

## vintagereport

### THE WINE:

Penfolds Thomas Hyland Shiraz 2000

### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

Australia (south part with grapes perhaps coming from McLaren Vale, Barossa, Padthaway); 15% new oak American and French.

### GRAPE VARIETY:

Shiraz

### COLOUR:

Deep inky purple

### NOSE:

Blackberry, pepper, leather, toasted oak

### IN MOUTH:

Blackberry, licorice, cherry, fruit driven, fairly tannic, long finish.

### FOOD:

Red meats, rare for now but in time medium to well done, also strong cheeses.

### VALUE:

Excellent value for a wine of this quality (one of my favourites). Drinkable now but will be better in 3-5 years.

### RATING:

4.5 grapes (0 lowest - 5 highest)  
Fantastic wine for the price.



*Available at  
Carver's Steakhouse  
by the glass. Try it  
with steak, prime  
rib, lamb or bison.*

# Vintage.

## WHAT CAUSES A CORKED WINE?

BY LEN STECKLER

I WAS AT A WINE SHOW RECENTLY and came upon two corked wines. This struck me as odd, as this was a wine and spirits show in which the wine merchants were showing off their products. One bottle was almost completely empty, which meant approximately ten people had tasted this particular wine and said nothing. The other bottle was just started. This means the tasters who preceded me either had no knowledge of what a corked wine was or they thought the wine was a horrid, mouldy product – something they would never purchase. Based on this experience, I thought now would be a good time to talk about corked wines.

Cork is made from the bark of cork trees, which are mainly grown in Portugal. Since it is a natural product, cork can be exposed to moulds in a variety of places. Mould spores can enter the cork as it sits on the ground after harvest or during processing. Cork is boiled to sterilize or treated with chlorine-based chemicals to kill the fungus. Unfortunately, these methods may trigger the mould growth they are designed to destroy because they only kill surface fungus. Moulds deeper inside the cork are untouched. This cork taint, called TCA (trichloroanisole), is what causes a corked wine.

The smell of a corked wine is described as mouldy, musty, mildewed, like wet cardboard or wet newspaper. Approximately 5 to 8% of wines using natural cork will have a TCA level noticeable to human senses. It's a problem that knows no favourites, it can be found in wines of all quality and price levels.

If you get a corked wine in a restaurant, send it back. This is not wine snobbery. The person serving the wine should have smelled the problem and not served you the product in the first place. If you get a bottle at home, simply take it back to your place of purchase for a refund or replacement.

Solutions to the problem of corked wine are varied. Cork merchants are setting standards in acceptable levels of TCA, along with moisture content, oxidants and surface qualities. Some research has been done on using microwaves to kill microorganisms throughout the cork and not just the surface area. Though reported to be quite successful, time will tell if it is a total solution.

Some wineries are using synthetic corks made of plastic. Most, however, are only using them in wines meant to be drunk within a year or two. The other stopper is the Stelvyn screw cap. The problem here is that most consumers associate screw caps with low quality jug wines. This quality association is changing rapidly. In California, a producer made 100,000 cases of \$100-plus wines (in US dollars) and put screw caps on them all. That's a bold statement.

Yes, there is something romantic about the pop of the wine cork during a candle lit dinner at a fine restaurant. If cork producers can solve the problem of TCA tainted wines, fantastic. If not, perhaps other bottle stopping methods will prevail. After all, it is what's in the bottle that counts, not what keeps it there. Till next time, CHEERS!

LEN STECKLER received his Cellar Masters Diploma in 1995 and is a member of the Wine Educators Society. He has visited wineries in every major wine region in the world and does wine seminars for sales groups, customer appreciation groups, and restaurants (staff training and wine list building and maintenance). If you are interested in learning more, call Len at 306-933-4393.