

You can't stop screwcaps, but corks win my seal of approval



Will Lyons

Screwcaps have been with us for decades. They were first used on Swiss wine in the 1960s, but it wasn't until the Noughties that they gained ground — led by Australia and New Zealand, which now close more than 80% of their bottles with these aluminium tops.

They have a number of benefits. As well as being cheaper for the winemaker, they considerably reduce the number of faulty or corked products, are effective at retaining fresh flavours and are convenient — no more searching for a corkscrew. For the majority of lively, young, fruity wines, they have been transformative because they are hugely consistent.

I happily drink from bottles under screwcap all the time, like the Cloudy Bay below, but let's not give up on corks just yet. Since the widespread introduction of metal closures around 2000, Portuguese cork farmers have upped their

game with regards to cork taint. This is when the wine has been infected with the chemical compound 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA), transferred from the cork. You can easily recognise this as it smells dank, like wet cardboard, and the smell gets worse over time.

While screwcaps are undoubtedly suitable for whites and reds that will be consumed within a few months of bottling, my money is still on cork to age "serious" red wine. But I'm keeping an open mind. Here are five corks you could also try ■

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**2017 CLOUDY BAY
SAUVIGNON
BLANC**

MORRISONS, £22

New Zealand
It's been nearly 35 years since the Australian David Hohnen and British-born Kevin Judd created the world-renowned Cloudy Bay. The price may have gone up, but this is still a fantastic drop, with fresh notes of gooseberry and lime and a long mineral finish.



**2017 GERARD
BERTRAND
CIGALUS**

**STRICTLY WINE,
£24.70**

France
The former rugby international Gérard Bertrand has built up a substantial vinous empire in his native Languedoc region. A sophisticated blend of chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and viognier, this is a rich, heady white with apple, peach and vanilla on the palate.



**2015 TRE SAGGI
MONTEPULCIANO
D'ABRUZZO**

**VALVONA &
CROLLA, £16**

Italy
Not to be confused with the Tuscan variety, this dark-red montepulciano grape is cultivated east of Rome. Matured in French oak casks for 12 months, the result is full-bodied, with lovely smoky aromas of wild berry, spice, coffee and cherry.



**2015 CHATEAU
D'ARGADENS
TANNERS, £11.50**

France
This beguiling blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc is produced in the Entre-deux-Mers region. A high-performing, no-nonsense Bordeaux supérieur, it's well balanced, robust and packed with ripe fruity flavour. A lot of wine for your money.



**2015 PIQUE-BASSE
COTES DU RHONE
VILLAGES ROAIX**

**SAVAGE
SELECTION, £13.80**

France
A combination of grenache, syrah and mourvèdre from the southern Rhône, this Pique-Basse has a deep purple hue, layers of dark fruit and a lovely underlay of wood smoke. With silky tannins, it's perfect with rich meats such as lamb or steak.



**2010 VINA ALBINA
GRAN RESERVA
VINEYARDS OF
SHERBORNE, £23**

Spain
This is textbook premium Rioja — dark and intense, with abundant vanilla, chocolate and red fruit. Aged in American oak, it's a mix of tempranillo, mazuelo (carignan) and graciano. Ready to drink without delay, but will keep and improve for a number of years.