



# US Wine Consumer Attitudes of Wine Closures

Tragon Corporation



## Consumer Usage & Attitude Results

### Exploring Consumer Attitudes

Use of alternative closures (synthetic closure and screw caps) has been studied extensively for their effects on wine drinking flavor. Consumer attitudes about use of alternative closures is less well known. In the early 2000's, concerns about tainted wines created interest in use of alternative closures. Although many factors contribute to taint in wine, natural cork received a great deal of attention and there was a trend away from natural cork and towards alternate closures.

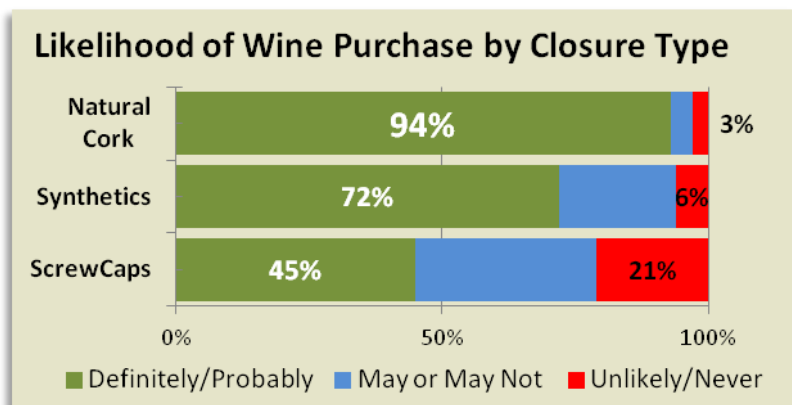
In 2004, the first research study in this series was conducted to explore consumer attitudes about three types of wine closures (natural cork, synthetic closure, and screw cap), along with their impact on purchase interest and perceived wine quality. This research series was updated in 2007 and this report highlights the latest update in October 2011.

The overall objective is to understand the USA consumer's attitudes for wines bottled with natural cork, synthetic closures, and screw caps and to determine how consumer opinions have changed over the years.

#### Question #1

**How likely would you be to purchase any type of wine with this closure?**

**Natural Cork:** An overwhelming 94% of consumers indicated they would be more likely to purchase wine with a natural cork. **Synthetic Closures:** A respectable 72% would purchase but still significantly fewer than Natural Cork. **Screw Cap:** Only 45% of consumers indicated a positive purchase interest with this closure with 21% indicating a negative influence on purchase interest.



## Key Findings

### Usage and Attitude, Purchase Interest, and Perceived Wine Quality

When asked how likely they would be to purchase wine according to closure type, 94% indicated they would be more likely to purchase wine with a natural cork, 72% said they would purchase wines with a synthetic closure and only 45% indicated a willingness to buy wines with screw-caps. 21% said screw-caps created a negative influence to their purchase.

Natural cork indicates that the wine is of high or very high quality (93%). Results for perceived quality of natural cork is three times higher than synthetic closure (31%) and almost nine times higher than screw cap (11%).

Natural Cork remains most appropriate for special occasions, dinner party at home, and to give as a gift.

Synthetic Closures have gained acceptance among consumers for everyday wines, relaxing at home, and dinner at home with family. However, relative to previous years, they are somewhat less appropriate today for special occasions, dinner parties, and gift giving.

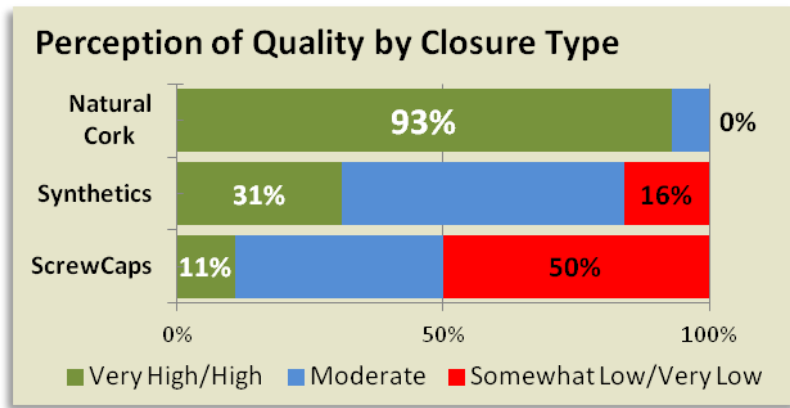
©2011 TRAGON CORPORATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. MATERIAL MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM TRAGON CORPORATION.

