



AMORIM

A new production process

Every process during the 12-18 month journey from bark to bottle was examined, and improved upon. Now, once the cork planks have been harvested, the selected material is then stored on stainless steel planks (to avoid contact with the ground) – and the first few inches, that had been in contact with the forest floor, removed.

Thanks to Amorim's corporate structure this excess cork can be processed for value-added, industrial uses – from Birkenstock sandals soles to space shuttle insulation.

The first step in the quality selection process is washing and boiling. Amorim has invested millions of Euros in building two processing plants, close to the forests in the Alentejo region to treat the raw material as soon as possible.

As well as sophisticated computers to grade punched discs and stoppers, state-of-the-art treatment tanks were installed for a fast, doubly-efficient boil - CONVEX®, enabling the planks to dry as quickly as possible to avoid humidity build-up.

Streamlining this process has achieved a time reduction from two weeks to two days.

With the TCA pre-cursors eliminated - as far as can be in a 100% natural product -, the planks are then graded and the best despatched to champagne and wine stopper plants, near Porto, for punching and manufacture. And this is where the biggest changes have occurred in the last few years.

Even more investment was sanctioned, from the installation of nine fine-tuned GC machines that run 24/7 analysing cork samples by detailed gas chromatography, to the development of the unique ROSA® system by R&D Director Miguel Cabral and his team.

Every batch of corks going through the different production units is analysed – from top quality corks, to composites made from cork granules, and the popular Twin Top® technical stopper, with an agglomerate shank sealed top and bottom with discs of whole cork.

Over 10.000 samples each month pass through the Amorim laboratories – more than anywhere else comparably in the world. If any batch sample shows even the slightest amount of TCA – then it is held back for further curative measures. But science has also played its part in another revolutionary development – the ROSA® unit.

R&D (go to R&S link) department read that TCA was "volatile with steam" – so spent many months researching how to inject then extract steam from cork products without damaging the stoppers themselves. The result was an unique – and cost-effective method - that uses controlled steam to force out TCA contaminates, and which has proven its worth not only in industrial-sized trials, but also in independent research published by high-ranking laboratories in three continents.



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Amorim has installed several ROSA® units, where all cork granules (for canglomerate and Twin Top® technical stoppers) are treated, together with the whole cork batches shown by the GCMS machines to require extra treatment. During early 2007, with the ROSA® Evolution whole corks from the top grades will undergo the upgraded steam distillation process, whatever their GCMS results – bringing far-reaching effects to the world of fine wines.

At Amorim, nothing is left to chance. It may be costly – in time and investment – but results have paid off. Turnover has doubled since the 1990s, and Amorim is selling more cork stoppers than ever before. Thanks to all the new preventive and curative measures, there are also fewer returns than ever from wineries and retailers.

And what of the future?

Today Amorim continues to build sales of cork stoppers globally. The marketing and R&D teams travel the world to hold seminars, wine faults workshops and engage in research projects with key wine-makers.

So will “cork taint” now become a thing of the past?...