

The Perfect Extractor



Donald A. Bull

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Introduction



In *The University of California / Sotheby Book of California Wine*, published in 1984, Brother Timothy Diener writes "A long-term favorite is a two handled corkscrew that seems to be a distant relative of the Thomason. A smaller, upper handle inserts the screw into the cork; a larger handle, fastened to a threaded shaft, which turns inside the threaded top of the bell, pulls the cork when rotated. The working parts, except for the steel screw, may be made of wood, metal, horn, or other materials."

Brother Timothy of The Christian Brothers in Napa Valley, California, was describing the type of corkscrew which will be examined in detail in this study. The corkscrew is often referred to as a "Club" or "Bistro" type and sometimes by the brand name "Copex." Below are two examples advertising The Christian Brothers. The corkscrew on the left was produced in France and the plastic corkscrew on the right was produced in England.



Corkscrews That Work!

In May, 1946, the *Wine Review* published "Corkscrews That Work!" by Paul Fredericksen of San Francisco's Wine Institute. The article detailed the Institute's scientific tests of a number of corkscrews to "determine what makes some succeed while others fail." Competing with two direct pulls, two open frames, a couple of bell types, several waiters' friends, a lazy tongs, a double, lever, a spring, and a flynut was one described as "Wire helix, with double-screw (straight pull, or non-turning) leverage." The latter was our "Club" type called the Copex.

Factors considered in the tests were penetration, grip, worm diameter and construction, shape of edge, pitch and position of the point, centering, and leverage. The goal was to determine which corkscrew "would most successfully, without fail, remove long commercial corks tightly seated in wine bottles." The Institute concluded that it was not possible to offer specifications "for the best corkscrew it is possible to make." However, they were able to present some recommendations regarding the factors tested.

Only one test chart was presented and it gave the Copex the highest ranking for the greatest gripping power stated in pounds. From this study, Copex concluded and published on their instruction sheet "In competition with eighteen other corkscrews of foreign and domestic manufacture, the Copex outperformed all others receiving the highest recommendation." No such recommendation was made.

THE RELUCTANT CORK

*Why Are Some Corkscrews and
Cork-Extractors Better Than Others?*

In 1967, Almaden Vineyard's *News from the Vineyards* edited by wine expert Frank Schoonmaker published an article entitled "The Reluctant Cork." The writer debunks the 1946 tests because the tests were performed on dry corks driven into empty bottles. Nine corkscrews were reviewed including an open frame with rollover handle, a Clough wire with button, a waiter's friend, a Swiss Corky, a Zig Zag, a double lever, a Maxram double helix, a cork pops, and a club type. Recommendations were made in four categories:

For hard to pull corks, the club type was rated 3rd behind the Maxram and Cork Pops.

For long, possible friable corks in old bottles, the club type was second to Cork Pops.

For use by women, the club type was second to Cork Pops.

Only the Maxram, Waiter's Friend and Cork Pops were recommended for pocket corkscrews.



In December, 1968, the English publication *Which?* asked "This month 50 million corks will be drawn, will they come cleanly? Or will it be a savage struggle? Only the corkscrew can tell." They gave twenty cork removers to 25 men and had them open 500 bottles. They referred to the club type as "double reverse thread" or "butterfly" corkscrews. The Valezina and an unbranded boxwood example were included in the test.

The winners in the test were the Sparklets Corkmaster, Corkette, Corky and Prestige Cork Boy - all air and gas injection types. The club type followed as

"...the next most popular, and, of the two models we tested, the wooden one was slightly preferred. People found both of these corkscrews comfortable to hold while turning the screw, but some said the top handle tended to get in the way while they were turning the bottom one to extract the cork. One or two people were a bit perturbed by the fact that, because of the solid frame of both these corkscrews, they could not see whether they were turning the screw in straight or not."

The remainder of the contestants included a Maxram, direct pulls, double levers, single reverse thread (locking handle) and prong pullers. In conclusion, Which? asked "Which type to buy?" The Sparklets Corkmaster took the number one spot and was followed with "Of the ways of drawing corks by hand, the double reverse thread method was the one our testers found the best."

Uncorking the facts

A guide to good screwing

In 1985, *Worldwide News* published "Uncorking the facts - A guide to good screwing." Eleven cork removers were reviewed including a Screwpull, a Norelco Electric, and an unmarked club type. After discussing several models, they concluded "By the better type of corkscrew, however, there is a centering collar. With numbers 7 (open frame) and 9 (club type) the screw is first screwed into the cork, after which a separate screw operates to raise the cork."



The July 17, 1988 edition of England's *Sunday Times* published an article entitled "The Taming of the Screw." Chef Rowley Leigh examines a bunch of corkscrews. He describes several corkscrews including a Cantiniere barrel, a Troika barrel, a Monopol rollover frame, and a double lever as wimpy. He says "All suffer from wishing to be admired as ornaments - uncorking a mere moonlight job." He adds

"An honourable exception is the Imp (club type) which has a good screw and is relatively simple to operate. Unfortunately, the poor finish of the plastic moulding on my sample suggests it wouldn't age well." His favorite was the Screwpull.

The Perfect Extractor

With all of those favorable reviews, who would not consider using a club type corkscrew on a regular basis? In the following pages we will look at a rather large number of these corkscrews residing in various collections. If you have one, try it. You decide if it is the Perfect Extractor. Rednutt Sherry says it is:

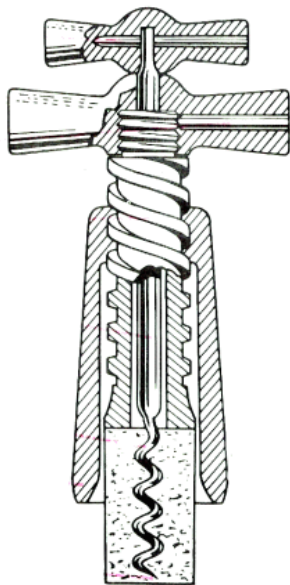


Don Bull
P. O. Box 596
Wirtz, VA 24184 U.S.A.

