



A picture is worth a thousand words...

But damn it, we're throwing the words at you, too!

The image above shows the state of 14 bottles of white wine sealed under various closures 125 months (just over 10 years) after bottling. This closure trial was conducted by the Australian Wine Research Institute to assess the relative effects of cork, plastic and screw cap closures on bottle-aged wine and has unequivocally shown the superiority of screw caps in aging wine.

It is well known that screw cap closures eliminate cork taint (TCA) and premature oxidization, but what this trial reveals is the fact that wine does mature/age in the bottle over time under screw cap. This is the most misunderstood aspect of the closure debate. Australians have been conducting both red and white wine screw cap trials for 20-30 years, so experience tells us this is indeed the case, but this is the first trial on such a grand scale to highlight this little-known fact.

The wine involved was a 1999 Clare Valley Semillon made by Kerri Thompson of Leasingham Estate. Thousands of bottles were sealed with 14 different closures, including multiple natural and synthetic corks as well as one sample under screw cap.

The bottled wines were systematically analyzed over a 10 year period by sensory and analytical methods and photographed (you can see the sequential photographs below). The bottle sealed with a screw cap is positioned on the far left. While the pictures tell a convincing story, leaving little doubt as to which seal provides the most effective method of preserving a wine, it is the sensory evaluation results that are most revealing. The wines sealed under screw cap were still drinkable and showing appealing secondary aged characters while retaining freshness.

UK wine Journalist Jamie Goode has followed the trial closely while remaining independent and was fortunate enough to taste the Semillon after being in bottle for 10 years and 8 months, saying "It's a full yellow color, with a mineral, flinty edge to the attractive honeysuckle and citrus fruit nose. The palate has a lovely focused fruit quality to it with pithy citrus fruit and a hint of grapefruit. There are also some subtle toasty notes. Very attractive and amazingly fresh for a 10 year old Clare Semillon."

Read more of Jamie's insights [here](#).

Group Manager at the AWRI. Peter Godden. agrees with Jamie's assessment of the 10 year old Semillon.

"The wine under screw cap was classic aged Semillon and was wonderful to drink."

Peter also said that there was huge variation in the results for the synthetic and cork closures, which was of more concern than TCA taint.

"The biggest issue for any form of cork closure is variability, the wines sealed with screw cap were extremely consistent bottle to bottle and no other closure achieved results even similar.

"Most of the wine sealed with closures other than screw cap were completely undrinkable, some synthetic corks didn't even last 28 months.

"The study was initially established to determine which would be the best performing cork and we didn't expect screw cap to be much of a factor. It didn't take long to work out that it was going to be the most reliable performer, and as it turns out the results are emphatic."

On his blog, Jamie closes with, "...for those who want to drink this wine at 10 years, very few of the cork-sealed bottles would be as good as this, and all the screw capped bottles would be consistently like this."



28 months after bottling



63 months after bottling



125 months after bottling

The humble screw cap. No RBO, no cork taint, consistent product. We'll take it. All day, every day.

Cheers!

The OBC Team

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