



The Wine Press

Pop Yer Cork



Ah, spring flowers from April showers, the air is redolent with their fragrance...no better time than now to pop open your favorite varietal and breathe deeply its floral bouquet. You know the routine: Position. Insert.

Withdraw. But if you experience problems popping your cork, perhaps you're not applying the right tool.

Like many of us, wine openers come in various sizes, shapes, lengths, widths, and types. Some need prepping, others are ready-to-go. And like the military, some units fully penetrate and subdue the target, then require force to eject; others enter the core, do the job and pull out easily. Fully equipped, fortified with add-ons or packing just the basic screw, some perform with a single action, others double-duty. And their methodology differs.

Since a compressed cork expands inside the bottle, extracting it can require over 100 pounds of commitment. The effort you want to or can exert, your willing price (an 1862-patented corkscrew sold on eBay in 2000 for \$13,550!) and your long- or short-term preference can help determine opener choice. From portable pocket sizes to fixed tabletop mounts, inventive mechanisms abound to release the bottled ecstasy of your wine.

Ideally, you need but one partner: a 1-1/2"-minimum corkscrew, for good cork grip, with a built-in blade to cut the foil and prevent blunting the screw tip (evolving wine-sealing methods may eventually foil the foils). Or do the two-step with a separate foil cutter or serrated knife.

Now pay attention: the quality of your screw is vital. Finger the spiral edges to test for smoothness. Feel the point. Blunt or edgy screws disintegrate corks, especially older, brittle ones, and flicking cork bits out of your teeth is *not* a turn-on. Some, like the costly Rabbit, reportedly will not pop synthetic corks. Don't want to screw around? Then try the two-prong approach.

I tested a variety of commonly used lever (i.e., lift up/over) and torque (i.e., continuous turning for plunge and removal) mechanisms for stills (I did not pop bubbly corks).

The lever-action classic butterfly opener mounted easily atop my bottle, lowered the metal worm and screwed into the cork with a few deft wrist twists of the top handle. The two side wings popped it out. Pretty standard.



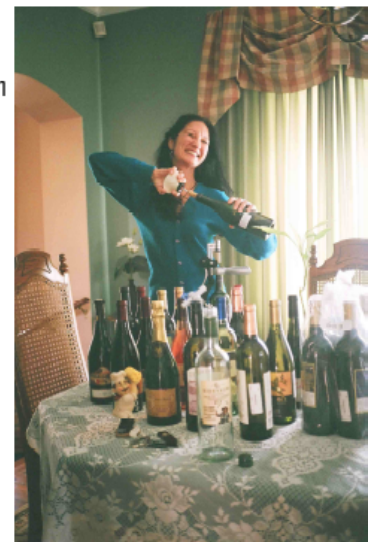
The T-shaped emergency opener sheaths a corkscrew with a hole through which the outer case slides. Nifty but required legs for opening support. Easier: twist the bottle. Then pull. Hard, as with all direct-jerk types.

My bulbous, suction-torque, continuous-action opener (OC Swap Meet) hugged the neck rim to lift the cork with effort. Better was the portable Swiss-Army-knife-like waiter's opener, which rim-balances the bottle cap-opener part for levered extraction. More rewarding: the hard-plastic Zyliss® that rotated smoothly in and out with a few turns of the screw. Those Swiss.

The challenging, dual-bladed two-pronger required rocking to maneuver the flat metal tines between the bottle neck and cork. Practice with this twist-and-pull to achieve an intact cork and impress the incognoscenti.

Like to vent? The air-popper injects a cork-popping propellant through a needle with one easy press on the (replaceable) air cartridge. Particularly befitting those less agile.

Deeply satisfying was Costco's Professional Tabletop Opener (online \$20), doubling as a handhold. With intuitive assembly, adjustable bottle heights (though not all) and table-suction grip, this sturdy



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device glides any cork out and—here's the best part—back in for resealing and reopening, regardless of oak or synthetic cork or the bottle it came from. Follow-up lever action self-extracts the cork. So much fun, you come back for more.

Urgent need and no opener? Gently push the cork in with a long hard object. Better to enjoy some than none. Get popping.

Kathryn Brockman The Wine Widgetress

"Two sips behind and coming up fast."

Disclaimer: The opinions above are those of the author only and do not represent the opinions of the Orange County Wine Society or its members.



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