

MEDIA RELEASE

ZORK CLOSURE MEETS SERIOUS DEMANDS OF U.S. WINE PACKAGING INNOVATORS

Australian wine companies looking to attract consumers to new brands and lift sales of existing wine products must consider more innovative packaging solutions to create retail shelf “cut-through”.

That’s the view of ZORK Chief Executive Officer Mark McAllister, who says the competitive retail environment means winemakers should investigate new ways to differentiate their products.

Recently returned from the United States, Mark is celebrating a major order with one of the US’s most innovative wineries, Don Sebastiani and Sons.

Wine Enthusiast magazine’s 2005 Winery of the Year, Don Sebastiani and Sons is a negociant which produces 1.5 million cases of wine a year, most of them with quirky, memorable names and eye-catching labels which create “super-brands” in consumer minds.

One of the fastest growing Californian wine companies, in the last four years they have received 27 “Best Buy” citations from Wine Enthusiast for their Smoking Loon, Pepperwood Grove, Aquinas Napa Valley, Fusée and Screw Kappa Napa bottlings.

The company also announced last year that it plans to graduate to non-cork closures on all bottles, across all brands, making it the largest wine company in the world to abandon the traditional cork closure completely.

Donny Sebastiani is excited about ZORK’s potential to capture US consumer attention.

“Everyone who opens the ZORK on our Le Bon Vin de la Napa Valley has remarked in an overwhelmingly positive fashion,” he said.

“Wholesalers, retailers, consumers, even other wineries love the look, feel, sound and practicality of ZORK and we have big plans to move ahead with this closure in the future,” Donny said.

Mark said his recent visit had confirmed that retail and consumer acceptance of ZORK packaged wine was highest in the United States.

“Our clients agree that US consumers have adapted more readily to ZORK than screwcap, giving them a substantial market edge.

“Australian brand Shingleback Red Knot has had an extraordinary sales year under ZORK and Penny’s Hill has just bottled its top selling Woop Woop with ZORK, after trialling the closure with its other brands last year.

According to Penny’s Hill winemaker Ben Riggs the response to ZORK in the US was “quite amazing”.

“Everyone just went Wow! They loved it,” he said.

Mark believes ZORK's time has arrived as the alternative closure with innovative brand values and high quality assurance.

"Differentiating with bottle shape, label design, package size, neck tags and shelf talkers have all been tried – it's time for a change," he said.

"That's where our technically advanced and visually appealing closure has 'come of age' in the global wine market place.

"After four years of patient product development, exhaustive qualitative research and market testing ZORK is now on bottles and on shelves – and our clients are delighted.

"As we move into this roll-out stage we need to assure customers that ZORK is a serious alternative closure to cork, synthetic stoppers and screwcap."

Mr McAllister who took over the leadership of ZORK last year, after a career in engineering and corporate management, said creating awareness of a totally new closure in an already cluttered market had been a necessarily long process.

"The closure achieved quite spectacular early awareness but was needed to overcome the novelty tag. To beat that perception we have had to be patient – we didn't want to rush the market until we had completed our quality research.

"I'm pleased to say that our rigorous trials with Provisor have achieved very positive, consistent results over the last 18 months."

ZORK Founder and Technical Director John Brooks said it was this very consistency of trial results which ensured there was virtually no bottle variation and a long, reliable shelf life.

"Based on the scientific test data I am confident ZORK is a long life wine closure which will overcome cork taint, stop random oxidation and reductive wine development for at least five years.

"On a sensory scale, ZORK results are as good as the best quality natural cork without the risk of taint. ZORK also scored better than screw cap control samples for wine development where screw capped wine exhibited reductive characters of flint and rubber aromas.

"Parallel trials being conducted by other major wineries are consistent with the provisor result."

Mark said the company is stepping up its marketing during 2006 and offering competitive packages which will encourage Australian wineries to trial ZORK this year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mark McAllister
Chief executive Officer
ZORK Pty Ltd