CORK

Recent years have seen the end of the virtual monopoly of cork as the material for bottle stoppers, due to concerns about the effect it may have on the contents of the bottle. This is caused by a chemical compound called 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA), which forms through the interaction of plant phenols, chlorine and mould. The tiniest concentrations - as little as three or four parts to a trillion - can spoil the taste of the product contained in the bottle. The result has been a gradual yet steady move first towards plastic stoppers and, more recently, to aluminium screw caps. These substitutes are cheaper to manufacture and, in the case of screw caps, more convenient for the user.

The classic cork stopper does have several advantages, however. Firstly, its traditional image is more in keeping with that of the type of high quality goods with which it has long been associated. Secondly - and very importantly - cork is a sustainable product that can be recycled without difficulty. Moreover, cork forests are a resource which support local biodiversity, and prevent desertification in the regions where they are planted. So, given the current concerns about environmental issues, the future of this ancient material once again looks promising.

Comparison of aluminium screw caps and cork bottle stoppers

Advantages of aluminium screw caps

- do not affect the **6** _____ of the bottle contents
- are **7** _____ to produce
- are **8** _____ to use

Advantages of cork bottle stoppers

- suit the **9** _____ of quality products
- made from a **10** _____ material
- easily **11** _____
- cork forests aid **12** _____
- cork forests stop **13** _____ happening

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