

Unpleasant surprises lurk inside tainted bottles



One of the most powerfully pungent substances on earth can be found in up to 1 in 20 bottles of wine, turning the contents into something little to do with grapes and more in common with the inside of dank and musty cupboards.

The substance (2,4,6, trichloranisole or TCA) and similar taints are one of the wine industry's major quality control issues not just in Australia, but every wine producing country in the world. TCA has little to do with the winemaking process as it almost exclusively resides in the cork used to seal the wine. A combination of the chlorine bleach used to clean the cork after it is removed from the tree, high moisture content in the cork, the ensuing creation of mould content in the cork and the resulting mould spores results in a nasty case of cork

contamination. How do you recognise cork taint, also called "corkiness", in a wine? The first thing to remember is that it comes in varying levels of grossness.

Stage one: At lower concentrations, the taint merely dulls the flavour and aroma of the wine. At this stage it is hard to detect, especially in red wines.

Stage two: The wine is noticeably musty and mouldy to smell and taste. The fruit quality of the wine has been well and truly robbed and we have a flat, dull wine.

Stage three: This cannot possibly be mistaken, as the wine smells positively foul. The contents in the glass bear no relation whatsoever to grapes.

To be sure you have a bad case of corked wine and not a bad case of winemaking, open a second bottle of

the same wine. If it seems quite free and clean, it's likely the cork was the problem.

A superior wine seal to cork has actually been invented and used in Australia. It was called the Stelvin closure but it didn't look the part. The Stelvin top is used in 200ml bottles.

The wine industry continues to seek out a replacement for the traditional wine cork. The Americans have developed a synthetic cork, too.

This month's special offer is the Yalumba Oxford Landing range of wines.

Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Rhine Riesling are available at the special price of \$6.95 each or \$75 per dozen, straight or mixed.

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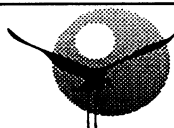
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