



The subtle assassin

If you buy enough wine to store some then an insidious danger may be lurking in a corner of your apartment; you will know nothing about this uninvited, invisible and silent guest until it is too late. 2,4,6-Trichloroanisole (a.k.a. "Duff Cork") taint can be very faint, or very palpable, but whatever the degree of contamination it is killing the wine in your bottle. The wet cardboard effects of a contaminated cork are annoying enough when discovered at home, and worse when you must address a restaurant sommelier with your suspicions and sufficient élan to have the bottle replaced; excruciating work even when successful. This tyranny of cork closures is estimated to affect between three and five percent of all bottles; surely an unacceptable risk for such a pricey consumable as wine.

Enter the screw cap?

Some still believe that corks are entwined with the tradition and mystery of wine, bottle variation and rituals involving a steel spiral to "do the honours"; essential to the aesthetics of the whole experience. Good luck to them but I remember I used to get a similarly perverse thrill from kick-starting my first motorbike, and on the third (or fifteenth) stroke she, usually, rumbled into life. With a smear of oil across the cheeks I was finally off, man and machine now melded through the blood seeping from a scuffed and ringingly painful lower tibia. However, pulling myself on board a more muscular and sophisticated two-wheeled beast some years later, the simple press of a button was always met with an instantaneous purr. This was progress and is exactly my feeling about screw caps on wine bottles; better technology simply eliminating unnecessary hassle and risk.

Corks are not just the bastion of hopeless romantics to be fair. Breathing, at a micro level, is a much cited argument in favour of cork closures for wines headed to the cellar for some years, but there is now strong science to suggest that oxygen is a spoiler of wine maturation in the bottle that the screw cap eliminates most efficiently. Truly time will tell with long aged wines under a screw cap, but the market is already speaking volumes with an emphatic rise from an estimated 100 million bottles ten or so years ago to approximately three billion now, from the seven billion or so sealed worldwide each year. Here are two to take for a spin, sure in the knowledge that you will be drinking the wine its maker intended.

The Stump Jump 2008 (¥149, BHG) hails from Australia's Adelaide hills; one of the white "Stumps" from producers d'Arenberg, comprising Riesling, Sauvignon, Marsanne and Roussanne grapes that makes for a zippy, vivacious, completeness of all component parts. Herbaceously appetizing on the nose and delivering vibrant and refreshing fruit across the mouth where lemon, melon and a trace of lime, along with firm acidity, lead an invigorating attack on the taste buds. A lot going on in the glass but it is not Byzantine by any means and will make genial shellfish company. Serve well-chilled, but not frozen, on a hot day and put the spring back in your soporific step (17 points).

Marius Grenache/Syrah 2010 (¥98, Metro) is jammy, in an evocatively wild and brambly way, with a toothsome licorice edge. A lightish red from the warmth of southern France; engaging and supple, yielding a sliver of sweetness over time with a more strawberry definition to the fruit, courtesy of Grenache's gentle touch. After slightly chilling in the cooler, serve with fresh fruit, yoghurt and lightly buttered toast. The breakfast of champions (16.5 points). **W**

Rick Staff with a remit to sniff, taste and spit his way around Nanjing and disseminate the drinkable.

POINT SYSTEM
0-10 A WARNING
11-14 A Feasible Party Prop
15-17 Heartily Recommended
17-19 Exceptionally Good
20 The Apogee Of WINE EXPRESSION



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THE NANJING COLLECTABLES OVERSEAS ICE CREAM CAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 box ice-cream in your favorite flavor
- 1 box ice-cream in another flavor
- 1-2 packages chocolate cookies
- 1 cup coconut flakes
- 5 chocolate bars
- 5 tablespoons cocoa
- 1 tablespoon cream
- Sweet bakers chocolate
- 1 cup butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Grease a springform baking pan. Set out ice-cream to come to room temperature.
2. Crush the cookies. Melt butter and add cocoa to form a watery paste. Remove from heat and add crushed cookies and coconut flakes. Press into the bottom of the pan ensuring good coverage.
3. Cut chocolate bars into pieces and add to the first ice-cream flavor. Press into the springform pan. Place in refrigerator.
4. Melt the remaining chocolate and cream together over a double boiler. Remove pan from refrigerator and pour melted chocolate over ice-cream layer. It should turn solid almost immediately. Return to refrigerator to harden.
5. Remove from refrigerator and make sure chocolate layer is hard. Add last layer of ice-cream. Return to refrigerator. Just as the top is starting to firm up, decorate the top with candies or fruit. Don't use anything with gelatin in—it freezes hard as rock and is impossible to chew. Put the cake into the freezer.
6. To server remove from freezer 20 minutes before serving. Remove the sides of the springform pan. Using hot water to warm a sharp knife, cut into slices. Must remain in freezer!

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