

Yalumba and Screw-Cap

A History of Innovation

The Stelvin or screw-cap closure has, in recent times, been gaining in popularity as a seal for premium white wines and even red wines. Yet this closure is not a new technology but one that has been used to seal wines since the 1970s. Yalumba was instrumental in the introduction and development of the screw-cap closure when in 1964, Yalumba's then Director, Peter Wall AM approached the French company Le Bouchage Mechanique (LBM) about an alternative sealing system for wine bottles. Convinced of the potential of such a seal, Peter almost single-handedly drove the development of the screw-cap.

From around 1973, Yalumba and a group of other wineries including, McWilliams, Hardys, Penfolds, Seppelt, Brown Bros and Tahbilk were involved in developing and perfecting the screw-cap closure before it was introduced into Australia commercially in 1973 by ACI and adopted into general use.

The screw-cap was widely adopted by wineries but while the wine industry was excited about this new seal, wine consumers were less so and perceived the metal cap as an indication of a lower quality product. As a result, many wines that had been sealed under screw-cap eventually reverted to cork.



Why Screw-Cap?

Screw-cap eliminates the possibility of wine taint from cork and, as there is minimal contact of the sealing polymer with the wine, flavour absorption from the closure is not an issue. As the seal does not allow any air into the bottle at all, it is ideal for ensuring a slow, gentle bottle ageing of appropriate wines.

With the effects of cork taint particularly prevalent in aromatic white wines, the reduced taint rate as a direct result of using the screw cap closure, has become overwhelmingly evident. Along with this, the convenience of this closure has been widely welcomed and expected in today's busy lifestyle.

"The screw-cap offers the perfect environment for ageing wine, providing consistency and not allowing oxygen to influence the wine," says Yalumba's Winemaking Director, Brian Walsh.

Screw-Cap Today

It was not until the 2000 vintage that Yalumba decided to take the plunge back into screw-cap and test the market with the release of the premium Yalumba Hand Picked Eden Valley Riesling sealed under a stelvin closure. Several industry leaders also reverted to screw-cap, following a charge led by a band of Clare winemakers and since that time demand has accelerated as the market begins to understand and appreciate the technical merits of this closure.

In August 2002, Yalumba proprietor, Robert Hill Smith, joined forces with renowned Clare winemaker, Jeffrey Grosset to create a new premium Eden Valley Riesling known as mesh Eden Valley Riesling. Given both Grosset's and Yalumba's experience with the screw-cap, it came as no surprise that this wine was bottled under screw-cap. Since that time, Yalumba has decided to seal more wines under screw-cap including, for the first time, Viognier which makes a great deal of sense as the variety seems particularly prone to flavour modification by cork.

"Yalumba has watched the market's adaptation of the screw-cap closure with interest," says proprietor, Robert Hill Smith. "Acceptance of the screw-cap has grown significantly and continues to increase amongst the wine industry and consumers, particularly at the top end of the market."



Screw-Capped Yalumba Wines

Yalumba now offers wine lovers a number of wines sealed under screw-cap, including; Oxford Landing Sauvignon Blanc, Yalumba Hand Picked Riesling and Chardonnay, Yalumba Y Series Riesling, Unwooded Chardonnay, Christobels and Viognier, Yalumba Barossa Semillon Sauvignon Blanc, Eden Valley Viognier and Chardonnay and Yalumba The Virgilius Viognier