



Pulling out all stops: Procork is chasing between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the national cork market within 18 months

Procork blends old and new

RUTH WILLIAMS

Forget the debate about stelvin caps versus traditional corks. A South Australian company has launched what it hopes will become the third force in wine bottle stoppage — a natural cork backed by thin membranes.

Procork, launched this month by cork distributor Vinpac, is made by topping and tailing a traditional cork with five thin, patented membranes that protect the wine from spoilage.

Winemakers believe that as many as 10 per cent of wine bottles are spoiled by cork taint — a problem the screw-on stelvin cap claims to prevent.

The stelvin has become increasingly accepted in wine circles, especially by makers of aromatic whites who claim it keeps the wines fresh and young.

But some wine purists have turned their noses up at the stelvin, claiming natural corks add complexity to wine and that pulling the cork is part of the ritual of wine drinking.

Procork's inventors claim it can keep both camps happy by preventing cork taint without abandoning the traditional cork, and research by the Australian Wine Research Institute indicates the Procork could combat taint better than both regular cork and stelvin caps.

The product was developed by Australian scientist Dr Gregor Christie, who has signed an exclusive licence and distribution agreement with Vinpac.

Procork is now chasing between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the national cork market within the next 12 to 18 months. Vinpac claims to have already has strong interest from the wine industry, but won't say

from which wine companies.

"We have had interest from a couple of high-profile companies in WA," said Vinpac sales and operations manager Luke South.

"There's a lot of people that have had different types of cork technology put under their noses in the last 12 months or so, but this uses natural cork as a base and aesthetically it is the least intrusive."

But not only must Procork square off against the stelvin cap and the old-school natural cork, it must also compete with another new cork alternative — the Zork.

The three-part Zork can be removed by hand and resealed and — importantly — makes a popping noise when pulled. South Australian winery d'Arenberg has signed up for Zork and Zork's makers claim the three-part contraption is being tested by a number of other wineries.