

PASSION



Real Cork. Real Wine.



Real Cork, Real Wine

If making a wine, a great wine, requires passion and wisdom, in order to capture its many flavours and aromas in a bottle requires knowledge and, above all, a seal of unquestionable quality, a stopper of the purest cork. Wine and cork. Two totally different products that complement each other in every way.

They have long shared a common history, ancient traditions and infinite moments of pleasure. From Roman amphorae sealed with cork, to one of the oldest bottles ever found in a sunken galleon filled with 350-year-old Port that - astonishingly! - was still drinkable. There are also all the great wines of international renown and prestige that continue to demand this genuinely natural seal, a symbol of quality and longevity. Legendary names that stir emotions and inspire respect - Quinta do Noval, Fonseca, Taylor's Vintage Ports or the celebrated Grand Cru of Bordeaux.

Natural cork stoppers, produced only from cork harvested from cork oaks that are at least 50 years old, are the only stoppers the most famous wine producers entrust their precious product. Particularly wines that are intended to be stored, aged and appreciated in later years. It is an unchangeable and essential ritual: choosing that special wine patiently reserved for the right occasion, appreciating the strength of its cork when opening the bottle, decanting it, letting it breathe and, finally, serving it, feeling its bouquet and savouring, on its own or accompanied with food, an experience of pure pleasure.



Real Cork, Real Nature

Like the vineyards of Portugal's Douro Valley or the Atlantic Forest in Brazil, the cork oak forests are a very specific, delicately balanced ecosystem found only in the Mediterranean basin, particularly in the southern regions of the Iberian Peninsula. Portugal has the largest area of cork oak forest in the world (around 730 thousand hectares, 33% of the world total).

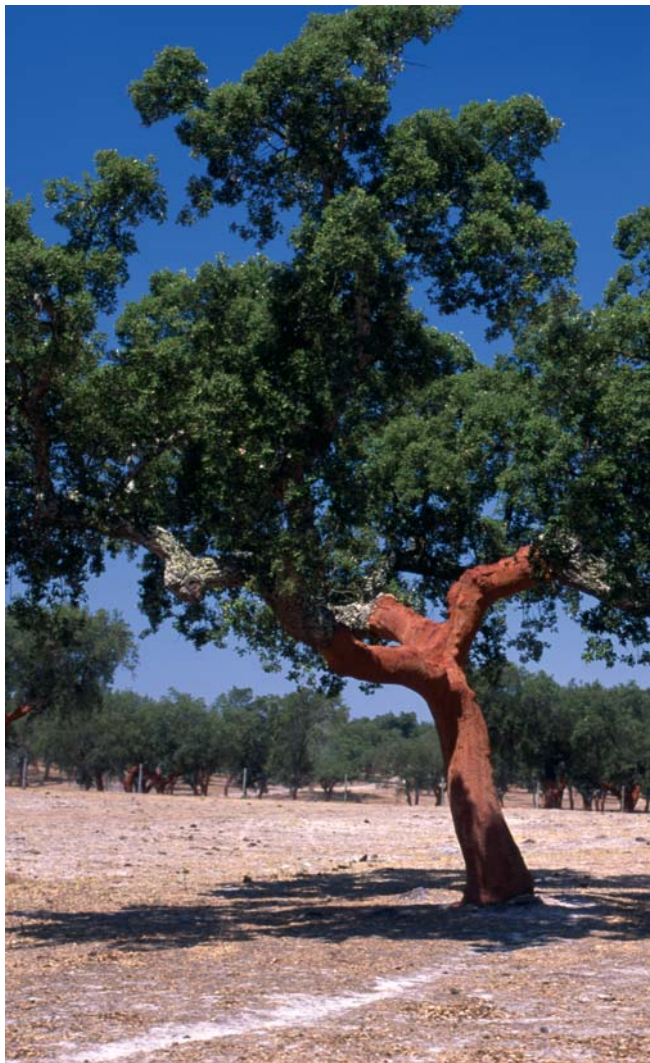
Considered a national heritage, cork oak forests have been legally protected for centuries. The trees may not be cut down and incentives are available for the planting and management of cork oak forests. This initiative, pioneered by Portugal, was clearly the right decision, since the harvesting of cork to manufacture cork stoppers has become an industry of great economic importance and Portugal has become the main international cork exporter and processor.