How it works



Here are disassembled examples of the Copex and the Valezina. The core (bottom center) is threaded into the barrel from the bottom. The large handle is threaded onto the top of the core. Glue is applied to the threads in the Copex and the Valezina handle is secured by a set screw. The worm shaft is inserted into the assembly through the bottom of the core. Finally, the small handle is mounted. The Copex handle is pinned in place and the Valezina handle is threaded on.



Copex offered these simple instructions for use: "Simply place the Copex over any bottle. Grip corkscrew and bottle with one hand...a Copex automatically centers over the cork. Screw top handle in usual manner until worm penetrates through cork. Then give the large handle a few turns in the same direction and 'presto' the cork slips out intact."

And they added this sales pitch:

"So unbelievably simple to operate, a child can free cork without exerting undue pressure. Moreover, the Copex does not weaken the cork, does not affect its texture. Leaves no cork dust. The rounded wire helix (worm) bores in clean and holds with a tenacious grip as cork is 'pulled without pulling'."

Plain and Fancy



Marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE
(Bull collection)

From the collection of
Ron MacLean



Not marked
(Bull collection)



From the collection of
Ferd Peters



Brass plate marked
VINO.
From the collection of
Ron MacLean



From the collection of
Ron MacLean



From the collection of
Howard Luterman



From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



		
<p>Marked MADE IN FRANCE on bottom of lower handle (Bull collection)</p>	<p>Wood with mark of Felix Montange. Octagonal barrel. (Bull collection)</p> 	<p>Plain varnished wood (Bull collection)</p>

		
<p>From the collection of Bob Roger</p>	<p>From the collection of Ron MacLean</p>	<p>From the collection of Ron MacLean</p>



From the collection of
Ron MacLean



From the collection of
Ron MacLean



From the collection of
Ron MacLean



Horn
(Bull collection)



Horn.
From ScrewBase



Horn
From the collection of
Carroll Johnson

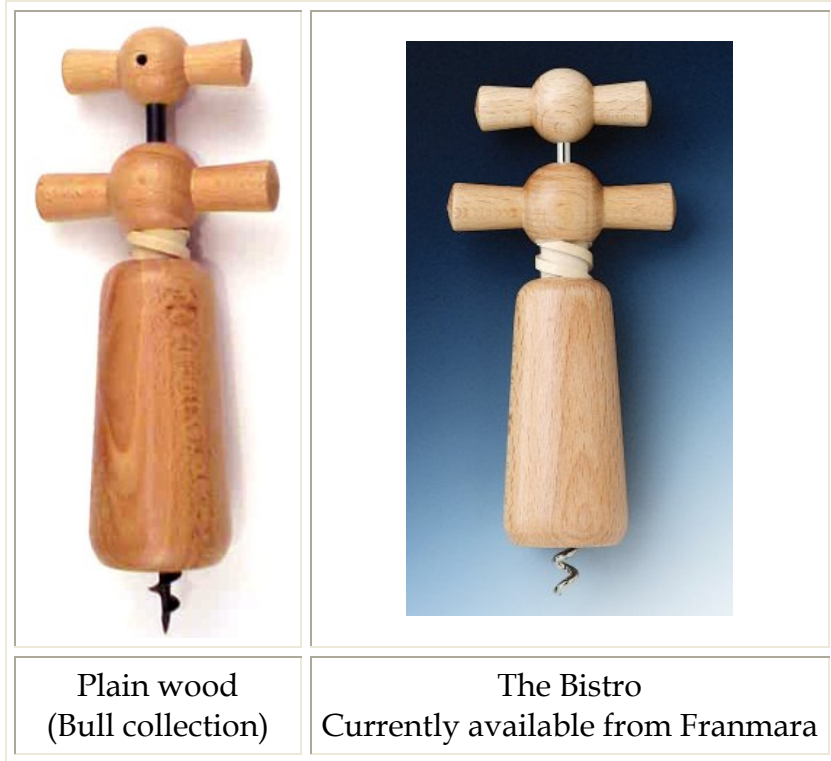


French Copex in original box (Bull collection)



French natural finish Connoisseur
(Bull collection)





Three nineteenth century Italian corkscrew pictured in the book *The Corkscrew, A Thing of Beauty* by Paolo DeSanctis and Maurizio Fantoni. Milan, Italy: Marzorati Editore, 1990.

Painted and Decorated



Decorated wood. "*L'amour fait passer le temps. Le temps fait passer l'amour.*"
(Bull collection)



From the collection of
Ron MacLean.



Decorated wood. Souvenir of Zurich
(Bull collection)



Decorated wood with grapes
and Chianti bottle
(Bull collection)



Various flowers with "Made in Switzerland" applied sticker
From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



An unusually large example (11 1/4")
with the barrel reminiscent of a
peppermill.
From the collection of Carroll Johnson



Decorated wood. Souvenir of Slovenija
(Bull collection)



Souvenir of Switzerland.
From the collection of
Ron MacLean.





Double action with clear barrel with label reading "selected for the Design Centre London." Patent no. 44404, made in England. On the back of the box: "Imported and distributed by Impax International Ltd., Redondo Beach, Cal. 90277".

From the collection of Mike Sharp.