# US Wine Consumer Attitudes of Wine Closures

## Consumer Usage & Attitude Results

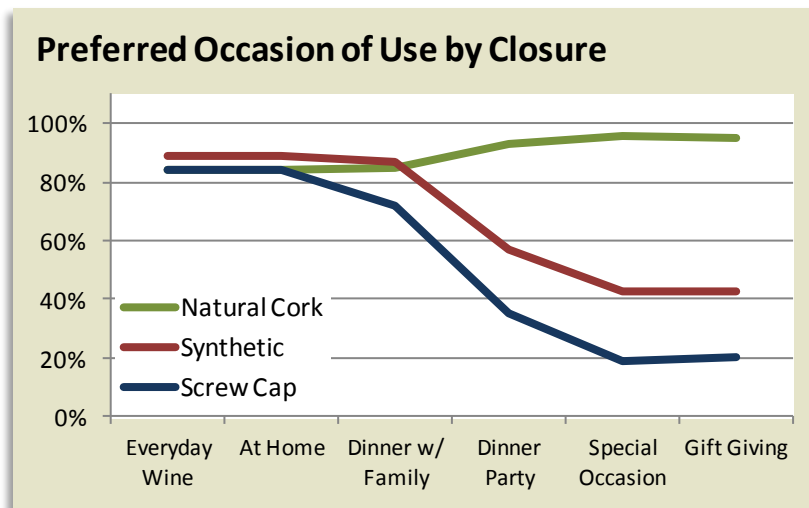
### Question #2 Perception of Wine Quality

**Natural Cork:** An overwhelming 93% of consumers agree that natural cork conveys wines of high or very high quality. This is 3 times higher than synthetic closures and 9 times higher than screw cap. **Synthetic Closures:** Only 31% of consumers agree that synthetic closures convey wines of high or very high quality, while most (53%) indicated moderate quality. **Screw Cap:** Few consumers (11%) agree that screw cap convey wines of high or very high quality, with most (50%) indicating it conveys a wine of a low or very low quality.



### Question #3 Rating appropriateness of wine closures for usage occasions

By far, natural cork was most appropriate for a dinner party, to give as a gift, and special occasion; whereas, all three closures were appropriate for an everyday wine, at home, and dinner with the family.



## Key Findings

Consumer opinion of **Screw Caps** has changed most over the years. Appropriateness was highest in 2007 for casual situations but they have always been least appropriate for special occasions. Screw Caps seem to have reached their peak in consumer acceptance in 2007 and are now less appropriate for all occasions than they were in 2007.

## Methodology

This survey is an update of previous Tragon work conducted in 2004 and 2007. Questions are similar and the target audiences were selected under consistent guidelines.

Total respondents: Approximately 1550 consumers in the USA

- Males (~35%) and Females (~65%)
- Head of household, primary shoppers, ages 25-65
- Red and white wine purchasers/ drinkers
- 80% drink wine at least once a week
- **Study 1** in 2004 with 300 consumers
- **Study 2** in 2007 with 940 consumers
- **Study 3** in 2011 with 347 consumers

This study has a margin of error +/- 4%

Consumers in each study completed two web based questionnaires.

