

Wine Intelligence

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For Immediate release

Cork is still king, say UK wine drinkers

Wine bottles should still be sealed with a real cork, despite the supposed benefits of screw-caps and plastic cork substitutes.

This finding is contained in a new report published today by Wine Intelligence, the specialist wine industry research consultancy. The report is based on the first major piece of independent research into consumer attitudes to wine bottle closures, conducted via a 1150-respondent online survey in August 2003.

The pro-cork consumer attitude flies in the face of recent press coverage highlighting the benefits of screw-caps and the occasional tendency of traditional cork to taint the wine in the bottle, causing it to taste musty or 'corked'. It will also come as a surprise to a number of major retailers, which are increasingly advocating the scrapping of cork-sealed wines in favour of screw-caps.

The distinctive 'pop' of a wine cork is still a key element of the wine drinking ritual, say consumers, and it is not one they are keen to give up. Some 99% of respondents to the survey, conducted between August 15 and August 24 with a national sample of wine drinkers, said they were positive or neutral about cork. By contrast, nearly 6 in 10 respondents said they did not like buying wine with screw-caps.

However the recent press attention appears to be softening attitudes towards screw-cap. Just under one in three respondents reported that their view of screw-caps had improved recently.

Artificial corks, meanwhile, receive a largely neutral response, with few consumers objecting to their presence, but equally few expressing enthusiasm.

Drinkers of New Zealand and German wine came closest to a vote of confidence for screw-caps. For instance, just over half of New Zealand wine drinkers thought that a screw-cap on a bottle represented good value. In general, screw-cap advocates tended to be over 45 years old, with the younger generation actually exhibiting more loyalty to cork.

Commenting on the report's publication, Richard Halstead, Managing Director of Wine Intelligence, said: "These findings show that ordinary consumers are not yet willing to

abandon a key element of the wine drinking ritual, despite evidence pointing to the better sealing properties of screw-caps.

“There is a danger here that retailers and wine producers will move too fast to embrace the new technology and in doing so alienate key segments of consumers.”

Notes for editors:

About the report

Closures: The Consumer View is published today by Wine Intelligence, price £375. The 44-page report contains full findings from the largest independent survey of consumer attitudes to closures yet undertaken. Consumer attitudes are analysed by demographics, behaviour and attitude to produce preferences by age, gender, socio-economic group, consumption patterns and involvement with wine. The report is available to purchase online at <http://www.wineintelligence.com> and comes in Adobe Acrobat® pdf format.

About Wine Intelligence

Wine Intelligence is a research-led marketing consultancy specialising in the wine industry. It conducts client-specific research projects to help companies gain greater insights into consumer and supply chain issues. The company also publishes its own research on important industry topics and runs a press analysis service. For more information visit <http://www.wineintelligence.com>

Charted data and illustrations are available on request.

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