



WINE TAIN T MAY BE IN DECLINE: UK STUDY

A survey of wine sold in Britain suggests that cork producers are making progress against musty corks.

Commissioned by the UK Wine & Spirit Association (WSA), a controversial survey of almost 14,000 wines found a sharp fall in the incidence of mustiness in 2001 vintage and non-vintage wines, compared with wines bottled in earlier years.

Overall, the survey concluded that mustiness affected between 0.7 and 2.1 per cent of the wines sampled, with the most likely range being 0.7 to 1.2 per cent.

For the 2,860 wines that were 2001 vintage or non-vintage, the verified mustiness was 0.2 per cent (after an initial assessment of 0.8 per cent).

The author of the survey report, Martin Hall, director of food science at Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Association, suggests that the lower incidence of mustiness last year may be due in part to a real reduction in the incidence of corks affected by mustiness caused by TCA.

"If this is the case it would reflect the major investment made by the cork industry to modernise its practices and impose more effective control measures," he said.

The other possible reason given is the time it may take for any TCA present in cork to transfer to wine in the bottle.

Of the total number of wines under all types of closure, 3.4 per cent were found to have some type of defect.

The WSA wine samples were initially evaluated by experienced assessors in the UK wine trade as a part of their normal quality assessments, and sent for verification by tasting panels at two independent laboratories, Corkwise Ltd and DBQA.

The survey methodology has been criticised as flawed. Critics have highlighted a gap of several days between when the bottles were opened and initially tested and when the samples were subsequently verified. It is said that, over a period of days, TCA can be reabsorbed into the cork and that oxidation can mask the presence of TCA.

However, the WSA believes the criticism



→ The UK Wine & Spirit Association examined some 14,000 wine samples, mainly from France, Italy, Spain and Australia.

is not fully justified, pointing out that even if *all* samples initially assessed as musty were considered to be TCA-affected, then the incidence of mustiness would rise to just 2.1 per cent. In the unlikely event that all faulty samples (including the oxidised samples), were also musty, the incidence of the defect would be 3.4 per cent at most.

A highlight for Amorim was the finding that wine sealed under Amorim Twin Top® corks (109 samples in total) recorded not a single verified instance of mustiness, the best result for any cork closure examined.

Amorim's executive vice president, António Affonso de Barros, said he was encouraged by the results, especially the fall in musty taints in 2001, but said the battle against TCA was not won yet.

"At Amorim, even 1 per cent taint is unacceptable to us, and defeating the problem of TCA in corks has been our number one priority for some time," he said.

For more information on the survey, contact the Wine & Spirit Association at info@wsa.org.uk. The report can be purchased from the WSA for £500.



→ Rich in tradition — Gerry Rowland has traced his winemaking ancestry back to 1537.

BEST OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

In the United States' Napa Valley, where 'older' wineries were founded in the late 1960s, Rowland Cellars is something of an anomaly. The winery's Ramspeck label is 465 years old!

When owner Gerry Rowland decided to market his own brand he traced his family history for inspiration. He discovered a rich German winemaking ancestry with the family's Ramspeck crest first appearing on a label in 1537.

Raised in Australia's famed Barossa

Valley wine region, Rowland began his career there before accepting a position at Stags Leap Winery in the Napa Valley in 1987. This was followed by eight years at Chappellet winery before devoting his energies to Rowland Cellars full-time from 1997.

Today, Rowland Cellars produces 4000 cases annually under three labels — Ramspeck, Rowland and Cenay. The pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon and syrah grape varieties are drawn from the Napa Valley and New Zealand's Central Otago region.

Respect for tradition is the cornerstone of Rowland's winemaking. After researching methods dating back centuries, he has developed a style that combines the best of old and new worlds.

Rowland manages his vineyards under the French 'terroir' concept where a wine's flavour directly reflects the soil and climate.

"I wouldn't make wine unless I could ensure a quality product," he says.

"With a family tradition beginning four and half centuries ago it adds a little extra weight on your shoulders to do it right."

With much care and dedication going into every bottle, Rowland is not willing to sacrifice the integrity of his wines at the packaging stage.

"I take such great care to get my wines to the point of bottling that I don't want to risk them with an untested closure," he said.

Amorim corks have been the only solution from the outset.

"Even before I started making my own wines, the extensive cork quality testing we did at Chappellet proved that Amorim, time and again, was the most consistent and aesthetically appealing of the corks we tested," he said.

"The overall quality and reliability among grades from year to year proved that Amorim was successfully eliminating the inconsistencies inherent in cork."

