

# All pop and no shock with new Zork sparkling closure

An Australian company has developed an all-in-one, resealable sparkling wine closure that eliminates the need for both cork and muselet but retains the 'pop' associated with the celebratory wine.

Developed by Australian company ZORK, the closure is a sister to the company's still wine seal STL – both dubbed peel-and-reseal closures – which is now used by hundreds of wineries throughout the US and Europe.

Made from the same food-grade materials as its still wine STL relative, the new sparkling wine closure (dubbed SPK for short) consists of a robust outer cap that includes ZORK's signature tamper evident tear band; an inner metal foil which prevents oxygen entering the bottle and carbon dioxide escaping; and an inner collet that holds the seal onto the bottle.

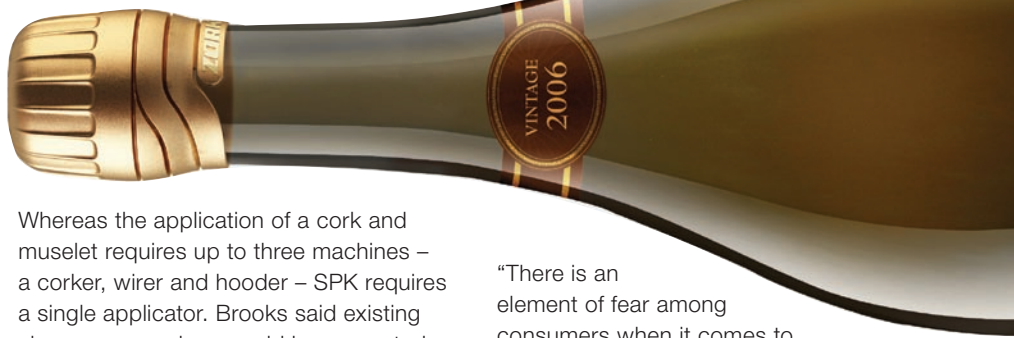
ZORK's founder, inventor and technical director, John Brooks, said SPK overcame the industry-wide concerns associated with the traditional sparkling wine seal of cork and muselet.

"Reportedly, more than 5% of sparkling wines exhibit CO<sub>2</sub> flatness upon opening – a percentage that is on a par with the amount of still wines under cork that reportedly develop cork taint," Brooks explained. "Trials conducted by Provisor have shown that SPK is holding CO<sub>2</sub> like a good quality cork in every one of the samples – less than 0.4g loss after four months; we're not getting the random flatness that can occur with cork.

"SPK also has a very low oxygen transmission rate – 0.01cc/day in air, which is similar to a good cork. Furthermore, after four months, the amount of free SO<sub>2</sub> in the wine is approximately 12.5ppm, which again is comparable with cork tested under identical conditions.

"Cork taint, of course, is also an issue with sparkling wines. In fact, cork taint is said to be easier to detect in sparkling wine because of the fizz," Brooks continued. "Sensory results from Provisor have also shown that the materials used in SPK do not cause taint or scalp wine aromas or flavours."

Unlike corks, SPK is capable of being used to reseal sparkling wines, which would be of most benefit in on-premise outlets where wines are served by the glass.



Whereas the application of a cork and muselet requires up to three machines – a corker, wirer and hooder – SPK requires a single applicator. Brooks said existing champagne corkers could be converted for between \$20,000-\$30,000 depending on the line speed to apply SPK and would then run at the same speed as a corker.

"The cork jaws are removed so the machine maintenance is significantly reduced. And because there's no need for a wirer or hooder, there's no breakdowns or hold-ups with those machines," Brooks said, adding that producers could still place a hood over SPK if desired.

"We have designed SPK so that a standard sparkling wine foil hood can be placed over the top of it. So, if producers want a traditional look for their sparkling wine, they can run SPK through the same hooding machine as they would a cork. The SPK is the same height as cork which also means there is no need to change the size of cartons to accommodate it."

Given its simple snap-on application, Brooks said SPK may be of interest to smaller wineries that don't have access to a bottling machine for small batch runs of sparkling wine. Normally, the closure will be supplied as a one-piece unit for automated bottling. However, we will be able to supply the closure as a two-piece unit so it can easily be hand applied for trials, lab samples or small commercial runs."

Brooks noted that SPK was cost-competitive with a cork and muselet.

"SPK is priced competitively with cork and muselet. If producers opt to leave the hood off, then that would be an additional cost-saving."

But perhaps the biggest attraction with SPK is its user-friendliness over a cork muselet which has a potential to be either impossible to take out or may self-extract once the muselet is removed.

Dave Pahl, who heads up sales and marketing for ZORK, said extracting corks from sparkling wine bottles was a big issue for consumers.

"There is an element of fear among consumers when it comes to extracting corks from sparkling wines because they don't know what to expect once they remove the muselet." Pahl said.

A recent survey by ZORK of wine consumers in the US showed that of all the women interviewed, 100% said they never opened a bottle of sparkling wine because they were afraid to do so, and therefore opted to hand the task over to a male.

"This is a startling revelation given that 75% of sparkling wine is consumed by women," Pahl said. "SPK is very empowering for women because it is so easy to use and eliminates the unintentional or accidental opening."

SPK is available in a range of food-grade colours. Winery logos can be printed or moulded onto the top of the collet or moulded on the side of the cap. A two-tone affect is also possible by making the collet a different colour to the rest of the closure.

Pilot production of SPK will begin in Adelaide early in 2009 with the first Australian wine to feature the closure expected to appear on shelves during the first three months of the year.

**For results of the Provisor trials on SPK visit [www.zork.com.au](http://www.zork.com.au). and for further information contact Zork Pty Ltd, 7 Hackney Road, Hackney, South Australia 5069, phone +618 8363 5635.**

