



P R O C O R K

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PROCORK MACHINE A WIN FOR AUSSIE INNOVATION

Melbourne-based wine closure company ProCork has commissioned its first revolutionary new membrane cork machine, signaling a major step for the company in its ambitions to be a major player in the global cork industry.

Designed and assembled in Australia by Melbourne's Scope Machinery the machine can attach ProCork's innovative membrane to both ends of a cork at a rate of 10,000 per hour, or up to 60 million per year.

Scope has already built a prototype machine that has been used to successfully produce commercial quantities of ProCork for ultra-premium wine producers Mount Avoca and Henty Estate.

The membrane and associated technology was designed by leading food packaging scientist and ProCork chief executive officer Dr Gregor Christie.

Dr Christie said the commissioning was the culmination of more than three years of research and development.

"It has been a long road but we are very proud of the fact that this technology has remained wholly Australian-owned from the moment of conception to the point where we are now marketing these corks to all corners of the wine drinking world," Dr Christie said.

ProCork's products have undergone extensive testing over the last three years to ensure they meet the exacting standards of wine makers and wine drinkers and reduce the fear of "cork taint" enabling natural cork to be used with confidence in wine and other beverages.

The technology revolves around a series of membranes that are applied to each end of the cork that significantly reduces flavour modification 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 will enable natural cork to be used by winemakers with high certainty that the membrane will reduce any off character imparted by the cork.

Dr Christie, a former CSIRO scientist, said ProCork had the simple goal of being the preferred closure for wine makers and wine drinkers.

"We want the people who make wine to be confident their hard work is rewarded when consumers open their wine and taste it as it was made to taste," he said. "We also want consumer's to purchase wine confident the product will taste just as the wine maker intended."

While synthetic and screw-cap closures continue to make inroads into the market, Dr Christie said wine drinkers and producers still overwhelmingly preferred cork.



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"Cork is a wonderful product, it has been an integral part of the winemaking process for 400 years and will always be the preferred choice of both wine makers and wine consumers," he said.

"The evolution of cork, through the adoption of new technology to create a better product is what ProCork is all about."

Scope Machinery managing director Nick Mebberson said the fully-automated machine had a capacity of 10,000 corks per hour.

"While it is a very complex piece of machinery the procedure is pretty simple with natural corks being fed in on to a high speed rotating platform where the membrane is applied ready for corking," Mr Mebberson said.

"The difficulty in designing the machine has always been the speed at which it will operate and the precision required to ensure each and every cork meets a high standard."

It has also been designed for easy transport anywhere in the world and fits easily into a standard shipping container. A complex array of electronics means it can be operated and monitored very simply, adding a new degree of sophistication to cork manufacturing.

The machine will be used in Australia initially and it is expected that it will be part of a major production line in the United States or Europe in 2004. Up to 10 machines can be built per year to meet demand.

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Media Enquiries:

Gregor Christie
ProCork Pty Ltd
Chief Executive Officer
(03) 9314 1361
0419 599 597

Nick Mebberson
Scope Machinery
Managing Director
(03) 9553 1846

Visit www.procork.com for more information.