

## FOOD

# Wineries Speak Up About the Benefits of Using Natural Cork

NewsUSA

(NU) - A growing list of leading wineries, including St. Francis, Bogle and Fetzer, are speaking up about the benefits of using natural cork. They recognize that not only does natural cork allow wines to age perfectly, but using natural cork also provides a potential competitive advantage when it comes to marketing their wine brands.

According to Wines & Spirits "25th Annual Survey of Top 50 Restaurant Wine Brands," wines finished primarily with cork accounted for 90 percent of the brands selected in these top restaurants. This represents a 21 percent increase from a decade ago, compared to a 39 percent decline in wines with screw caps and a 70 percent drop for those with synthetic closures.

"These survey figures are consistent with the Aug. 16, 2014, Nielsen scan of the Top 100 Premium Brands, which showed that since the start of 2010, there has been a steady increase in cork's market share – with a 30 percent positive slope for cork-finished wines compared to a 9 percent slope for wines with alternative closures," commented Peter Weber, Executive Director of the Cork Quality Council (CQC).

Christopher Silva, President and CEO of St. Francis, said, "We believe that natural cork is an integral part of the romance of the wine experience. There is nothing that can duplicate the iconic 'pop' when a cork is pulled from the bottle."

Silva said that his winery discontinued using cork two decades ago, due to inconsistent cork



quality. But he and his team kept testing corks on a few cases of wine each year in the hope of returning to cork. They saw a steady improvement, and by 2012 they were convinced it was time to return to cork.

He added that using natural cork is consistent with St. Francis' commitment to sustainability. "We are a certified sustainable Sonoma County business that is powered by solar energy, uses eco-friendly packaging, and is active in water conservation and recycling."

Weber continued, "In addition to cork's robust sustainability credentials, wineries are also benefiting from the hundreds of million dollars that Portuguese cork manufacturers have invested in new technologies and improved quality-control measures."

In 2013, the CQC members conducted over 30,000 analyses. Their combined screening records show a steady reduction in measurable 2,4,6-Trichloroanisole (TCA) levels that are now 95 percent lower than the results seen when records were first tabulated in 2001.

"Using natural cork is an integral part of our message, heritage and culture," Silva added.