Rowland's premium brands are closed with Amorim natural corks, while the mid-priced Ramspeck label is sealed with Twin Top® technical corks.

"Initially, I chose Twin Top® as a cost saving over natural whole cork, but I've stayed with it because of the lack of taint it ensures in my wines," he said.

In fact, since switching to Twin Top® in 1993 Rowland Cellars has only had one bottle of tainted wine.

It is this impressive performance that led Rowland, during one season, to ship Twin Top® corks from the United States to New Zealand to close his Rowland pinot noir when he couldn't source Amorim closures locally.

"I know that the amount of control that Amorim exerts on its cork production process is paying off — I see it in the product," he concluded.



→ The Rowland Cellars vineyard is managed under the French 'terroir' concept.



FROM BARK TO BOTTLE: THE FOREST

With a greater emphasis on forest management and a strong reforestation program in Europe and North Africa, *Quercus suber* looks set to continue to flourish in the Western Mediterranean basin as it has for thousands of years.

Cork is the bark of *Quercus suber*, the cork oak.

Today, cork forests cover some 2.2 million hectares of land in Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

In Portugal alone cork oak forests occupy more than 725,000 hectares, representing 30 per cent of the world's plantations. By 2015, this is expected to increase to 1,450,000 hectares¹. From existing plantations, Portugal produces more than half of the world's cork.

A cork oak begins life as an acorn, which may germinate naturally in the forest or under controlled nursery conditions.

Growth is slow and gradual. The tree needs a lot of light, relatively little rain, a degree of humidity and thrives up to 1400 metres above sea level.

Cork oak husbandry is divided into two

main areas — care of the soil and of the tree itself.

The soil is tilled periodically and undergrowth cleared every four to five years. This increases tree vigour and hence enhances the cork's economic value in terms of quantity and quality.



→ Today there is greater emphasis on forest management by owners of cork oak plantations.

Trees are selectively thinned to regulate the density of the forest and to remove aged trees. Pruning is carried

out to foster productivity, train young trees, maintain the form and vigour of mature trees and revitalise aged trees.

The delicate operation of stripping the cork is critical to the on-going vitality of the oak. Cork trees are not considered robust or mature enough for harvesting until they are at least 25 years old.

Naturally, the industry's importance to the Portuguese economy has led to strict regulation of the growth and management of cork trees.

By law, trees cannot be felled without permission and the bark can only be stripped once every nine years.

In recent times, due in part to increasing pressure from cork manufacturers, there has been greater emphasis on forest management by plantation owners.

Amorim also plays an active role in forest management to ensure it purchases the best quality raw material. It only buys from growers complying with the industry's code of practice and has records going back over 40 years to help it identify and select the best quality raw material.

¹ Source: 2000 World Congress on Cork Oak and Cork.

ACADEMY CELEBRATES

The Amorim Academy met in Portugal in July to celebrate and review 10 years of activity and define its program for the coming decade.

Over four days, 45 influential representatives of the world wine community — all academy members or past laureates — were guests of the Amorim Group.

As part of the program, the group revisited the works of the 16 researchers and authors acknowledged by the academy's awards program over the past decade.

In many cases, their studies have had a profound effect in determining new courses of action for human health, legislation, grape growing and winemaking. Examples include:

- Pascal Chatonnet demonstrated that the volatile odour compounds in wine are significantly modified during ageing in oak barrels.
- Regulatory limits for lead content in wine were dropped to 200 micrograms/litre



→ Amorim Academy president Robert Tinlot examines cork discs at an Amorim processing plant

shortly after P.L. Teissedre's work showing its effect on health.

- Valérie Lavigne-Cruege explained the mechanisms of lees ageing in small oak barrels and how to reproduce it in large tanks.
- Virginie Moine-Ledoux explored the role yeast mannoproteins play in

protecting wines against tartrate and protein instability.

In recent years the Amorim Academy has taken a greater role in facilitating debate on issues affecting the global wine industry.

More details on the Amorim Academy and specific research studies can be found on the academy's website at www.academie-amorim.com.



DROP US A LINE

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IN BRIEF

A TASTE FOR THEATRE

The Australian wine industry's major conference and celebration, Wine Australia 2002, was widely regarded as a great success.

Amorim Cork Australia had an important presence at the festival, sponsoring a wine taste theatre. The Amorim Taste Theatre conducted up to six master classes a day for consumers and trade personnel.

