

Sections

Top Stories

Latest News

- News Pop-up

Scotland

UK

International

Politics

Sci-Tech

Health

Education

Entertainment

Gaelic

Features

Opinion

Obituaries

Article Index

Hot Topics

European Union

Iraq

Middle East

Immigration

Holyrood Parliament

Topics A to Z

Other Sites

Sport

Business

Print Editions

The Scotsman

Scotland on Sunday

Evening News

Back Issues

Services

Free News Email

Free Web Feeds

Syndication

Latest News

"PA" NEWS

Sun 18 Apr 2004



printer friendly

9:14am (UK)

'Blast of Co2 Will End Corked Wine Misery'

By Graham Hiscott, Consumer Affairs Correspondent, PA News

Drinkers can avoid being left with a nasty taste in the mouth from "corked" wine with the arrival in shops of a new solution, its makers claimed today.

A hi-tech process in which the natural cork is blasted with carbon dioxide is said to remove all traces of the stale taint.

Up to one in 10 bottles of wine are estimated to be affected by "cork taint", caused by the chemical trichloroanisole (TCA) which can occur in the bark of the cork oak tree.

The problem is one reason for alternatives such as synthetic corks and wines with screw-caps. However, there are reports that some consumers dislike them and feel they are not suitable for bottles stored over time.

Different methods of solving cork taint have been tried but Sabate, the world's second largest cork manufacturer, claims its Diamond process is the best yet.

The special technique involves treating cork with "supercritical" CO2 to remove TCA particles.

Similar technology is used to remove caffeine from coffee and by the perfume industry to extract fragrances.

Nicolas Serpette, communications manager at Sabate's parent company Oeneo, said: "Some tasters are assuming they can detect TCA at very low levels and our work is to eradicate it.

"The Diamond process is, to the best of our knowledge, the only solution available that physically and totally extracts TCA from the raw material itself.

"The objective is to respect the wine and make sure that the wine is not altered in any way by the cork."

The Diamond process has taken seven years and £10.4 million to develop in conjunction with the French Atomic Energy Commission.

The new corks will be used for the first time in bottles of Australian Petit Verdot from supermarket chain Sainsbury's next month.

Howard Winn, wine technologist at Sainsbury's, said: "Cork taint is a huge problem for the wine industry, but consumer research shows that 80% of customers prefer natural cork closures.

"They feel that nothing compares to the pop a cork makes as it is pulled from the bottle neck.

"This development should make our wine-loving customers very happy as they can have the best of both worlds."

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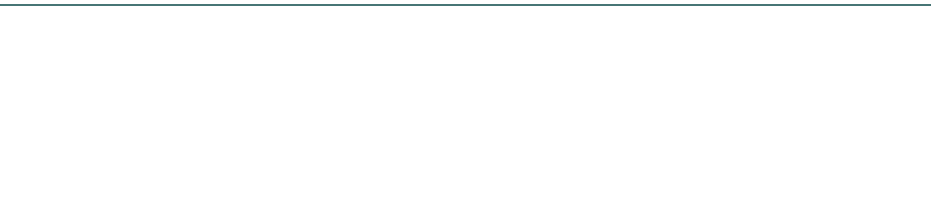


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