

THE GRAPES OF CATH

Put a cork in it! Or screw it!

BY CATHY A. RODGERS

I don't know about you, but I've been a little stressed lately. There certainly seems to be plenty to "wine" about. Thankfully, the Applegate Valley is here to serve. So, pour your heart out and enjoy my new *Applegater* wine column, "The Grapes of Cath," focusing on local vineyards and the wine industry.

How to start? I opened a bottle of RiverCrest wine, let it breathe, took a deep breath myself—and two things came to mind—put a cork in it! Or screw it!

Achieving closure is important. When it comes to wine, few topics are as divisive as the closure: cork or twist-off? Understanding the difference can deepen your appreciation of what's in the bottle and ultimately, your glass.

When selecting a bottle of wine, many consumers still equate a cork with tradition, quality, and ceremony, but metal twist-off caps, often associated with convenience and modernity, have gained traction. Both closure types have advantages and downsides, but understanding their origins and roles can help demystify their impact on your wine experience.

Cork has been the traditional closure for wine bottles for centuries. Its use dates to ancient Greece and Rome, but it wasn't until the 17th century, when glass bottles became standardized, that cork became the go-to seal for wine. The material is harvested from the bark of the cork oak tree (*Quercus suber*), primarily found in Portugal, which supplies over half of the world's cork. Spain and parts of North Africa also grow cork oaks. Cork's popularity stems from its natural elasticity and impermeability. It forms a tight seal while allowing a tiny bit of oxygen to interact with the wine, enhancing the aging and flavor development of certain wines, particularly reds, by softening the tannins and enhancing the complex flavors over time. That's why cork is still favored for age-worthy wines.

Cork is harvested by carefully stripping the outer bark without damaging the tree. The bark is stripped every nine to 12 years. After harvest, the bark is aged, boiled, and processed into the stoppers we see in wine bottles. Cork oaks can live



for over 200 years, making cork a highly sustainable and renewable resource.

In contrast, metal screw caps, often made from aluminum, are a relatively recent innovation popularized in the mid-20th century. While twist-offs were originally met with skepticism by traditionalists, they've since gained wide acceptance, especially among modern wine producers who prioritize consistency, freshness, and practicality.

Twist-off caps create an airtight seal, preventing oxygen from entering the bottle. This is ideal for wines meant to be consumed young, such as many whites and light-bodied reds. They're also user-friendly—no corkscrew required! Airtight twist-off caps have virtually eliminated the risk of cork taint, a flaw caused by the compound TCA (2,4,6-trichloroanisole) that can ruin a wine's aroma and flavor. The convenience of twist-off caps makes them an ideal choice for white wines and wines intended for early consumption. They're easier to open and resealable, which is great for casual drinkers or in picnic settings.

In the final analysis, which is better? It really depends on the wine, the occasion, and personal preference. Cork remains the hallmark of tradition and elegance, while twist-offs bring practicality and reliability. If you're opening a bottle for casual enjoyment or immediate drinking, twist-offs offer ease and reliability. But if you're cellaring a fine vintage or savoring the ritual of uncorking, cork brings history, craftsmanship, and a romantic, sensory experience that's hard to beat.

In the end, both closures serve the same purpose—to protect the wine. Many premium wineries use both methods, depending on the intended style and aging potential.

In short, we are at a tipping point, so don't judge a bottle by its closure—let the wine inside speak for itself. Whether you twist or pull, what matters most is what's in the glass.

Cheers!

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Editor's note: Contact Cathy with suggestions for future wine-themed articles.

Finding control in a chaotic world

BY HAYRIYA HEIDI HANSEN

As I write this article, winter's tentacles reach through spring, chilling my bones—but there are glimpses of summer. Weather, like life, is unpredictable. This brings me into this moment and thoughts about "control." Who is in control? What do we control? Where is the control? When do we have control?

