

Amorim Cork: scientific research to prove the benefits cork brings to wine

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Antonio Amorim, CEO of Amorim Cork, explores how cork stoppers add tangible value to wine through innovation, sustainability, and science. From global wine trends to circular economy initiatives, Amorim details how cork supports premiumisation, enhances wine performance over time, and contributes to a more responsible and aspirational wine industry.

For both cork and wine, product and process innovation have reached very high levels. Now, the main objective in global

markets seems to be building a strong brand, so that consumers can perceive its value. What are the most effective strategies?

First of all, we are a B2B company; that is our market. It's important to clarify that the protagonist is not cork, but wine. Cork is an accessory.

There are two dimensions to cork: the closure function and the packaging aspect. Cork is a sustainable and premium option. Using cork stoppers can improve a wine bottle's carbon footprint by 30%.

We must also focus on the technical performance of cork in the wine's evolution. This means concentrating on how cork contributes to the wine's development inside the bottle.

You work with many wineries around the world. What are the most interesting strategies you've observed in response to current market challenges (e.g., low/no alcohol, packaging, communication)?

Right now, the global wine market is clearly split between premium and entry-level products. It is crucial to differentiate these two segments.

When we talk about premium wines, there are five strategic aspects to consider:

- 1. Strong focus on terroir and cru – limited availability equals added value;**
- 2. Sales channels: DTC (Direct to Consumer) is key in the New World markets;**
- 3. Awards, scores, and competitions still matter;**

4. **Biodynamic, organic, and sustainable viticulture are growing trends, especially in Burgundy;**
5. **The low/no alcohol segment is growing in quality and should be monitored.**

For entry-level wines, the strategies include:

- Sustainability,
- Global branding,
- Lower alcohol content,
- Tech innovation and interactive labels,
- Caloric impact.

Amorim operates in over 100 countries with 22 branches across 5 continents. Wine represents about 70% of your revenue. What global changes are impacting the wine market?

We're seeing five key global shifts affecting the wine market:

1. Current global conditions are penalizing low-end wines,
2. Declining wine consumption in China,
3. Increasing consumption of white and rosé wines,
4. Growth in sparkling wine,
5. Spirits are growing via cocktails and cannibalizing wine consumption.

Although logistics have normalized post-Covid, entry-level wines are losing volume, while spirits are gaining ground.

Wine is a cultural product (as well as environmental, social, and economic), and we believe its cultural dimension will grow. This may negatively affect entry-level wine consumption.

To change these dynamics, we need recovery in the Chinese market and stronger momentum from the U.S. market.

Shifting the focus to production plants and facilities, what innovations have helped Amorim capture 40% of the global cork stopper market?

- 1. We're deeply committed to cork and wine.** We've introduced a culture of rigor and innovation, respecting internal protocols with discipline;
- 2. Technological advances like Naturity, Xpür, and NDTech have improved cork performance.** We now offer exceptional reliability across all product ranges;
- 3. Scientific research proves cork's benefits.** We've solved cork taint issues and are now focusing on quantifying cork's added value to wine.

Premiumisation is a growing trend. Can cork stoppers benefit from this movement, given their premium and wine-preserving qualities?

The world's best wines choose cork stoppers. Wine is an aspirational industry; all producers aim to create iconic wines. Our strong market share and premium clients are key to our commercial success.

We invest in R&D to scientifically prove how cork enhances wine quality and longevity. What happens in a bottle over time? Why is a wine more complex after 6 years? Our goal is to quantify this added value.

Sustainability and circular economy are pillars of Amorim's work. You've also funded NGOs that collect corks. What are your goals?

Each ton of cork captures 73 tons of CO₂, making cork production carbon-negative. This improves the overall footprint of wine bottles.

We were pioneers, but we need to improve product circularity at end-of-life.

In Italy, we recover 30 million corks annually and reuse them for insulation or interior design. We use Italy as a model for replication in countries like South Africa.

For us, there is no such thing as waste: used corks are raw material. We aim to enhance logistics to get used corks to those who can reuse them.

Cork is a unique material with spectacular technical and sustainable properties.

Amorim currently recovers 240 million corks annually, 30 million of which are from Italy. But considering we produce 25 million corks daily, recovery rates are still too low.

Suber Design is a recycling project by Amorim. Since 2011, in partnership with local NGOs, it collects used corks and transforms them into interior design objects.

Presenting this project at Milan Design Week and the Venice Biennale was amazing. Linking cork with architecture, design, and art helps elevate its perceived value.

This interview was conducted in partnership with [Amorim Cork Italia](#) as part of the "[Amorim Wine Vision](#)" project – a network of thought leadership on technical and topical wine-related

issues, spotlighting the original visions of industry entrepreneurs and managers.

Key points

- 1. Cork improves wine's carbon footprint and aging performance.**
- 2. Wine market is splitting between premium and entry-level strategies.**
- 3. Spirits and global conditions are challenging wine consumption.**
- 4. Cork R&D focuses on proving wine-enhancing benefits.**
- 5. Amorim champions cork recycling and circular economy worldwide.**