



NOMACORC®

GROTH WINES: A CASE STUDY

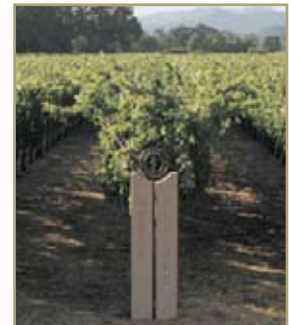


Groth Wines in Oakville, California

PROFILE

Producers of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc varietals, Groth Vineyards & Winery strives to make the best wine that each vintage will allow. Located in the heart of the Oakville appellation of Napa Valley, the family owned and operated winery is a champion for the appellation. Drawn by the beauty and unique microclimates of the area, owners Dennis and Judy Groth purchased the 121-acre Oakville Vineyards in 1981 and shortly thereafter built their home and winery on the property. The Groth's early focus on development of high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon vintages put the Groth brand on the map with the Groth 1985 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon being the first California wine to receive a 100-point rating from industry critic Robert Parker.

Over the years, the winery expanded its production to include white varietals. Groth's Sauvignon Blanc is produced from grapes grown in various microclimates of Napa Valley. The warmer areas within Napa Valley yield grapes that result in wines with a lush, full melon/citrus character in the aroma and in the flavor. The fruit grown in cooler areas of Napa Valley has a solid, crisp backbone that gives the wine an exciting liveliness, which balances the rich creaminess created from "sur lie" aging. Unfortunately, problems became evident after bottling this varietal.





PROBLEM

After bottling, Groth winemakers recognized significant problems with the flavor and aroma profile of the Sauvignon Blanc characterized by classic taint and off-aromas contributed by natural cork. In addition, the winery was experiencing extraordinarily high defective rates of greater than 10%—more than a bottle per case. Sales and marketing team members were receiving complaints from consumers and retailers, which were in turn creating an undesirable perception of the Groth brand.

Seeking a solution, winemakers experimented with microagglomerated “twin-disc” closures in the late 1990s, but experienced the same taint issues as with first-grade natural cork. They also tried injection-molded synthetic closures, which led to oxidization in the wines. Winemakers considered switching to screw caps but recognized that would require a change in bottling line equipment, packaging and their well-established winemaking processes.

SOLUTION

In 2004, the winery began using Nomacorc Classic closures exclusively in their Sauvignon Blanc wines.

“A wine’s closure plays a very important but very basic role—to keep the wine in the bottle, protect the wine, and to not impart any flavor,” said Eric Fidel, assistant winemaker at Groth Vineyards & Winery. “We take care to make the best wine that a vintage will allow. We needed a closure to get the wines to the consumer the way we intend them to appreciate it.”

Nomacorc closures allowed Groth’s Sauvignon Blanc to retain its fresh, crisp and fruity flavor profile without concern about natural cork’s taint and inconsistency.

When asked about the financial benefits of implementing the Nomacorc closure, Fidel replied, “Minimizing costs by switching to Nomacorc was not the initial concern. However, Nomacorc closures are a little over one-quarter the cost of high-quality natural corks, and we’ll definitely take that to the bank! But most importantly, the value is in our newfound confidence, our ability to gain and retain new customers and the improved consumer perception of our wines.

“Nomacorc gives us the confidence that what we want our customers to taste is always there, and that the wine is consistently great when it arrives at a restaurant table,” said Fidel. “Now, there are no surprises when our Sauvignon Blanc is opened.”



www.grothwines.com