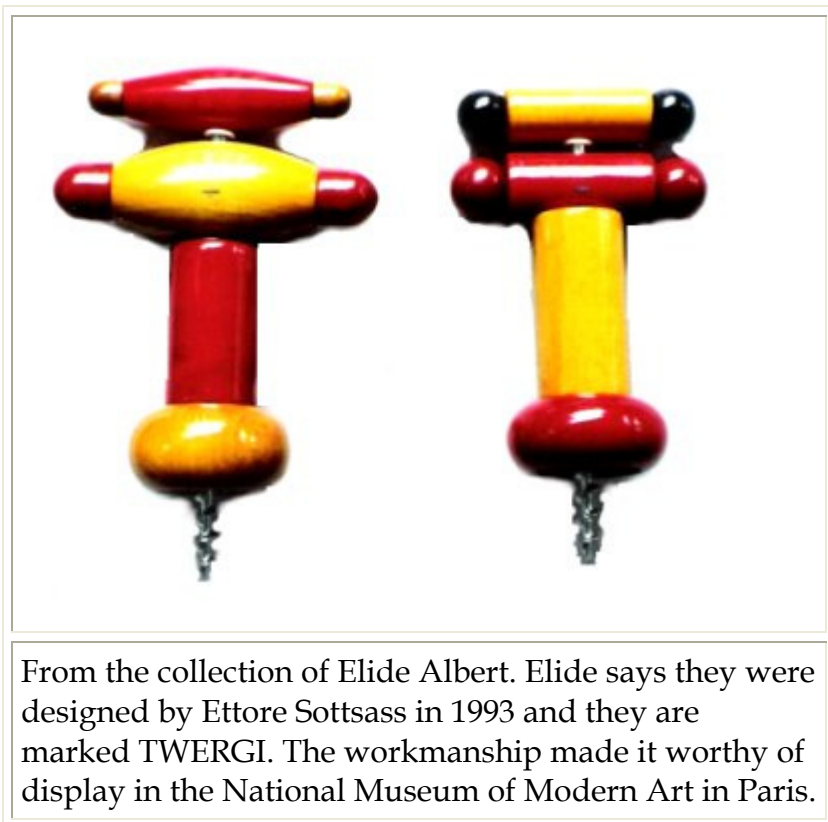
From the collection of Ron MacLean



All plastic except worm / shank. Black stopper inside is marked MADE IN ENGLAND. (Bull collection)

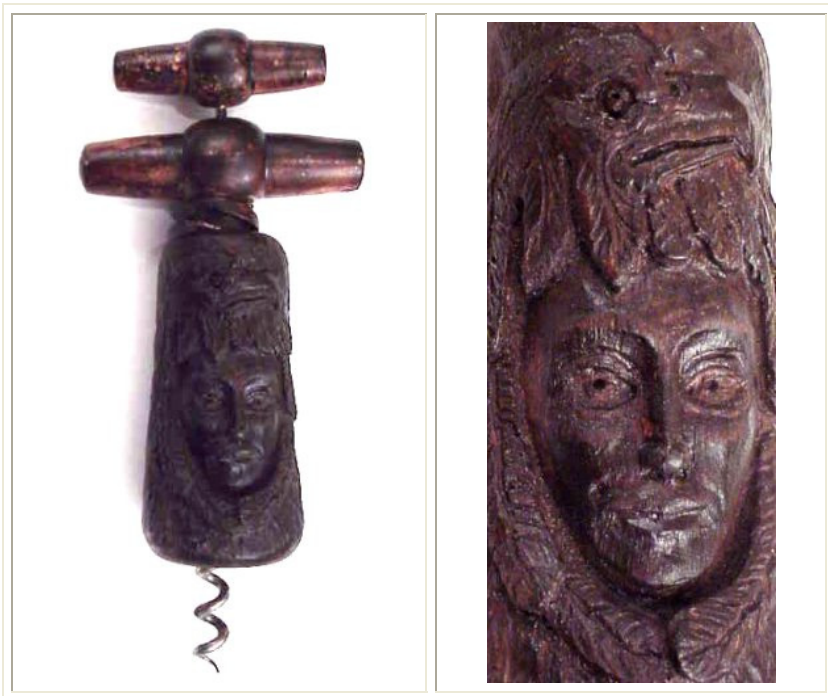


Wood with painted native costumes (Bull collection)



Figurals and Carvings





Carved tribesman with eagle headdress
(Bull collection)



Elephant carving
(Bull collection)



Pelote Basque player
Courtesy of Trevor Holdsworth



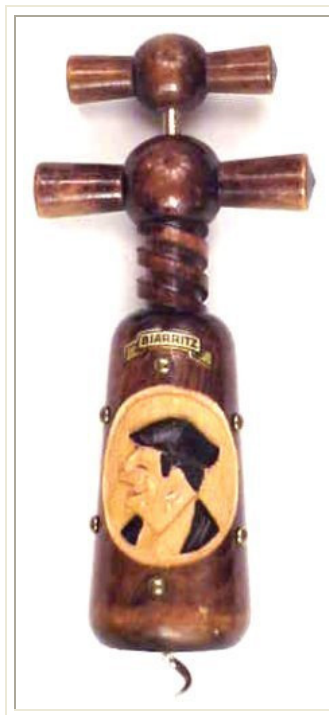
When I asked French collector and author, Guy Olive, "Who are these people", he responded with:

"In Gérard Bidault's book *Les Fabriques Françaises de Tire-Bouchons 1820-1970*, Gérard traces the history of two greatest factories of 'tournerie' (wood-turner factory) situated in the Jura: Vaillat Emile 1945 - 2000 and Verpillat C. et André 1889- 1972.

According to Gérard Bidault these two factories did not make figurative corkscrews. They were made by wood-turner craftsmen. They lived in Jura (East of France). The corkscrews in the photos show heads of Basque easily recognizable by the Basque béret. The Basque country (Biarritz etc ...) is situated in the South-west of France.