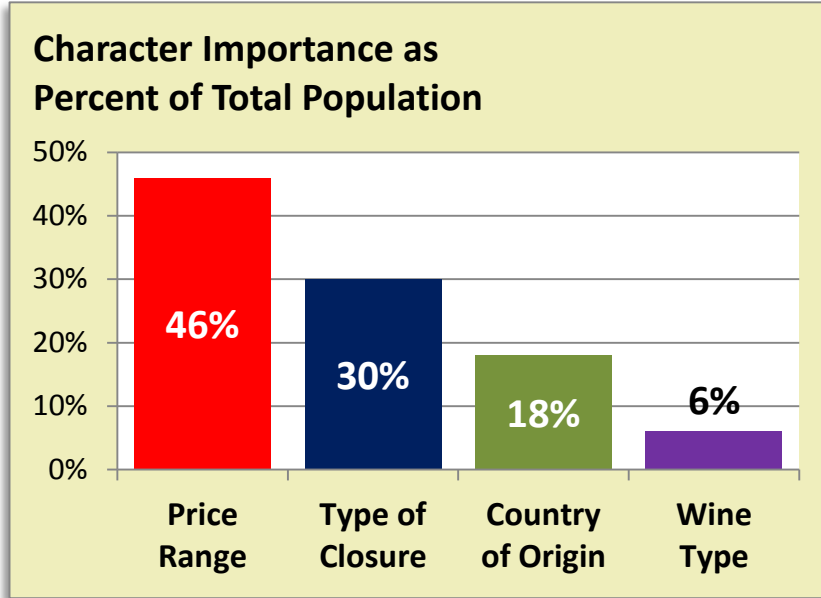
(1) Usage and attitude (U&A) survey, purchase interest, and perceived quality

(2) Conjoint/trade-off analysis for closure type, wine type, price, and region.

**Conjoint Results — 2013**

**Character Importance : Total Population**

Based on the conjoint results, price point was most important to purchase decision, with the \$10 to \$15 price point as most desirable. The second most important criteria was closure type, with natural cork as the key positive driver. Varietal and country of origin were least important among these choices.