Real Cork, Real Biodiversity

Cork oaks can grow up to 25 meters high and live for up to 300 years, always serving the community: through the regular harvesting of their exceptional bark which continues to surprise the scientific community with the versatility of its qualities. It has such a capacity for regeneration that even without chemical herbicides, fertilizers or irrigation, during the nine years between each harvest (or stripping), the bark regrows, ready for the new cork harvest. A life cycle that crosses generations and ensures environmental sustainability, since the bark is always harvested with great care and skill.

“Plant a cork oak forest for your grandchildren,” the wise country folk say. They know that their future and the future of their descendants are dependent not only on the harvesting of cork, but also on maintaining the amazingly rich environmental biodiversity of the cork forests and even the balance of the climate itself. Besides its capacity to produce oxygen, the cork oak has a unique cell structure that enables it to retain carbon dioxide, the principle cause of global warming.



Real Cork, Real R&D

Although the cork stopper is the most famous international ambassador of cork, the use of this raw material in areas other than seals has been increasing exponentially, thanks to both recognition of its numerous qualities and increasing investment in research and innovation, in a clear commitment to the final quality of the product. Over the last five years the Portuguese industry has invested more than 400 million euros (\$US 480 million) in modernisation, new factories and new technologies. The International Code of Cork Stopper Manufacturing Practice (ICCSMP) that became an international reference in 1997 and the international certification, SYSTECODE, was created in 1999. Their objectives are to certify cork stopper manufacturers that comply with the ICCSMP. In 2004, there were 274 SYSTECODE certified companies. Nearly 90% are APCOR members.

That's not all. Portuguese companies are increasingly investing time and money in the application of **quality certification** systems, such as **HACCP** (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control), a food production control system, or **ISO standards**, a vast series of internationally implemented procedures. APCOR itself is developing an innovative project - **Research into the Elimination of Cork Contamination by Haloanisoles** –, based on the use of biotechnological strategies. **Symbios - The Knowledge of Nature**, is another process developed by the Cork Technology Centre (CTCOR) which prevents

the formation of the chemical compounds responsible for the so-called "cork taint,"the chloroanisols (commonly known as TCA).

On the other hand, although natural cork stoppers are recyclable, the waste resulting from their production, whilst biodegradable, can always be used to make cork granulate which can then be used for stoppers or for many other applications. In the cork industry nothing is wasted, everything is transformed.





Real Cork, Real Consumer Preferences

The latest market studies are unanimous in confirming a clear preference for cork stoppers among wine consumers. In 2004, Wine Intelligence, the largest international wine industry consultancy, conducted the first major survey of American consumer attitudes to the two types of seal, cork stoppers and aluminium capsules (screwcaps). Two thirds of the respondents thought it was positive to buy wine with a cork stopper, 52% rejected aluminium capsules and only 1% said that they did not like to drink wine sealed with a cork. Another endorsement of cork came from the online survey conducted by the celebrated American magazine Wine Spectator, the "bible" of wine publications, which gave the results front-page coverage. When asked "What type of closure do you think is best for your wine?," thousands of Internet users chose cork: 81% in fact compared to just 18% who preferred screw caps. An indisputable victory for cork.

Another extensive study (Moulton Hall) of the main wine consumer markets - USA, UK and Australia - concluded that the natural cork stopper is perceived to be a sign of quality and an essential element of the ritual of opening and consuming a bottle of wine, significantly contributing to its value and positive differentiation.

For further information, please visit realcork.org

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