



A perfect blend

The Dornier Donatus White 2007 is a delightful blend of barrel-aged Chenin Blanc and rich Semillon. Eight months of barrel maturation are evident in the opulent colour and richness of this blend. The aroma of white pear and cumquat is complemented by nuances of honey and citrus. The length and fullness provided by the Semillon combines with the elegance and complexity of the Chenin Blanc to create a silky fine finish with a lasting aftertaste. This unique blend is priced at R96.



Under the Influence of...

closure

There are numerous ways to close a bottle of wine and never before has there been such contention in the wine business about which to use. Cork is a beautifully suitable product to close a wine bottle with, but it comes with the threat of cork taint, which can influence about five percent of all cork-closed bottles. The Australians pioneered the screwcap closure which is not only cheaper for producers but saves the hassle of arriving at a distant picnic spot with that carefully-cooled bottle of wine, only to find you have no corkscrew. Opening a bottle of wine with a screwcap is about as easy as opening a bottle of Coke, which opens up another debate; can consumers accept a closure that is synonymous with cheaper products?

The answer is yes, but it has taken some time and convincing. On the screwcap front the marketers have spoken about how cork can easily taint your wine and espoused the convenience of the screwcap. Cork punters counter that screwcaps don't let any oxygen into the wine, which according to them is beneficial in ageing and softening a wine. Everyone knows that cork can taint a wine but what many people don't know is that screwcap wines can actually have a fault of their own. This is known as reductivity and is caused by sulphur in the wine being in a little or zero oxygen environment. Reductive wines can have burnt match or rubber flavours and aromas, which typically disperse as the wine breathes.

This is why the wines that are typically put under screwcap are meant to be drunk earlier. A crisp Sauvignon Blanc is perfect for screwcap while a tannic and intense Cabernet Sauvignon might benefit from the oxygen interaction that a cork can give. Synthetic corks were lauded as an alternative to natural cork, still giving traditionalists the satisfaction of popping open a bottle of vino. Unfortunately synthetic (plastic) cork lets through too much oxygen, which is unsuitable for wines that need to age. So, screwcaps don't let in enough oxygen, cork the right amount but some are tainted and synthetic corks providing too much oxygen.

An ingenious cork manufacturer has come up with an alternative. The best way to explain this is a cork with a condom. A natural cork is covered with a thin synthetic covering, protecting the wine from taint but allowing oxygen flow. Even a completely tainted cork did not harm the wine in tests done.

At the end of the day we make our choices based on many different factors. One of them is quality – the wine needs to taste good. The second is a more romantic factor when it comes to wine, for some twisting open a bottle of wine will never reach the almost solemn ritual of removing the foil and lifting the cork with a corkscrew. Then, for those practical souls where time is money, you can twist to your heart's content! Whatever your choice, you can rest assured that there are men and women in white lab coats coming up with new ways to safely seal your favourite tippie in the bottle.