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# goodweekend

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## Wine by Huon Hooke

**Wine bottle closures** (corks, plastic stoppers, screw-caps, etc) were one of the biggest talking points of Wine Australia late last year.

I hosted two seminars on closures in The Cellar tasting room, and at least two alternative closure companies, ProCork and Zork, had stands.

ProCork, fresh on the heels of its good report card from the Australian Wine Research Institute trials, was giving people a comparative tasting.

The company had three randomly selected bottles of the same inexpensive two-year-old riesling from a big maker, under three different seals. The regular cork bottle was dull and slightly musty: no good at all. The screw-cap bottle was sulfidic. This is a wine problem – not the fault of the closure – and can happen if a wine hasn't been properly prepared for bottling. I'd still prefer this slight pong to the taint or random oxidation corks can produce. The ProCork bottle, however, was fresh, vibrant and clearly had the brightest aromas.

ProCork is a natural one-piece or composite cork that's had a barely visible polymer membrane attached to each end. This is designed to prevent wine contacting the cork. I've seen

some ProCorks that have allowed wine past the membrane, but inventor Dr Gregor Christie tells me they've been improved since then.

Like ProCork, Zork is an Aussie invention. It's a soft-plastic stopper incorporating a housing that looks like a shortened capsule: this is torn away to release the Zork, thus opening the bottle. I've seen only reds under Zork so far, and all have been acceptable.

Mount Avoca began using ProCork about a year ago and Wolf Blass's Eaglehawk range recently made the switch. Zork has been taken to heart by McLaren Vale, and so far I've tasted Maxwell's Four Roads Shiraz Grenache Vioignier 2002 under Zork and thought it exceptional; also d'Arenberg's 2003 Cadenzia (a grenache, shiraz, mourvèdre that's bottled entirely under Zork) and Schild Estate Barossa Grenache Mourvèdre Shiraz 2004 (which looked a touch dull compared to the same wine under screw-cap). None showed any taint, oxidation or other serious problem.

Wide-ranging, long-term testing is still to be done on many of the new seals. One thing's certain: the rule book on closures is currently being thrown unceremoniously out the window. ■