

*For Immediate Release*  
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## **THE HOGUE CELLARS ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF SCREW CAP CLOSURE STUDY**

*Screw Caps Proven to Retain Freshness and Fruit Character and Allow More Consistent Aging when Compared to Natural and Synthetic Corks*

SAN DIEGO, June 30, 2004—The Hogue Cellars announces today the results of a four-year study that examined the effect of five different closures on its wines. Screw cap closures were proven to hold fruit and maintain freshness more effectively than natural and synthetic corks. Jordan Ferrier, research enologist at The Hogue Cellars, will present the winery's extensive study today at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual American Society of Enology and Viticulture (ASEV) Conference in San Diego. Hogue is the first winery to scientifically analyze the effects of various bottle closures and then share its results with the industry.

As a result of the study, Hogue will bottle its entire line of 2004 Fruit Forward wines—representing 70 percent of total production—in Stelvin screw caps with Saranex liners. The wines will be available in January 2005. “After scientifically researching the effects of two kinds of screw caps, two brands of synthetic corks, and the traditional natural cork, we have come to the conclusion that Stelvin screw caps best preserve the quality of wine in the bottle,” says David Forsyth, director of winemaking at The Hogue Cellars. “For us, it’s all about delivering high-quality wines, and screw caps more effectively preserve the purity of the fruit and winemaking flavors with which the wines are meant to be enjoyed.”

A panel of Hogue winemakers and trade professionals tasted and analyzed a 1999 Hogue Genesis Merlot and a 2000 Hogue Fruit Forward Chardonnay at six-month intervals for 30 months.<sup>i</sup> Each wine was closed with natural cork, synthetic Neo cork, synthetic Supreme Corq, Stelvin screw cap with Etain liner, and Stelvin screw cap with Saranex liner. At the conclusion of the study in December 2003, the following results were found:

- The wines closed in natural corks showed low to medium levels of cork taint, while the synthetic and screw cap wines showed none.
- Over time, synthetic closures began showing oxidation characteristics, leading to lower levels of fruit aromas and taste, as well as browning in both the Merlot and Chardonnay.

- Screw cap closures maintained fruit, and the wines were considered less developed and relatively fresh for both red and white wines.
- At both 24 and 30 months, screw caps were preferred over synthetics, which were preferred over the natural cork.
- Screw caps and natural cork held SO<sub>2</sub> better than the synthetic closures.

General results for the Chardonnay found that the Saranex screw cap closure was the most preferred, with development similar to a natural cork but with no cork contamination and good retention of fruit character. The screw cap and natural cork closures held SO<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> the best. Wine bottled in the synthetic closures was the most oxidized after 30 months, having excessive aged character and lowest fruit. The natural cork was the least preferred closure with high 'cork-like' character and lower fruit.

Generally for the Merlot, wines bottled in the Saranex and Etain screw cap closures were the most preferred wines. The Supreme Corq and Neo cork closure wines were more developed and less reduced than the screw cap wines, and the wines closed in natural cork were the least preferred.

Overall, the Hogue study revealed that screw cap closures are more superior for maintaining freshness and quality for both wines, but especially in the Chardonnay. For the Merlot, the results are still positive, but the benefits are not as distinct when compared to the Chardonnay.

“Bottling our wines with screw caps will yield tremendous benefits: elimination of cork taint, as well as consistent and appropriate aging, lower SO<sub>2</sub> levels at bottling, and greater ease in opening bottles,” says Forsyth. “We are striving to reduce all barriers in delivering the quality of wines that consumers expect from Hogue.”

In 1996, Hogue became the first large domestic wine producer to bottle a portion of its wines with synthetic closures. However, this study has revealed that wines closed in synthetic corks undergo premature oxygenation, and therefore, have a shorter shelf life than natural cork and screw cap closures. Furthermore, the movement of oxygen through a natural cork is highly variable, which leads to variable aging in identical wines. Cork taint due to TCA contamination was estimated to be as much as 4.9 percent following a recent tasting of 11,033 wines at the 2003 International



Wine Challenge.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, over the course of three years, benchmark tastings of Hogue and competitors' wines performed by Hogue found that an average of 17.6 percent of wines were consistently corked.<sup>iii</sup>

Founded by Mike and Gary Hogue in 1982 and based on the values of the Hogue farming family, The Hogue Cellars has become one of Washington's largest wineries. In addition to growing Concord and vinifera wine grapes, the Hogue family produces specialty apples and hops in eastern Washington's Columbia and Yakima valleys. The Hogue Cellars is owned by Toronto-based Vincor International. For more information, visit: [www.hoguecellars.com](http://www.hoguecellars.com).

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<sup>i</sup> For chemical analysis, there were always eight replicates of each wine and closure set, so forty wines were opened in a randomized order for each variety each time the panel analyzed the wines. The wines were scored on a zero to four (0.0 to 4.0) quality scale for overall performance. The winemaking panel consistently uses this quality scale almost daily in production tastings.

<sup>ii</sup> According to information published on the International Wine Challenge Web site, [www.wineint.com](http://www.wineint.com).

<sup>iii</sup> A professional panel tasted 50 wines from different producers once a year for four years with four varieties, yielding a total of 200 wines.

