioration of the sensory qualities of the wine accelerates when this falls below 10 milligrams per litre.

Of the 14 closures on trial, eight are synthetic stoppers. After 30 months, the free sulfur dioxide concentrations in wine sealed under each of the synthetic stoppers had fallen to less than 10 milligrams per litre.

Amorim's head of research and development, Professor Miguel Cabral, attributes the strong performance of Twin Top® to the higher grade of materials and superior method of manufacture, compared with other types of 'one plus one' technical corks.

"The cork granules are relatively large, which helps to ensure Amorim Twin Top® is very close in its mechanical properties to natural corks. Also, the discs are cut in a way that ensures they exert uniform pressure against the bottleneck, providing a very reliable seal," he said.

Twin Top's® exceptional results at the 30-month mark of the AWRI trial can only add to the strong international sales of the product, which already comprise 40 per cent of Amorim's total wine cork sales in the United States.

Note: For an earlier report on the progress of the AWRI closure trial, see Bark to Bottle issue No. 10 published in September 2001 and available on the Amorim website at www.corkfacts.com

Reference: Australian Wine Research Institute, Technical Review No. 137, April 2002, 7-10.



BOTTLING TIP FOR WINERIES

With interest in Amorim Twin Top® booming, several wineries have recently sought advice from Amorim on the specific bottling requirements of the high-performance cork.

As Twin Tops® are significantly denser than whole natural corks (about 255-265 kg/m³, compared with 140-160 kg/m³ for natural cork) they require a greater force of compression to achieve

the desired diameter for bottling.

If, for example, a corking machine is worn or poorly calibrated, 'lipping' or chipping of the Twin Top® cork may occur.

Amorim advises that, when calibrating a corking machine, the cork should be put into the machine jaws, compressed and then measured to check that the amount of compression is sufficient.



→ Amorim's TwinTop® is recommended by Woolworths in South Africa.

WOOLWORTHS' SEAL OF APPROVAL

Woolworths, regarded as the leading supermarket chain in South Africa for quality food products, has selected Amorim's Twin Top® cork as the recommended closure for its range of fast moving South African bottled wines.

"Amorim is a reputable company," said Jenny Ratcliffe, Woolworths' assistant selector for wine/fresh juices/beer.

"It has built a solid reputation in

this market and has quality control mechanisms in place that meet our specific requirements.

"The market feedback on Twin Top® is excellent and that has been a key factor in granting it Woolworths' approval.

"It is an extremely cost effective closure and many of our suppliers have been using it successfully for years."

Sales of Twin Top® are expected to increase by 50 per cent in South Africa in 2002.

BAR TOPS LIFT SPIRITS IN THE UK

United Distillers and Vintners (UDV), the world's largest whisky producer, has committed to sealing its premium malt whisky range with Amorim's bar top corks.

The two year contract, with an option of a third year, includes premium brand, Johnnie Walker, and 'The Classic Malts of Scotland Selection', comprising the Cragganmore, Dalwhinnie, Glenkinchie, Lagavulin, Oban and Talisker labels.

Deborah Guimaraens, who is responsible for Amorim's natural bar top closures worldwide, said technological advancements made by Amorim in recent years and the premium image consumers associate with natural cork had led to the agreement with UDV.

"Factors affecting cork selection for bar top closures for spirits and fortified wines are as exacting as for still light wine," she said.

"Although different nuances come into play, very close attention has to be taken to minimise the passage of tannins from cork into spirits, particularly white spirits.

"The high alcohol content of spirits makes them far more erosive to cork over time than light wine, so we take particular care with surface treatment to prevent any debris fall-out from the cork into the spirit.

"We also have to pay close attention to the tops, particularly in gluing the two components together. All the products we use are food grade approved — whether they are glass, metal, crystal, wood, polystyrene or ceramic."

Amorim's unique INOS II washing process also plays an important role in enhancing the technical performance of bar top corks.



→ Premium bar tops — Amorim will seal UDV's premium malt whisky range.

Carlos Agrellos, who is responsible for Amorim's natural wine corks in English-speaking countries, says the UK market is extremely important for Amorim across its full range of products.

"The UK has a unique combination of discerning, knowledgeable and demanding bottlers, agencies, retailers

and consumers," he said.

"With over 50 wine producing countries active in marketing to the UK we focus closely on supporting that market's particular needs.