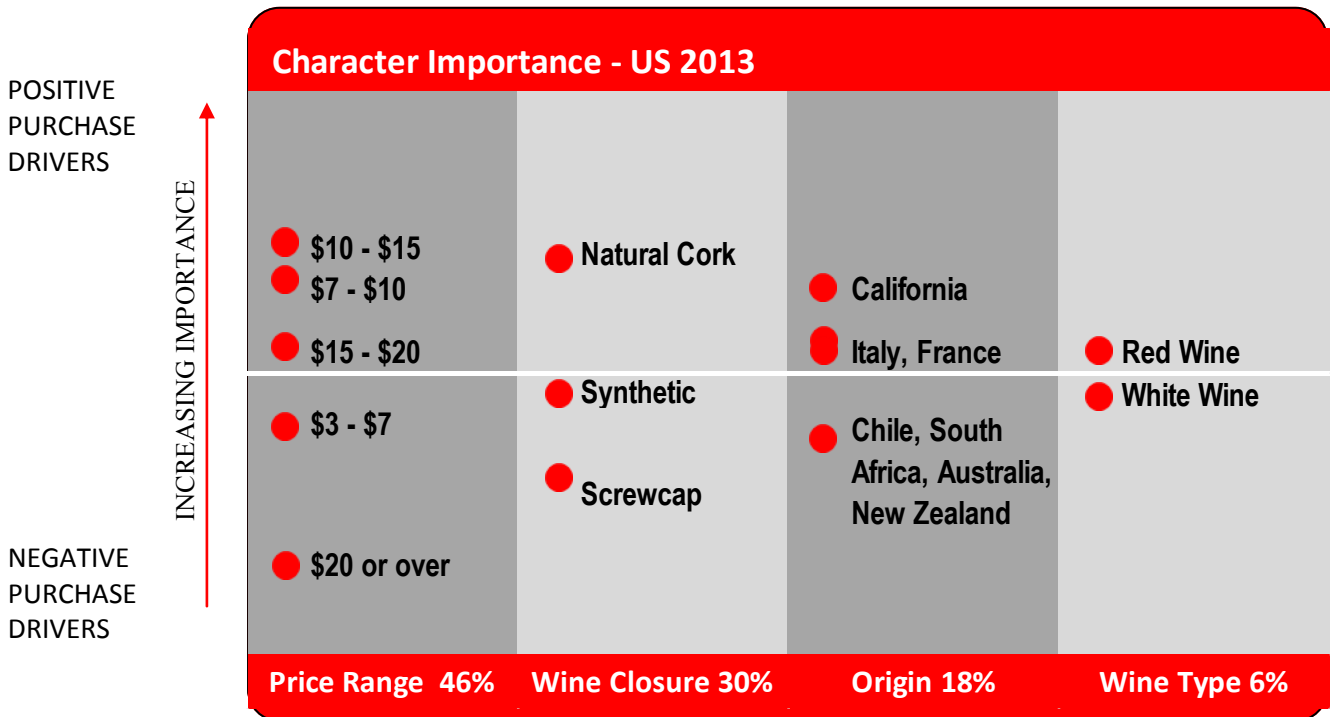
**Key Findings**

**Conjoint Analysis of Characteristics Effecting Purchase Decisions**

Closure type was more important to purchase interest than wine type, price point, and country of origin.

- Natural Cork had a positive influence on purchase interest.
- Synthetic Closure had a relatively neutral impact on purchase interest.
- Screw Cap had a negative impact on purchase interest.

**Driving Influence within Character Importance**



**History of Responses**

**Preferred Occasion of Use**

This question has been asked of respondents in 2004, 2007 and in 2011. Responses are relatively consistent but different closures exhibit noticeable changes over time.

**Natural Cork**

Overwhelmingly, natural cork is still the closure of choice for special occasions, gift giving, and a dinner party, but slightly less appropriate for everyday wine than it was in 2004.

**Synthetics**

Synthetic closures continue to be appropriate for everyday occasions, similar to the 2007 ratings and more appropriate than in 2004. However, they are again less appropriate for special occasions.

**Screw Caps**

Consumer opinion of screw caps has changed most over the years. Appropriateness was highest in 2007 for casual situations but always least appropriate for special occasions. Screw caps seemed to have reached their peak in consumer acceptance and are now less appropriate for all occasions than they were in 2007.

**What effect does wine bottle closure type have on perceptions of wine attributes?**

Published in the International Journal of Hospitality Management, this consumer study found that wine drinkers in a blind taste test rated the same wine 10% – 13% higher when they were led to believe by visual cues that the wine was closed with a natural cork as opposed to a screw cap or synthetic cork. The 310 participants did not know they were actually tasting the exact same wines, and that the wine was poured directly from a keg and had never been bottled. The survey participants were half male/half female, with an average age of just under 30, mostly college educated, and consuming on average 2.5 glasses of wine per week.

The survey results mirrored almost exactly the results of a blind taste test conducted in 2017 by Oxford University professor Charles Spence, in which participants rated the same wine after hearing the sound of a bottle being opened – either the twist of a screw cap or the pop of a cork. In that study, the perception that the wine was closed with a cork led participants to rate the wine 8% to 15% higher. While the Oxford study was funded by the Portuguese Cork Association, the current study was independent of any connection to the cork industry.

The key conclusion cited in the current study was that “wines thought to have come from a bottle sealed with a natural cork closure were rated significantly higher on appearance, bouquet, taste, and overall quality compared to wines associated with other closure types”.

The authors also said “restaurants, bars, wineries, and cellars can better please customers by serving wines with natural corks instead of screw caps or synthetic corks....closure type can also influence perceptions of taste, bouquet, appearance, and overall quality.... In spite of industry trends, then, wine manufacturers should perhaps resist shifting to alternatives to natural corks.”

The study was coauthored by Dennis Reynolds of the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management, University of Houston, Imran Rahman and Shaniel Bernard of the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Management at Auburn University, and Amy Holbrook of The Boeing Company.

**Cork Quality Council  
Members**

Amorim Cork America,  
Cork Supply USA  
Lafitte Cork & Capsule,  
M.A.Silva USA,  
Portocork  
Scott Laboratories

[www.corkqc.com](http://www.corkqc.com)