Webster's Dictionary defines control as "the power to influence or direct people's behavior or the course of events." As I write, on today's date, April 9, world stock markets have plunged, worldwide tariff wars have begun, and Israel's airstrikes continue. World and USA news has created fear, grief, stress, and upheaval. Controlling any of these events feels outside our personal scope of influence. So, what can we control? Our lives, our death?

A wise teacher of mine once told me there are "areas of influence" and "areas of concern." Within our area of concern, individually, we have unapparent impact. We can't stop a war, a tariff, or the stock market. About all we can do is pray and hope for a good outcome. But we can have an impact within our areas of influence and maybe bring about some change. We might even believe we have some control. We can speak with family, friends, and work colleagues about issues important to us. We can share ideas and work together to effect change. We can volunteer, speak out, ignite those around us by sparking a light. We can have some influence, whether for good or bad.

So, what does all this have to do with the Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance? SOLADA's mission, in part, is to "increase our capacity to serve and care for one another and our planet." Stress, fear, grief, anxiety, sadness, or any negative emotion can decrease that capacity, significantly impacting our daily life and well-being, possibly leading to dysregulation, even maladies.

As individuals, we have no control over most changes. Our environment, country, and world are changing, and, inside ourselves, our bodies are aging. How do we manage? How can we regulate ourselves? We can walk, meditate, spend time with friends, play games, create art, dance, read, rest, eat well, drink water (optimally, equal to half your body

weight in ounces)! Most important, we can learn to titrate the news. Every day is different! As individuals, we have no control over the great change happening on our planet. We just have to "go with it."

Humbly, I'd assert that all we can affect is within our area of influence, which begins within our own selves—within our bodies, thoughts, words, and actions. I believe that this is the greatest power we have as individuals—to know ourselves and find ways forward, carrying a light not only for ourselves, but to shine upon others. This said, it's important to allow feelings to arise, to track, feel, and share them appropriately, while not allowing ourselves to circle the drain or be swallowed up. There truly is power in positive thinking, which has been linked to numerous health benefits including a stronger immune system, reduced stress and anxiety, improved mental well-being, and even a longer lifespan.

Some believe these are the darkest days on earth. Perhaps. But from time immemorial there have been challenges and extreme difficulties plaguing humans. Please know I am not minimizing the trials many people are enduring right now, and I'm not suggesting that a simple flip of a "positive" switch will make these troubles go away.

What I am presenting is a shift in consciousness for your personal betterment and for those around you. I'm suggesting a change in the way you look at life—choosing how you'll live in this moment, knowing that the next moment is not a guarantee, knowing one day, perhaps soon, you and I will die and everyone we know and love will die. Ultimately, all you or I really do have control over is our own thoughts, words, and deeds.

As the saying goes, "None of us gets out of here alive." Einstein said it best, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

Now go have your best day ever.

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■ **RECREATE**
Continued from page 5

settings. Days before the sold-out concert, the organization received an email from a ticket holder seeking assurance that her disabled companions would be able to reach the concert site—one used a cane and the other a walker.

A scouting trip revealed only two handicap parking spots and a crumbling ADA path full of potholes that didn't reach the lake's steep edge.

This woman gave her tickets to able-bodied friends and made a fair point: "It may be too late for this event, but I would suggest that ADA accessibility, or the lack thereof, be addressed in any future (especially ticketed) outdoor events."

The Recreation Ready grant process required A Greater Applegate to show support from the community

and to assemble a steering committee. Enthusiasm was easy to come by. Letters of support and willingness to join the project's steering committee came in from Travel Southern Oregon, Travel Medford, Hart-Tish Park, In a Landscape, the Jacksonville Chamber, Applegate Partnership, the Outdoor Working Group, Provolt Recreation Area, and several Forest Service employees.

Although A Greater Applegate did not receive the Recreation Ready grant, we were encouraged that the proposal reached the final stages of the review process. Travel Oregon recommended that we continue the effort and suggested alternative routes for funding the project.

For more information about A Greater Applegate, visit www.agreaterapplegate.org.
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For Opinion piece and Letter to the Editor requirements, please visit applegater.org/submitting/#articles.