The four-day biennial festival, held in the first week of August in Sydney, brought together some 400 wineries and was attended by over 30,000 people.

VISION PRESENTED IN SOUTH AFRICA

Corticeira Amorim chairman, Antonio Amorim, has outlined his vision for the world's biggest cork manufacturer at an industry conference in South Africa.

Mr Amorim emphasised Amorim's aspiration to be the "centre of competence for cork" at the conference, which was attended by 100 leading winemakers, technical directors and journalists.

He said the company was pursuing a range of initiatives including vertical integration and restructuring around product lines; development of new products; and continuous investment in research and development.

The head of Amorim's research and development department, Miguel Cabral also addressed the conference. → 01

DONATING TO THE FUTURE

The winemaking program at Napa Valley Community College (NVCC) has received a major boost following donations from the Napa Valley Vintners Association and local businesses including Amorim Cork America.

Through the donations, a fully equipped winemaking facility has been built on the

NVCC campus, allowing the NVCC to teach commercial winemaking.

"In the past, the course was taught out of a 40-foot metal container where the students had practical experience but were only afforded the space to practice home winemaking techniques," said Geraldine Richie, head of NVCC's wine making program.

"We strive to keep the program up-to-date with the current processes and equipment to meet the needs of the industry and produce the next generation of winemakers."

US WINERY TRACES TCA TO CELLAR

Dogged by an abnormal high incidence of tainted wines, a leading Napa Valley winery recently undertook an investigation to locate the source of the contamination. Tests revealed that chemical preservatives were the most likely source.

According to *Wine Spectator* magazine, several bottles of suspect wine submitted by the winery for 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA) testing revealed the presence of chloroanisoles typically associated with chemicals used as wood preservatives.

The winery has since traced the contamination to a cellar where its top red wines were aged in barrels. A humidifier had apparently helped spread TCA throughout the cellar and into the barrels.

→ 02

SPARKLING SPONSORSHIP IN SA

In a move aimed at identifying South Africa's top Methode Cap Classique wine, *Wine Magazine* in conjunction with Amorim Cork South Africa is organising the first Cap Classique Challenge.

The general manager of Amorim Cork South Africa, Joaquim Sa, said the company was delighted to sponsor the competition and extend its support for the industry.

"We supply 80 per cent of South Africa's and

30 per cent of the world's sparkling wine corks — it's a natural association," he said.

WINEMAKERS PREFER CORK: US STUDY

Amorim Cork America has released the results of a survey of US winemakers that shows the majority prefer natural cork.

According to the results, almost three-quarters of winemakers (72 per cent) prefer natural cork as a wine closure — more than five times higher than synthetics (14 per cent) or screwcaps (11 per cent).

The survey also found that wine taint is not as prevalent as sometimes thought. Generally, participants reported less taint in their own wines (0 to 1 per cent) than the perceived national average (3 to 5 per cent).

Conducted during May and June by an independent researcher, the Amorim commissioned survey involved a random selection of 200 winemakers — or approximately 10 per cent of US wineries.

AND FINALLY...

Cork floor tiles purchased from a local hardware store have played an important role in the world's first launching of a revolutionary hypersonic scramjet rocket.

On 30 July a team of scientists from University of Queensland in Australia fired the scramjet engine, beating organisations such as NASA to the achievement.

The scramjet combines hydrogen fuel with hypersonic airflow to propel the rocket at over five times the speed of sound.

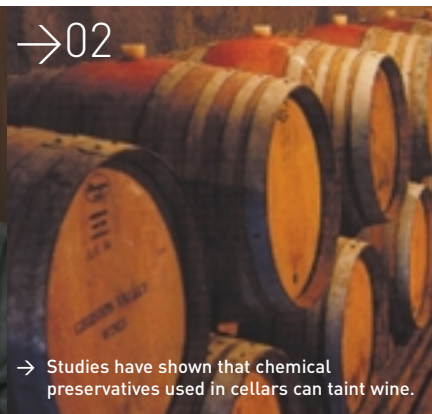
At such speeds the rocket reaches extreme temperatures that could damage the valuable technology. The cork tiles, as a natural insulator, were placed on the rocket's nose to protect it.

The project involved almost 20 years of research and funding of \$US 1.1 million from various organisations, including the US Air Force. → 03



→01

→ Antonio Amorim outlined his vision for the company in South Africa



→02

→ Studies have shown that chemical preservatives used in cellars can taint wine.



→03

→ Cork was used to protect the hypersonic scramjet rocket.

Photo: The University of Queensland