These corkscrews were sold as tourist souvenirs after the second World War."

From the collection of Don Bull



Boisson Frères et Fils SA, 17 Grande Rue 39260, Meussia purchased the Verpillat machinery in 1972. They currently produce these corkscrews:





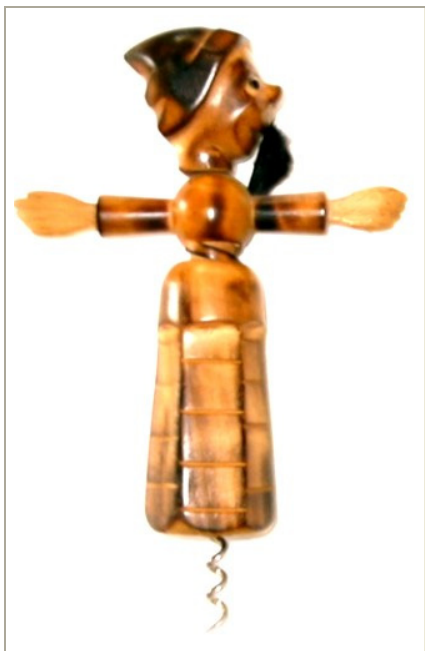
From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



Carved design wood example
with wire helix. MARKINGS:
Cite de Caccassonne
From ScrewBase



Wood figure
(Bull collection)



From the collection of
Ron MacLean



From ScrewBase



From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



This corkscrew was offered in a May 1994 Christie's South Kensington auction catalog as part of a large group of corkscrews. It was described as "a turned boxwood 'Club' type corkscrew with applied gilt badge depicting the manneken pis and also marked 'Bruxelles'."

Metal

In *Mechanical Corkscrew: Their evolution, actions, and patents*, Chapter VII ("Threaded Shaft Corkscrews"), Ferd Peters heads up the club type corkscrews with "A piston rod and a second handle fixed to the withdrawing shaft." Ferd presents what is probably the first patent for this type of corkscrew with "On May 26, 1875, Jean Picard obtained French patent No. 323,030 for a corkscrew with a plain inner penetrating shaft (piston rod) fixed to a steel handle and with a large disc fixed to the upper end of the right-hand threaded shaft." He surmises the corkscrew was "perhaps the precursor of a number of wooden Italian and French corkscrews manufactured at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century."





The Valezina corkscrew was produced in Brighton, England by John Bagwell-Purefoy in a factory in Little Preston Street. The corkscrew was named after his daughter Valezina who said, "He called me after the silver washed fritility butterfly female version Valezina. At that time there was only one other person of that name, the naturalist Frobel's daughter, whom he asked if he could call me after. Since then my niece has the name and possibly now a few other people as well."

Bagwell-Purefoy trademarked "Valezina" in Canada on April 12, 1950. The application indicated the name had been used in the United Kingdom since 1947.

The Valezina was produced in blue, red, silver, and gold finishes. VALEZINA is stamped around the middle of the top handle.

From the collection of Don Bull.



The earliest Valezina corkscrews are marked as on the left MADE IN ENGLAND, PAT. PEND., REG. DESIGN No. 857,383 (English Registration of 1949). Later examples included the Canadian Reg. Design No. 112-17645 and dropped the PAT. PEND.



A Valezina stamped "With the compliments of J. B. Purefoy Unit Tooling Ltd." (The maker)

From the collection of Carroll Johnson.



Silver Knight Cork Puller

— INSTRUCTIONS —

Place cork puller directly over cork in bottle. Hold puller firmly in left hand and turn upper or small handle to right, until spiral is well inserted in cork. Turn lower handle only, to right to extract cork.

•
Made of rust proof aluminum alloy with high carbon steel spiral, hardened, tempered and nickel plated.

•
Material and workmanship guaranteed.

— MANUFACTURED BY —

THE O'BRIEN MACHINE CO.

1620 HIGHLAND AVENUE
CHICAGO 26, ILLINOIS



Aluminum alloy cork puller. Marked on the inside:
MFG'D BY O'BRIEN MACHINE CO.
From the collection of Joe Young, Elgin, Ill.
Museum ascension # 10,551
Further examples in the collections of
Ron MacLean and Carroll Johnson

Italian corkscrew.
From ScrewBase





Brass plated barrel with flynut in green box labeled "Things Remembered." On the side: "Quality engraved while you shop. Solid brass, hand crafted, tarnish resistant." Made in Spain. Things Remembered is a personalized gift store chain that opened its first store in 1966. It now has over 800 stores in the United States.

From the collection of Jack Bandy.



"Total" barrel with flynut. Made in Japan. Brushed stainless design and quality by Ikea of Sweden.

From the collection of Mike Sharp



This corkscrew was offered in a December 2001 Christie's South Kensington catalog with this description:

A modern brass corkscrew - club type with open barrel, knurled brass top handle and bar fly-nut extracting handle, pointed centre worm.

The sale estimate was US\$220 - 290.

It did not sell.



The same corkscrew was offered by Christie's in May 2002 with this description adding the last three words:

A modern brass corkscrew - club type with open barrel, knurled brass top hand and bar fly-nut extracting handle, pointed centre worm, probably hand-made.

The catalog photo was in black and white instead of color.

The sale estimate was US\$150-220 / £100-150.

This time it sold for £141.

Advertising and Commemorative



Wood advertising. (Bull collection)



Enamelled wood with advertising.
Marked MADE
IN FRANCE

Bruno's Pen & Pencil, New York 17,
N. Y.
(Bull collection)

No, Bruno's Pen & Pencil was not a manufacturer. It was a restaurant in New York City.

