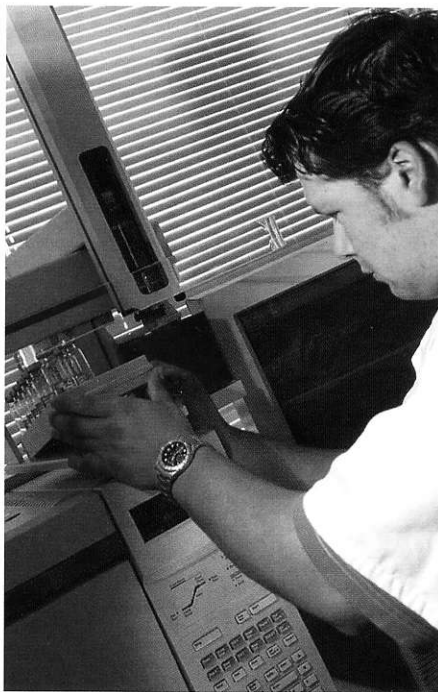


Taking away TCA

Cork taint could be a thing of the past if French cork and cork-based closure manufacturer Sabaté's recent breakthrough meets expectations.

The 'Diamond' process, which uses a process called supercritical CO₂ extraction to remove TCA from the cork, has been in development since 1997 in association with the Supercritical Fluids Laboratory of the French Atomic Energy Commission. UK trials at the laboratories of the Campden Chorleywood Food Research Association showed closures which had undergone the treatment had no detectable levels of TCA (set at 0.2 parts per trillion). The effectiveness of the process has also been supported by a study from the Australian Wine Research Institute.

Sabaté's communications director Nicolas Serpette commented: "We are confident in the viability of cork as a wine closure. People



want cork for their wines and we are convinced that it is our responsibility as a closure manufacturer to provide the industry with the best performing closures that do not taint the wine."

Composite corks which have undergone the treatment are available now, though Sabaté is still adapting the process for treatment of fully natural corks for high end wines. A new plant in Spain costing some Euros 13m is expected to be fully operational by early next year and will implement the Diamond process on an industrial scale, treating up to 2,500 tonnes of raw cork annually.

Long hours in the laboratory have led Sabaté to a breakthrough in the fight against TCA