

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT





Introduced in 1991, Penfolds Red Wine Re-corking Clinics provide Penfolds wine collectors and enthusiasts with an opportunity to have their wines assessed and, if necessary, topped up and re-corked. Over 45,000 bottles belonging to more than 9,000 wine consumers have been given a 'health check' since this programme began. The clinics take place each year, on a two-year rotational basis, in major Australian cities and recently in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Penfolds Red Wine Re-corking Clinics were inspired by the practice of re-corking old bottles by United Kingdom wine merchants and Bordeaux chateaux. In fact, Max Schubert would re-cork old vintages of Grange for his friends. A number of these bottles have turned up at Australian wine auctions over the years. Penfolds has reinvented this largely ad hoc practice into a serious after-sales service for Penfolds wine collectors and enthusiasts. After many years in the cellar, corks can deteriorate and the level of the wine in bottle may ullage. If not checked, it is possible the wine may overdevelop or oxidise, rendering it undrinkable.

Penfolds' experience with re-corking is unmatched by any other wine company in the world. It has developed an awareness of diverse cellaring conditions, giving winemakers an insightful understanding of the maturation process. There is no question that ideal cellaring conditions are not only a matter of a cool temperature and optimum relative humidity, but also overall constancy of temperature and environment. Bottles lying in warmer cellars may develop more quickly, but not necessarily to the detriment of the overall quality of the wine. Conversely, storing wines in very cold cellars can retard the maturation process. The issue of cellar provenance is becoming more and more important, especially as wine markets become increasingly global. Ideal cellaring conditions (as outlined here) are the preferred option.

The problem with corks (other than the infuriating occurrence of cork taint) is that they deteriorate with time. Typically wine will soak through the cork or find a way between the cork and the wall of the bottle neck and start leaking out. The level of the wine in the bottle will consequently fall below the base of the neck and increase the risk of oxidation. Cellaring conditions can therefore influence the life of the cork. Air conditioning without

Bottles lying in warmer cellars may develop more quickly, but not necessarily to the detriment of the overall quality of the wine.





PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

humidifiers, can dry out corks and shorten their life. Usually, however, corks do not present a problem until after an extensive period of cellaring.

Clinics offer owners of Penfolds red wines which are 15 years and older the opportunity to have their wines assessed by a Penfolds winemaker and, if necessary, opened, tasted, topped up, re-corked and recapsuled (with branded corks and capsules) on the spot. Special equipment has been developed to optimise this process, including the use of inert gas to prevent oxidation and portable reverse pressure (vacuum) re-corking machines. All the features of a modern bottling line are replicated at the clinic.

Bottles in acceptable condition receive a special numbered clinic back label certifying the soundness of the wine. It's signed by a Penfolds winemaker and endorsed by specialist wine auctioneers, Langton's Fine Wine Auctions and Christies. All re-corked bottle numbers are recorded in a data bank. Bottles found in unacceptable condition are sealed with a plain, unbranded cork, but neither topped up, nor certified, nor recapsuled – effectively weeding poorly cellared wines out of the system.

Bottles in acceptable condition receive a special clinic back label certifying the soundness of the wine.

Penfolds has been experimenting with alternative closures to cork for some time. While perhaps not particularly romantic, the various available technologies have genuine advantages, not the least of which, is that they solve the frustrating problem of cork taint, an inherent problem with the treatment and manufacture of cork. Screwcap capsules and Nomacorc® are just two examples of the various closures available.

Penfolds is increasingly using these inert, taint-free closures. Newer vintages of Eden Valley Reserve Riesling, Bottle Aged Reserve Bin Riesling and Reserve Bin A Chardonnay have been bottled under screwcap. It is possible other Penfolds wines will be released with alternative closures. In the meantime, cork producers are working at ways of improving the production and quality of corks. Consumer acceptance is the key to this trend. Regardless, Penfolds Red Wine Re-corking Clinics will remain a feature of Penfolds customer service for many years to come. It is still early days and Penfolds has no plans to stop using traditional cork closures altogether.



Although at first unpredicted, the Red Wine Re-corking Clinics have had a major impact on the secondary wine market. Penfolds' reputation for wine quality and aging potential make it a cornerstone of Australian wine collecting. The overall auction market has embraced the clinics – firstly by offering no obvious difference in market value between bottles in original condition and certified bottles, secondly by discounting older bottles of Penfolds which are 'not in mint condition' and lastly, by rejecting uncertified bottles. The result is that few bottles of poorly cellared wine ever reach the consumer through the secondary market, further enhancing the collector's wine experience and the reputation of Penfolds.

For enquiries regarding Penfolds Red Wine Re-corking Clinics, contact:

PENFOLDS CONSUMER RELATIONS

Tel: 1300 651 650 Australia

0800 651 650 New Zealand

020 8917 4687 United Kingdom

800 255 9966 United States

or visit www.penfolds.com to email an enquiry.

Please refer to Cellaring and Service on the Penfolds website for further information on wine valuations, sourcing rare wines and specialist stockists.