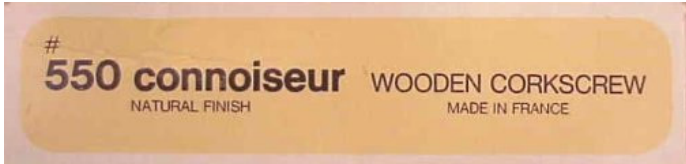
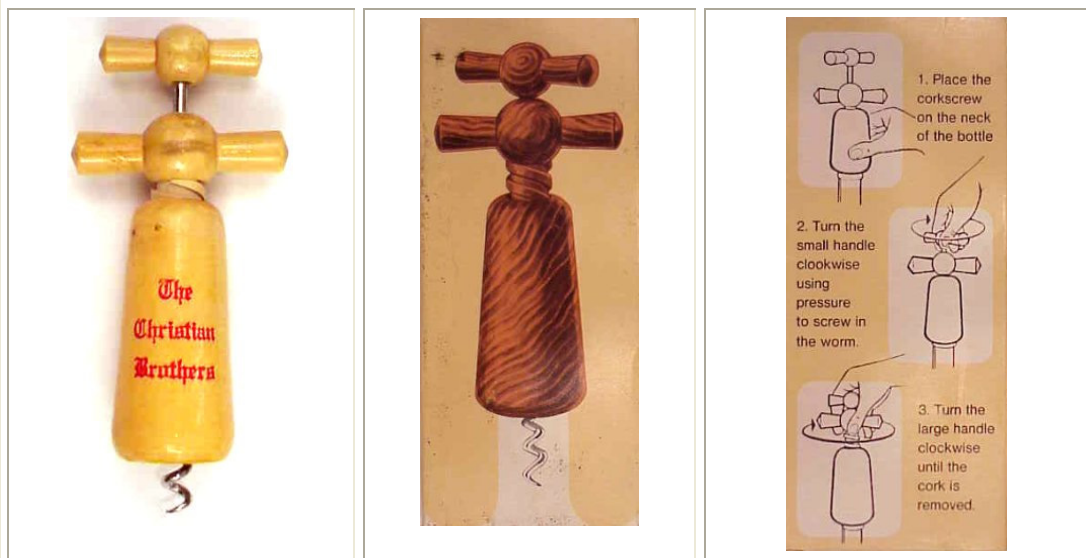
Excerpt from a 1959 publication:

"Charles Stradella owned a liquor store on Ninth Ave. which he sold in order to buy a small restaurant, in 1938, for his son, Danny. He took over a beer joint at 203 E. 45th St. and with the aid of his son-in-law, Dalmo Pozzi, created the original PEN & PENCIL, then known as Charley's Rail.

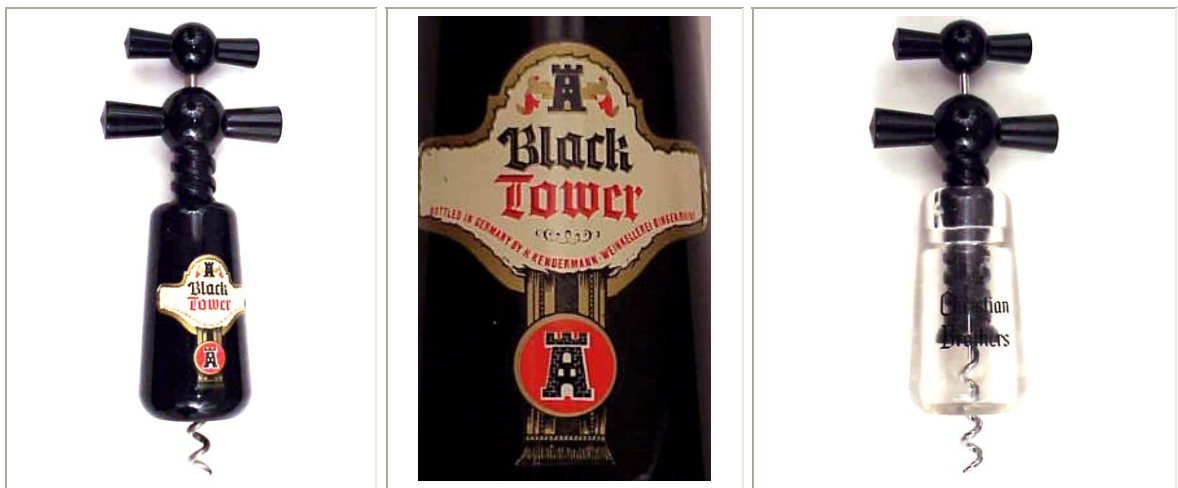
In 1939 John C. Bruno left the Hotel Lincoln's Blue Room to become headwaiter at the PEN & PENCIL (his wife was Frances Stradella, Danny's sister). With him, Bruno brought along Henry Castello. In the years that followed, Bruno's PEN & PENCIL was to become the spawning spot for three rival steak houses on Steak Row: The PRESSBOX, the EDITORIAL, and DANNY'S HIDEAWAY. They were founded by PEN & PENCIL employees who had been trained by John Bruno."



D. Recher was located at 322-324 W. North Avenue, Chicago. In 1976 the firm was known as Recher Wine Company and was located at 2343 West 27th Street. In 1955 Recher trademarked a Vermouth named "Grandeur."



French Connoisseur with advertising for The Christian Brothers, Napa Valley, California (Bull collection)



Black plastic with applied advertising decal. Marked MADE IN ENGLAND on the bottom of the core. (Bull collection)

Reh-Kendermann GbmH, Germany was founded in 1920. It currently sells over 9 million bottles of Black Tower annually.

