



NOMACORC®

MARKHAM VINEYARDS: A CASE STUDY



Markham Vineyards in St. Helena, California

“I am always looking for people who are not only a supplier but also good friends—looking out for me and my brand. We have a very good partnership with Nomacorc.”

—Kimberlee Nicholls, Winemaker Markham Vineyards

PROFILE



Calistoga Ranch



Youtville Vineyards



Trubody Ranch



Oak Knoll Vineyards

Markham Vineyards was founded in 1978 by Bruce Markham with the purchase of vineyards in Yountville, Oak Knoll and Calistoga and the historic Laurent winery. Markham Vineyards continues to use the Laurent winery original stone cellar, which was built in 1879 of stone quarried from the nearby Glass Mountain, making it one of the oldest wine cellars in California to be in consistent use since its construction.

Markham Vineyards focused on the production of Cabernet Sauvignon until 1980 when the vineyard became an industry pioneer in the development of the Merlot varietal. Today Merlot has become the flagship varietal of the Markham brand.

An ambitious renovation, expansion, and replanting project completed in the early 1990's more than doubled the winery's capacity, creating one of the most advanced wineries in the United States. With 350 acres of prime Napa vineyard land, the winery has received critical and commercial success with its wines sold under the Markham and Glass Mountain brands.

The winery's philosophy: To produce classic Napa Valley wines that are easy-drinking, food-friendly and affordable; and to be a responsible and caring neighbor in our community and everywhere we sell our wines.



PROBLEM

Markham Vineyards had historically used only natural cork closures for its Markham brand wines, however the winery was very concerned by the fact that up to 3% of their wines were being tainted by TCA, negatively impacting consumers and the brand. In addition, the popular priced Glass Mountain wines which were closed with technical corks were experiencing an even higher rate of TCA related taint that continued to increase the longer the wines were in the bottle.

SOLUTION

Winemaker Kimberlee Nicholls began researching and testing alternative closures with the objective of qualifying a closure that would eliminate concerns about the negative impact cork taint was having on the quality of Markham Vineyard wines. After running many trials and cross-referencing with trials run in other wineries, Markham found Nomacorc to be the closure that consistently provided the best performance. In 2003 the winery began using Nomacorc co-extruded synthetic closures for the Markham brand Sauvignon Blanc and subsequently expanded their use to all Markham white varietals as well as all wines bottled under the Glass Mountain brand.

During a recent trip to Japan, Nicholls had an opportunity to taste a 2003 Glass Mountain Merlot closed with a Nomacorc Classic closure. "I was so happy to open this wine which was bottled five years ago and find it to be perfectly preserved" stated Nicholls.

According to Nicholls, the use of Nomacorc closures has helped Markham to sell their wines with more confidence, no longer worrying about receiving calls from their distributors with complaints about inconsistent wine. "I am confident that everything we bottle with Nomacorc will be the way I intended it to be when it left the winery."

Nicholls understands the importance of oxygen management throughout the winemaking process and feels that the closure is a critical component of oxygen management and wine development. "We have had several years of experience now with Nomacorc closures. They are very consistent with no bottle to bottle variation. And, the Nomacorc product is more consistent on the bottling line than natural cork. I know our wines will remain fresh when closed with Nomacorc," said Nicholls.



Markham has succeeded in eliminating cork taint concerns in their wines which are closed with Nomacorc closures while significantly reducing packaging costs. And the Nomacorc closures, which are 100% recyclable, support the winery's sustainability efforts.

"Every bad (or neutral) impression of your wine is a loss for your brand, said Nicholls. Nomacorc has helped us make a good impression every time."

www.markhamvineyards.com