about cork stoppers

AMORIM

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From tree to table, here's how the spirit of the world gets its cork – and how one of nature's most extraordinary materials is harvested and transformed.

AMORIM

how is it made?

Cork is manually harvested from the trunk, a process that doesn't harm the tree.

Cork is transported to an industrial plant, where it stays for at least 6 months, acquiring the ideal moisture content for processing.

The planks are boiled in closed filtered stainless steel tanks. This process softens and cleans the material, while simultaneously expands and improves its internal structure.

The planks to be used to produce natural cork stoppers are cut into strips and punched to extract the cylindrical stoppers.

The cork stoppers are graded and sorted by a computer, using sophisticated customised algorithms.

Amorim is a forerunner in strict quality control at every production stage, including use of a high-precision Gas Chromatography analysis system by GC-MS.

The final stages include: cleaning process with steam distillation, washing in an aqueous hydrogen peroxide solution, polishing and branding.

cork

Cork, *cortiça* in Portuguese, is the outer bark of the cork oak tree – *Quercus Suber L.* – which has grown for millennia throughout the Mediterranean Region.

The life span of these exceptional trees is between 200 and 250 years. It takes each cork oak 25 years before it can be harvested for the first time. After the first harvesting, cork oaks are stripped in nine year cycles, always between May and August, when the tree is at its most active phase of growth and it is easier to strip. In a context of increasing concern for the environment, it is important to stress that cork is the only tree whose bark can regenerate after each harvest – leaving the tree unharmed.

cork stoppers

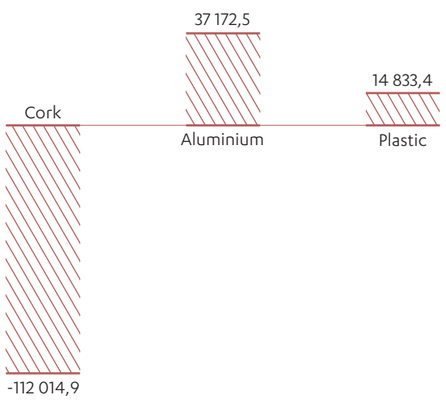
70% of wine producers choose cork to seal their product

Cork's natural characteristics – lightness, compressibility, resilience, resistance to liquids and gases, and its capacity to insulate against moisture – make it an incomparable closure, thus contributing in a unique way to the development of wine. The secret is a complex structure, that manmade technology has been unable to replicate. Each natural cork stopper is a sophisticated valve, made up of around 800 million tiny cells of suberin with an air like gas.

the only closure that combines high performance and sustainable credentials

Each cork stopper is responsible for the retention of up to 112 grams of CO_2, in stark contrast with the carbon emissions caused by the production of artificial closures.

CO_2 Emissions, LCA (g/1000 cork stoppers)



Cork stoppers are 100% natural, recyclable and renewable. According to an independent study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers/Ecobilan on the life cycle of cork stoppers versus aluminum caps and plastic closures, the cork stoppers present huge environmental advantages. With regard to greenhouse gas emissions, the study revealed that the production of a plastic closure or an aluminium screwcap causes 10 or 24 times more CO_2 emissions, respectively, than a cork stopper.

corticeira amorim

The annual production of 4 billion cork stoppers confirms the extent of an encompassing portfolio which meets the highest performance demands of the industry.

Amorim is the world's largest producer and supplier of cork, exporting 96% of its production to more than 100 countries. The company began as a small cork stopper factory, established in 1870 in the heart of the Port wine region. The proximity of the wine producers soon contributed to creating business relationships, anticipating client needs and swiftly meeting their requests. Four generations later, this continues to be the strategy which consolidates the company's leadership in the sector.

Amorim leads an exemplary economic activity in terms of sustainable development. By promoting the cyclical harvest of the cork, the company makes the cork oak forest viable, a natural and renewable resource, with numerous environmental, economic and social benefits. Cork oak forests are natural CO_2 retainers, they regulate the hydrological cycle and foster a biodiversity which is on a par with regions such as the Amazon forest. It is the harvest of cork that maintains the vitality of cork oak forest, enabling millions of people to continue to live in areas prone to desertification.

It is only after the 3rd stripping – 43 years – that cork has achieved the standards of quality required for a natural cork stopper

Anticipating the needs of the wine industry, Amorim was the 1st packaging company in the world to obtain FSC certification

research & development + innovation

Amorim's quality standards include state-of-the-art laboratories, sampling according to the protocol used by US Armed Forces, over 16,000 tests per month and one golden rule: analyse the cork stoppers at each stage of production.

These are just some of the quality rules of Amorim. The company is wholly focused on guaranteeing reliable products, while continuously creating new ones, meeting the needs of wineries.

21
units dedicated to the continuous extraction of TCA from different cork products;

14
chromatography systems controlling in every single lot;

16,000
gas chromatography analysis per month.
(commercial value of approximately 100€/piece)

market recognition

Consumers prefer cork
Several studies show that the majority of wine consumers clearly prefer the cork stopper, associating it with quality and premium value:

United States: 94% of wine consumers prefer natural cork stoppers (Tragon Corporations)

France: 89% of wine lovers prefer the cork stopper and 89.8% state that cork stoppers preserve the full aromas (Ipsos)

Italy: 85% consider the cork stopper the best closure to ensure the quality of wine (AstraRicerche)

China: 85% of consumers believe that wines sealed with cork are better quality (CTR Market Research)

Spain: 92% of consumers prefer the cork stopper for wine and cava bottles (Cork Project)

Brazil: 80% of Brazilians say that noble wines must have cork closures (Conecta/Ibope)

Premium value
According to information produced by Nielsen's Track Scan Data, US consumers are wiling to pay US $4.31 more for a bottle sealed with cork. Annual same brand sales for cork finished wines recorded a 6% year-on-year increase in case volume, compared with a 1% drop for wines sealed with artificial closures.