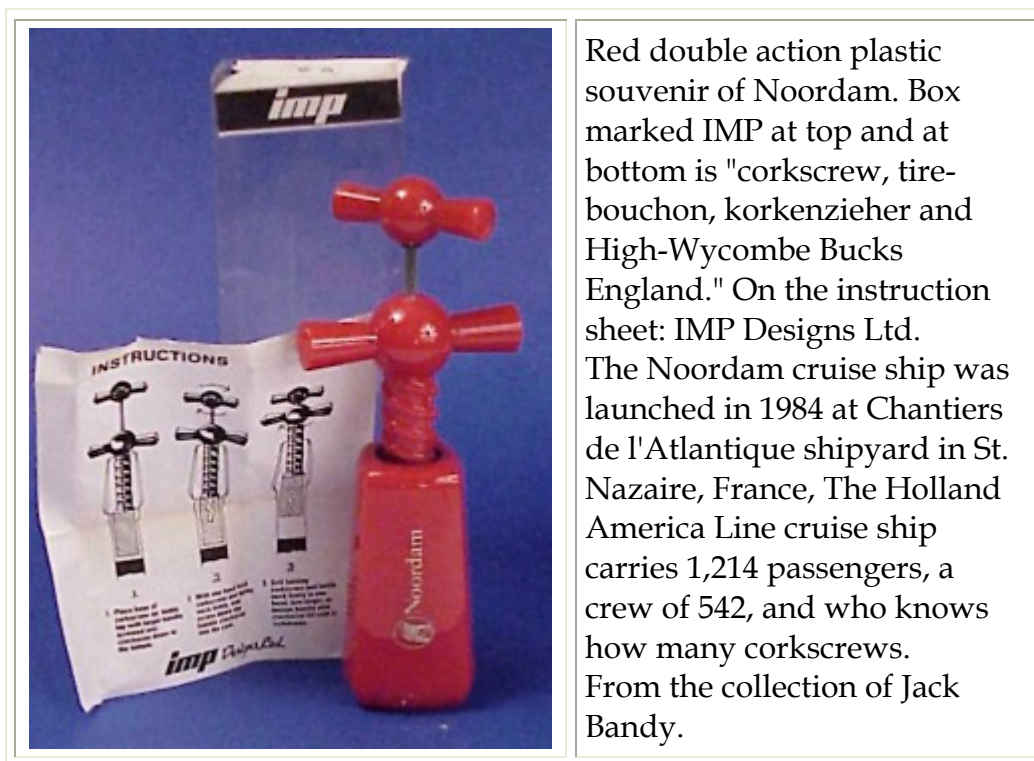
Plastic with Christian Brothers advertising. Marked MADE IN ENGLAND on the bottom of the core. (Bull collection)



Three different corkscrews advertising Sauter's Wijnkelders, Maastricht, Holland (The Sauter Wine Cellars were founded in 1904) (Left: Bull collection; Two on right from the collection of Ferd Peters)



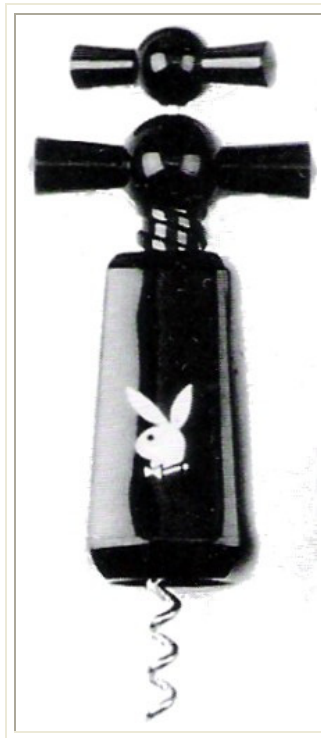
1977 The Queen's Silver Jubilee (Elizabeth II). Marked MADE IN ENGLAND on the bottom of the core. (Bull collection)





"Woodtrends Octagon corkscrew Stock No. 9103, Country of Origin: Republic of China, 3404 Beltline Road, Dallas, Texas 75234." The company name is New Trends. On reverse of tag: "Woodtrends Division of EPI." Tag on double action handle reads: "Imports exclusive for New Trends, made in Taiwan."

From the collection of Jack Bandy.



This corkscrew was offered in a November 1994 Christie's South Kensington auction catalog as part of a lot of six corkscrews. It was described as "a plastic barrel corkscrew with rabbit emblem." The rabbit is the Playboy symbol.



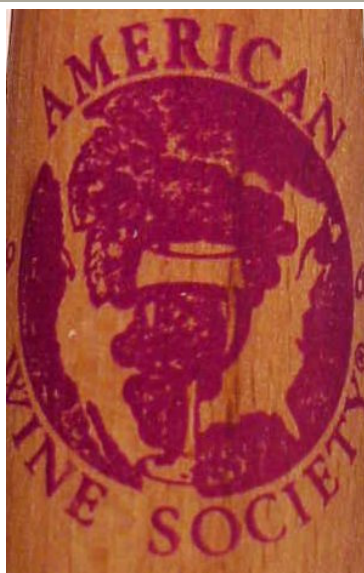
Rednutt Sherry was produced in Spain and records show it sold in England as early as the 19th Century. In the 1950s it was imported to England by J. R. Parkington & Co., Ltd., 161 New Bond Street, London. It was shipped by Moreno Y Ca, Jerez, Spain.





American Wine Society 1967. The year refers to the founding of the organization not the date of the corkscrew.

(Bull collection)



Advertising the Washington Liquor Store, Belleville, New Jersey.

