



P R O C O R K

June 2, 2003

PROCORK STOPPER ENTERS FINAL TESTING

An Australian company has entered final testing of a revolutionary new cork which could once and for all end debate on the most effective way to seal wine.

Following a strong tradition of Australian wine innovation the team of scientists, engineers and industry professionals at ProCork have developed technology that reduces the fear of "cork taint" enabling natural cork to be used with confidence in wine and other beverages.

The technology revolves around a membrane that is applied to each end of the cork and reduces chemicals entering the wine, regulates the passage of oxygen through the cork and retains cork moisture resulting in less cork breakage.

The new technology developed by ProCork will enable natural cork to be used by winemakers with high certainty that the membrane will reduce any off character imparted by the cork.

ProCork chief executive officer Gregor Christie said the company's products had already undergone nearly three years of research and development with the final phase of testing to be launched in the next few months.

"Cork is a great product and the membrane makes it even better," Dr Christie said. "In blind tastings we are rating higher than screw caps and other cork products.

"We are still about 12-18 months away from commercialisation but we are getting closer all the time.

"We want to make sure the product lives up to our expectations and market requirements so we need to put it through an extremely rigorous testing process."

Dr Christie said wine drinkers and producers overwhelmingly preferred cork, and the membrane reduced the level of spoiled wine, which had become unacceptable in the highly competitive wine industry.

"The public overwhelmingly supports cork with the alternatives failing to provide that traditional link to the history and romance of wine that cork does," he said.

Dr Christie, a former CSIRO scientist, said Procork's many years of research and development had produced a product that complemented all the best aesthetic features of wine and added some real technical horsepower in terms of wine quality and storage.

Primarily, the product will improve corks ability to block oxygen and taint such as TCA (trichloroanisole) and other related compounds entering the wine, improving the wine quality.



P R O C O R K

"There have been many attempts to solve the problem which has become more urgent as the global wine industry and drinkers become more sophisticated and demanding," Dr Christie said.

"More recently we have seen the advent of synthetic corks onto the market. Initially hailed as a major breakthrough, several question marks hang over the synthetics, particularly for use with wines destined for extended cellaring."

Dr Christie said ProCork had received a warm welcome from cork and wine producers working in conjunction with the company to bring the product to market.

Early trials of the technology at Mount Avoca Vineyard prompted experienced winemaker Matthew Barry to invest in the company.

"You can imagine how that made us feel. Excitement grows as you begin to sense that you are on the right track particularly when your potential customers want to buy more than the product," Dr Christie said.

"In the UK, the market is largely controlled by the supermarkets who are encouraging alternatives as they can no longer tolerate the failure rate of cork.

"Synthetics and screw-caps have made some inroads, but there is consumer resistance to these new closures.

"If ProCork can produce a cork with substantial reduced taint and can also reduce random oxidation, and the trials to date suggest that this is in fact the case it has a great future."

Dr Christie added the ProCork technology may also boost the cork industry which had come under intense pressure as a result of synthetic alternatives.

"In many countries, particularly Portugal, thousands of people depend on cork for their livelihood," he said.

"The creation of an alternative closure which is more reliable but still uses 100 per cent natural cork may be a huge relief for many cork producers who have seen their market eroded over recent years."

ENDS

Media Enquiries:
Gregor Christie
ProCork Pty Ltd
Chief Executive Officer
(03) 9214 5401

Visit www.procork.com for more information