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U.S. Consumers Give Cork the Seal of Approval; Nine Out of Ten Customers Think Non-Cork Closures Cheapen Wine, Survey Says

NAPA, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Feb. 28, 2006--Consumers still love cork according to the results of a recent survey of the United States wine trade. Nine out of ten consumers - a stunning 94% - think that non-cork closures sometimes or often cheapen a bottle of wine according to those questioned in the study.

Cork closures are still popular too with those in the trade who work directly serving wine to customers. Of those questioned who worked in a restaurant or other wine serving setting, the majority (71%) still preferred to open wine bottles with cork closures above screwcaps (26%) and synthetic closures (3%.) They felt their customers were not well informed about the issue of wine closures, with 48% of them feeling customers had very little information, 35% with some information and 9% with no information about which closures protect wine best.

The survey was carried out by Napa-based Balzac Communications on behalf of the Portuguese cork association (APCOR) to launch the International Campaign for Cork in the U.S. During the week of December 12 to 18, 2005, Balzac Communications and Marketing sent out a survey on wine bottle closures to members of the U.S. wine trade to determine their opinions of cork closures. Survey participants included members of the US Court of Master Sommeliers, restaurateurs, retailers, wine buyers at hotels nationwide and members of the wine media.

There were 327 responses to the 20 question-survey. According to respondents the bulk of consumers (69%) preferred cork as a wine closure because of its tradition. Cork performance was a factor for (11%) of consumers according to the wine trade, as well as sustainability (1%.) A further 19% felt consumers liked cork for all these reasons.

"Wine lovers still love their corks," says Elisa Pedro, Director of Communication & International Relations for APCOR. "This survey shows consumers trust cork and see it as a sign of quality in wine."

Half of those questioned felt the cork industry was making progress toward solving the issue of off-odors associated with TCA (2,4,6 trichloroanisole). Of those in a direct wines sales setting in restaurants, around 41% of those surveyed said they experienced about one customer per month sending back wine for quality issues. A further 25.4% said one customer a week sent back wine, 21.3% said this happened two to five times per week. Around 6.6% said 10 customers per week would send back wine, while 5.7% had never had a customer send back a wine.

For their at-home wine enjoyment the bulk (50.7%) of wine trade respondents still preferred cork as a closure for their wines, followed by screwcaps (42.6%) and synthetic closures (6.7%.)

APCOR is a consortium of more than 280 cork companies, representing approximately 80% of the Portuguese cork business volume and 85% of all cork exports from Portugal. APCOR stands for "Associacao Portuguesa da Cortica" - Portuguese Cork Association. It was founded in 1956 and is based in Santa Maria de Lamas, near Porto in Portugal. Its mission is to represent and promote natural cork and all products made of cork. Companies involved in the production, commerce and export of cork-based products are members of this association.

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