From ScrewBase



TWA (airline) advertising on Palisander wood
From the collection of Carroll Johnson



Dubonnet label on painted wood
From the collection of Carroll Johnson



Boxwood advertising "Bourgogne, Cordon Pere & Fils, Beaune"
From the collection of Carroll Johnson

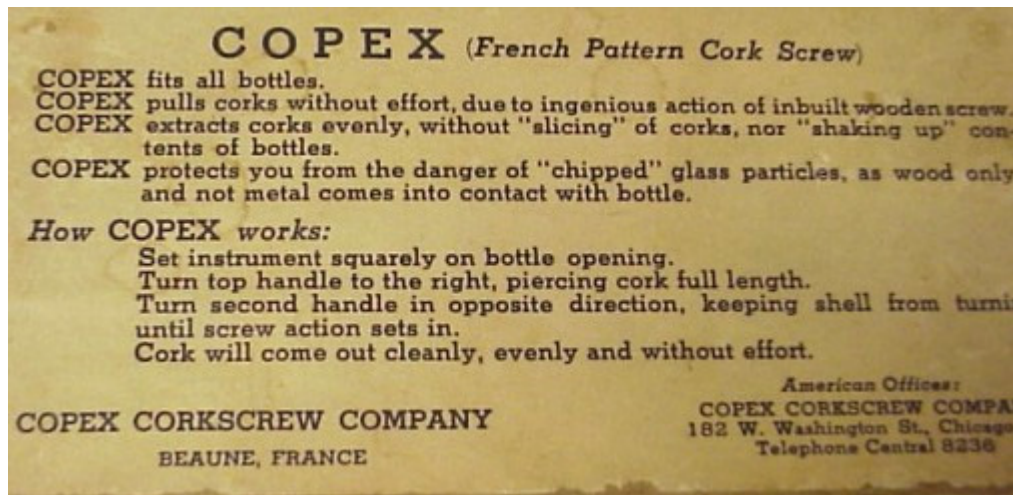


Nath. Johnston & Fils,
Bordeaux, France.
From the collection of
Carroll Johnson



Zimmerman (liquor / wine store),
200 W. Randolph St., Chicago,
phone DEArborn 0012 on Copex
corkscrew.
From the collection of
Carroll Johnson

The Copex Corkscrew



The earliest corkscrew box that I have seen has these markings (in the collection of Carroll Johnson):

Copex Corkscrew Company, Beaune, France and "American Offices: Copex Corkscrew Company, 182 W. Washington St., Chicago, Telephone Central 8236"

A later box simply says "Imported from France" with no addresses. This one has been found with two different enclosed instruction sheets:

The first states "Exclusive Importers and Distributors for Copex, Copex Corkscrew Co., Algonquin, Illinois.

The second states "Exclusive Importers and Distributors for Copex, Copel Ltd., 916 S. Main St., P. O. Box 203, Algonquin, Illinois 60102 (produced after the 1963 introduction of zip codes).

Both quote a test done by the Wine Institute in San Francisco with a copyright date of 1946.

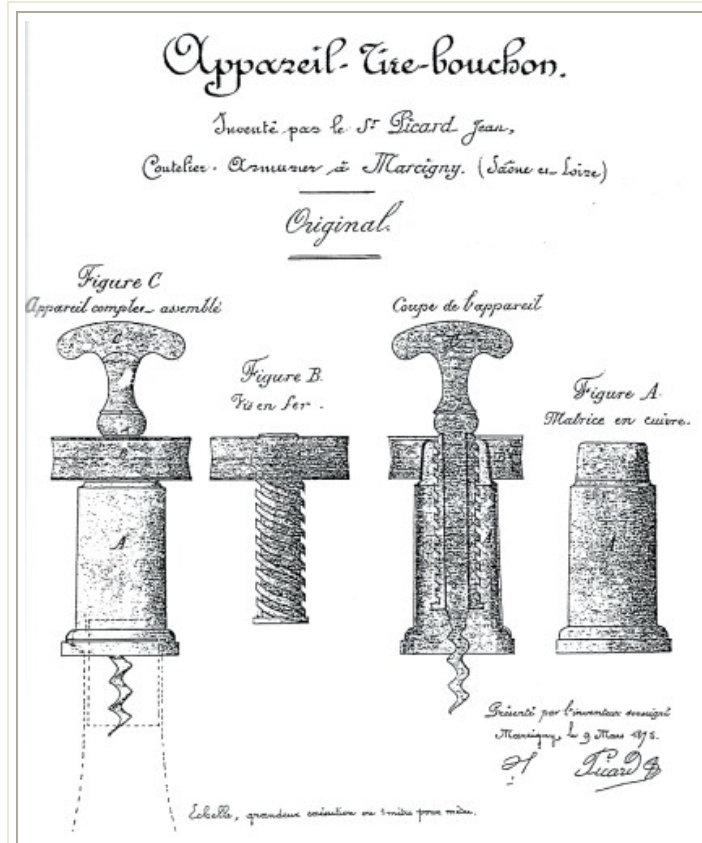
So who produced the Copex? The answer lies in these two corkscrews:



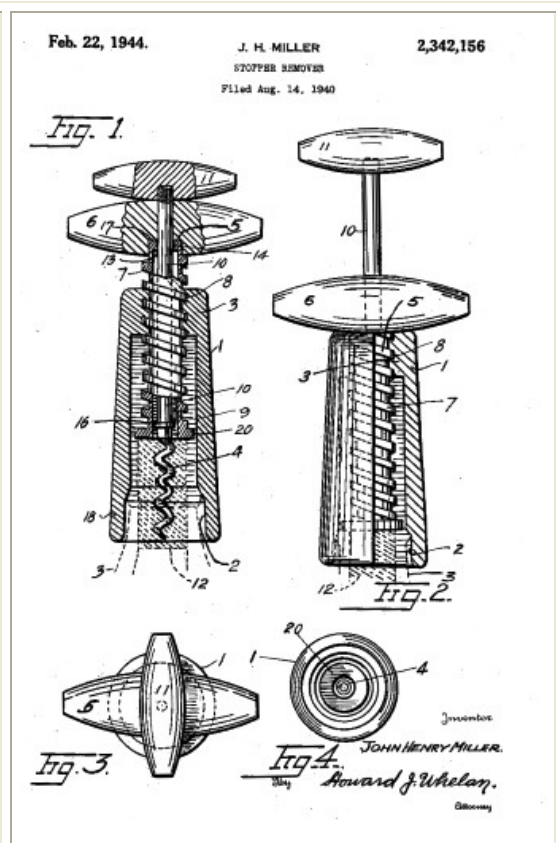
CAM was a trademark of Felix and Camille Montange in the Jura region of France. The company produced corkscrews from 1932 until 1972. They made a wide range of the Club type of corkscrew with various wood and horn materials.

