



... WHEN THE CONVERSATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WINE

SUMMER 2010



Renewable & Recyclable

Cork
Cork harvesting is an environmentally friendly process during which not a single tree is cut down. The vegetable tissue known as cork is the outer bark of the cork oak tree, not the trunk as people might think. When the bark is removed, the tree quickly forms new layers of cork and restores its protective barrier. Depending on the growing region, cork trees are harvested every nine to twelve years. Harvested trees normally live past 200 years, and they are generally considered to be healthier than trees that have never been harvested. This makes the industry a near-perfect example of renewable production.

Used corks have long been collected for craft purposes to make wreaths, coasters and, in one famous case, a full-size sailing ship that traveled Portugal's Duoro River. They are also popular with suppliers of specialty ground covers (playgrounds) and can be used in mulch and soil conditioners.

Until recently, there was little opportunity to return the wine corks to a manufacturer for recycling into second generation cork products. The reason was primarily geographic as the vast majority of cork manufacturing plants were in Europe.

This has now changed with the advent of several recycling programs in North America. Two of the fastest growing – Cork Reharvest and ReCORK -- have opened numerous receiving facilities in the U.S. They arrange for delivery to industrial cork facilities, where the wine corks are ground into small pieces for reassembly into cork sheets suitable for flooring, gaskets and a growing list of new products.

Information courtesy of the Cork Quality Council

IDYLLWILD

Words from the Winemaker

HI FRIENDS,

Since the time that wine was first packaged into bottles, natural cork (whole chunks of bark from the cork oak tree) has been a well-known means of keeping the wine in, keeping excess oxygen out, and providing that ever familiar *ploikk* sound when you open the bottle. Today there are different kinds of closures – natural cork, technical cork (bits of natural cork glued together), synthetic corks and, of course, screw caps.

How does a winemaker decide which closure to use?

Natural Cork

One of the primary benefits of natural cork is that it allows for tiny amounts of oxygen to slowly pass into and out of the bottle (called micro-oxidation) which is an important part of the aging process of red wine. That's right! Even though you think of cork as being solid, it actually allows oxygen to pass through it. The downside of using natural cork is that it is considered to be the most common cause of **cork taint** – a musty, damp cardboard smell. The cause is typically eliminated when the cork is sterilized, but about 1% of bottles with natural corks still end up tainted. On top of that, natural cork is generally more expensive than other closures. All that aside, I love natural cork – I love the look of it and the way it smoothly pulls out of the bottle ... and besides, it's a tradition in winemaking!

Technical Cork

These corks can also lead to **corked** wine but not nearly as often as natural cork. They have some annoying shortcomings though – leaky bottles and oxidized wine (wine that has experienced excessive oxygen exchange resulting in flat, stale or sherry-like aroma and flavor). Also, they have a tendency to fall apart when getting pulled out of the bottle.

These failures are why I will NEVER use it again – I have cases of wine where almost a quarter of the bottles are hit-or-miss junk and must be dumped. And what's more frustrating than a chunk of cork stuck in the neck of your bottle?!

Synthetic Cork

These corks have none of the problems of natural or technical cork, and they come in some really fun colors. They are also less expensive than cork. The problem is that they look and feel like what they are – synthetic! And they have a really big downside if you're a red wine lover – they don't offer the oxygen exchange needed for aging red wine ... not to mention that they tend to gum up your *Rabbit* corkscrew!

Screw Caps

As with synthetic cork, you get none of the problems with natural or technical cork. They're great for wines that need no micro-oxidation for aging (which is most whites). And they're very convenient when you've misplaced your corkscrew! Some people ask me if I will ever use screw caps for my white wine. Never say never, but for the time being it's cork for me – besides, I don't have screw-cap equipment.

So what do you get with Middle Ridge wine? You get a traditional, natural cork that sustains the earth ... and good conversations as well!

Until we meet again,
Good Health, Good
Drink, Good Times

Chris Johnston
Winemaker & Bottle Washer



Wine in the Times



Cork

I have something of a love/hate relationship with cork tainted wine. I hate getting a bottle of corked wine. But when I do, I close it up, put it in the refrigerator, and keep it as long as I can. WHY you ask? Training. I love having folks smell corked wine at our Middle Ridge Signature Aroma Table events. It is amazing how many people remark, "I had a wine that smelled just like that the other day!" My first response is, "I certainly hope you sent it back." The server at your restaurant should happily oblige.

- Chris

CHILL, OPEN ... AHHHHH!

Summer is a perfect time to enjoy white wines. Chill them down, gather a few friends and make your way to the patio -- or to the deck if you're at our place in Idyllwild. In fact, I often refer to my white wines as "deck wines" because I design them with hot summer days in mind. They're great when you're looking for something light and refreshing -- whether you've been working in the garden all day, washing the car or, like me, raking pine needles (a regular fire abatement chore when you live in the mountains). Of course, having friends stop by is the best of all reasons for opening a bottle of your favorite wine.

The Middle Ridge Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc are perfect deck and picnic wines -- they are great alone or with food. Pinot Grigio pairs nicely with melons and mild cheeses like Gruyere, Humboldt Fog, or mozzarella. It's also goes well with seafood, roasted chicken, pork tenderloin, and even omelets and frittatas. Sauvignon Blanc goes well with the same foods and because of its grassy, herbaceous notes, it's an ideal accompaniment to salads and vegetables as well.

To get the most flavor and aromas from your white wines, don't forget to think about temperature. 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit is a good basic temperature for white wines. If you've had the wine chilling in the refrigerator, which is usually kept at 35 degrees, be sure to take it out about half an hour before serving. This will bring out the flavors and aromas which are hidden when the wine is too cold (like eating frozen pizza when it's still frozen). Wine warms up -- and chills down -- at about 4 degrees every ten minutes. As the wine begins to warm, the aromas come to life. And aromas are an important factor in enjoying wine -- 80 percent of tasting occurs in the nose!

By the way, if you need to chill a bottle of white wine, place it in the refrigerator for an hour, in the freezer for 20 minutes, or in a bucket of ice water for 10 minutes before serving.

Then open, pour, and relax ... and enjoy some great conversation!



Come taste Middle Ridge wines at The Collective wine bar in Old Town Temecula, which serves as our tasting room, and special events in Idyllwild.



The Wine Collective
28544 Old Town Front Street
Temecula, CA 92590



New REDS-ONLY WINE CLUB

Red wine lovers now have their very own Middle Ridge wine club beginning August 2010! It's here by popular demand, and we thank you for your support. If you're currently receiving the mixed wine club shipment (which includes both red and white wines) and would like to change to the reds-only club, please contact Wine Club Director Jasmine Gioia.

IDYLLWILD PICK UP LOCATION

Wine club shipments can now be picked up in Idyllwild at Idyll Awhile Wine Shoppe Bistro! If you would like to change your current club status to "Idyllwild Pick-Up," please contact Wine Club Director Jasmine Gioia. *(Please note that, while club shipments can be picked up at Idyll Awhile, other member benefits such as tastings and discounts are not applicable at this location.)*

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