"Our main priority is to ensure that the end-user, the consumer, is getting the best that natural cork from Amorim can offer."



DROP US A LINE

For more information about cork and/or Amorim please drop a line to:
The Editor, Bark to Bottle
Fax: 61 3 9654 3785 Internet: www.corkfacts.com
E-mail: fbevangelista.ai@amorim.com

IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA ADDS OZONE

Amorim Cork South Africa has added an ozone room with a humidifier to its Cape Town premises to improve the quality of natural corks it supplies to the local market.

The innovative equipment will have an important role in homogenising the humidity content of natural corks, which are subject to diverse climatic conditions during transport from Portugal — with temperatures in some instances ranging from 5°C to 40°C in the same day.

The main advantage of the ozone treatment, however, will be the deodorisation and sterilisation of every order of natural corks delivered by Amorim Cork South Africa. → 01

APCOR STARTS GLOBAL PUSH

The Portuguese Cork Association (Associação Portuguesa de Cortiça - APCOR) has started an international campaign to promote and protect the image of real cork closures.

It has launched Cork Information Bureaus (CIB) in key wine markets — the UK, USA, Australia, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, Spain, Italy, France and Germany — to provide information, news and facts about cork to the wine industry and media.

The CIBs are a major part of APCOR's strategy to promote cork. The global campaign also includes advertising, public relations and online activity.

APCOR aims to raise awareness of the advantages of cork stoppers and the overwhelming consumer preference for natural cork.

The chairman of APCOR, Henrique Martins, said that natural cork has been the leading wine closure for hundreds of years and, with the onset of new technologies, still remains the most popular.

"However, for our industry to continue to be

competitive and remain the world's leading manufacturer of natural cork stoppers, it is necessary for us to come together as an industry to promote and protect the image of real cork closures," he said.

Amorim is a member of APCOR together with some 300 other Portuguese cork manufacturers. → 02

NEW GCMS MACHINES FOR LAB

Amorim has substantially lifted its capacity for identifying contaminated corks, with the recent purchase of another two gas-chromatography mass-spectrometry (GCMS) analysers for its research and development department.

The GCMS machines, which can detect chloroanisole taints in the low parts per trillion range, are an important element in Amorim's campaign to defeat TCA and further improve quality control.

The new equipment will allow Amorim to chemically analyse an additional 150 cork samples a day.

CHAIRMAN RE-ELECTED

The annual general meeting of Corticeira Amorim, the holding company for the cork business of the Amorim Group, has re-elected Mr António Rios de Amorim as its chairman.

US CAMPAIGN STARTS

Amorim has commenced an integrated marketing campaign in the United States.

The campaign objectives are twofold: to increase awareness of the Amorim brand and build preference for Amorim cork closures within the North American wine industry.

Leading global public relations firm, Porter Novelli, is working with Amorim Cork America on the campaign that will include benchmarking research, media relations, direct mail, trade advertising and industry presentations.

AND FINALLY...

A goldfish owner in England has crafted special water wings from a wine cork to save his sick pet from starving to death.

Gandalf, a fan-tailed goldfish, was unable to feed because his swim bladder — a sac that helps fish get to different depths — had failed.

Graham Morrison found the answer to the buoyancy problem while enjoying a bottle of wine. He sliced the cork in half and attached the pieces to either side of his pet with an elastic band.

Now Gandalf can swim to the surface to feed then go back to the bottom of his tank.

"He might look funny now but at least he is swimming about with great agility," Morrison told *The Sun* (UK). → 03

Editor's Note: Amorim is a strong supporter of cork recycling and encourages the use of used wine corks in different applications — although this one did surprise us!

MYTHS EXPOSED

MYTH- There is a shortage of cork in the world.

FACT- The cork forests of Portugal are expected to produce sufficient cork to meet demand over the next 100 years. The average age of today's cork trees is about 75 years. As their average lifespan is 170 years, today's forests are still young.

The Portuguese cork industry has invested heavily in scientific research resulting in larger plantations and higher density forests. Research is also exploring ways to increase cork yield.

The introduction of 'technical corks' such as Amorim's Twin Top® allows even better utilisation of cork resources.



→01

→ Amorim South Africa is now treating corks with ozone.



→02

→ The APCOR logo.



→03

→ Water wings are a corker.

Photo: Carl Rutherford - www.carlrhix.co.uk