



ABCCORK PRESENTS CORKS

Cork material is a subset of generic cork tissue, harvested for commercial use primarily from the Cork oak tree (*Quercus suber*), with Portugal producing nearly 50% of the corks in the world. The increasing demand for cork product makes Portugal a leader in both quantity and quality.

A cork tree can be harvested a dozen times in its lifetime. Cork trees live from 150-250 years. Virgin cork (or "male" cork) is the first cork cut from generally 25 year-old trees. Another 10-12 years is required for the second harvest. Harvesting a cork tree requires very skilled labour. A special axe is used to cut into the bark and then used as a lever to gently pry the cork off the tree. The cork is peeled off in large panels from the main sections of the trunk, including the large branches. About a third of the bark can be harvested from the tree at one time. Cork harvesting is done entirely without machinery.

The fact that corks are made of the bark harvested from living trees has lead European environmentalists to encourage the use of cork over other, less natural, alternatives. The sustainability of its production and the easy recycling of cork products and by-products are two of its most distinctive aspects.

Top quality corks are quite expensive, so less expensive brands of wines have switched to synthetic plastic stoppers, screw caps or other closures. However, on the down side, both synthetic stoppers and screw caps present numerous problems such as oxidation and high levels of SO₂, potentially giving wines a rotten egg smell. Cork demand has increased due to a larger portion of wine being sealed with cork rather than being sold in bulk and a worldwide increase in the consumption of wine

Cork, which comes in a variety of shades and tones, finds various applications, thanks to its resistance, elastic and waterproof properties. Cork has many uses other than in the wine industry. It is used in making insoles for the footwear industry or agglomerates used in "acoustic" insulation as well as various flooring applications.

Cork alone has outstanding traits such as good compression and recovery, non-permeability, low bulk specific gravity, heat insulation, vibration dampening, a high abrasion coefficient, sound absorption and much more. These are some of the reasons why Cork is a material very much in demand.



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