



The future of cork

Simple system a boon for boutique wineries

By **BRUCE MUNRO**

THE world's southern-most winery is singing the praises of the world's newest bottling device, Zork.

Geoff Weston, of Weston's Winery, Halfway Bush, has bottled a test run of about 500 bottles using the Australian-designed plastic corking system, which he said offered advantages over cork and metal tops.

The Middle Beach chardonnay was still ageing but the test bottling had been "perfect", Mr Weston said.

Compared with cork, Zork breathed at a known rate, which gave a more consistent result and did not deteriorate over time or leach contaminants, he said.

Metal twist tops did not breath at all, could not take as much pressure and in the United States carried the stigma of being used on cheap wine.

Bottling with Zork could be done with minimal machinery, which was an important advantage for New Zealand's many small wineries.

"For small operators like me, this is the difference between up to \$15,000 worth of machinery and \$250 for hand-operated machinery," Mr Weston said.

"For wee guys, this is a revolution."

Launched in 2003, Zork is used by a handful of wineries in Australia and four in New Zealand.

"I met the Brown Brothers representative in Dunedin recently," he said.

"He had not heard of Zork, but said they were

looking for a new top for a wine with a wee bubble in it and would be taking the idea back to Australia."

Wineries which exported to the United States had met market resistance to metal twist tops.

"Some wineries have had to produce special corked runs for the US.

"But Zork has no history, so there is no resistance."

In time, about one third of all bottle closures would be with Zork, Mr Weston estimated.



Zorked: Winemaker Geoff Weston opens a chardonnay bottled using the new plastic corking system.