On August 14, 1940 John Henry Miller of Baltimore, Maryland applied for a U. S. patent for his "Stopper Remover." Although the construction of the Copex is similar, I do not know if there was a relationship between Miller and Copex (i.e. patent license). Copex could very well have predated the Miller patent.

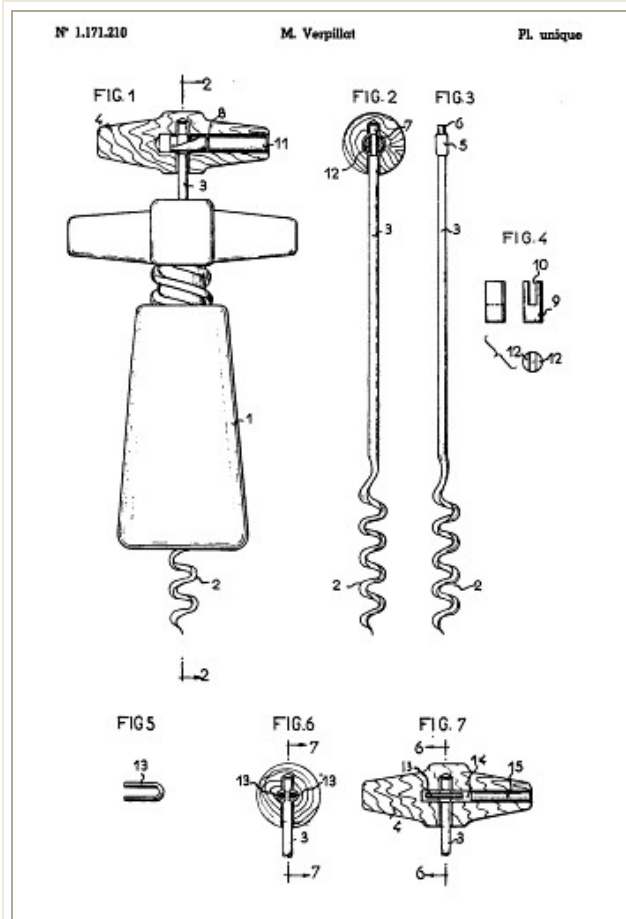
Patents and Producers



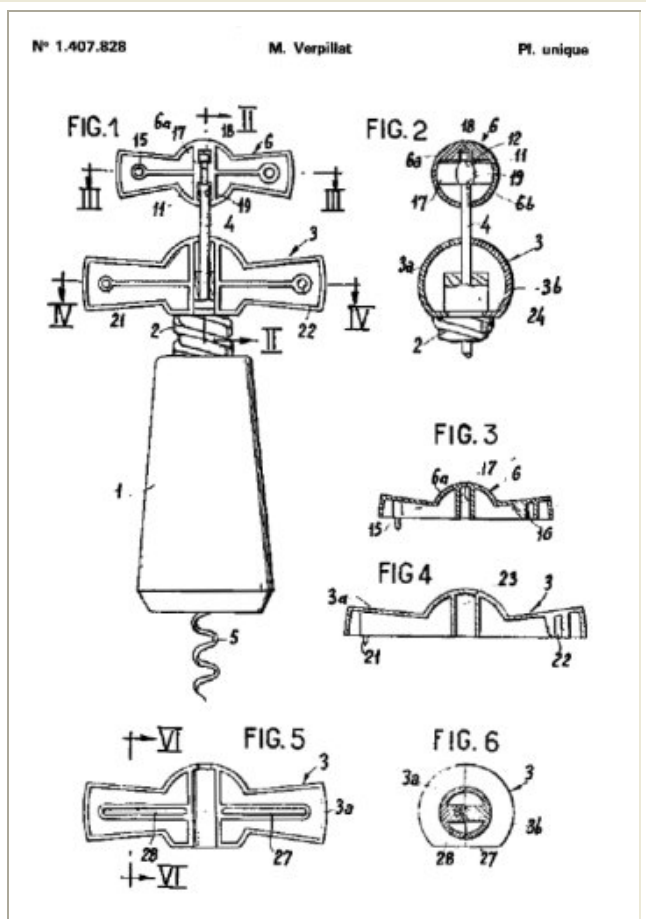
French Patent No. 106,849 granted May 26, 1875 to Jean Picard. Filed March 10, 1875.



U. S. Patent No. 2,342,156 granted February 22, 1944 to John Henry Miller, Baltimore, Maryland for a "Stopper Remover." Filed August 14, 1940. Also patented in England and Canada with later filing dates.



French Patent No. 1,171,210 granted September 29, 1958 to André Verpillat, a resident of Jura. Filed April 12, 1957.



French Patent No. 1,407,828 granted June 28, 1965 to André Verpillat, a resident of Jura. Filed June 26, 1964.

On February 22, 1944, John Henry Miller of Baltimore, Maryland, was granted United States Patent 2,342,156 for his "Stopper Extractor". He applied for the patent on August 14, 1940 and later applied for patents in England and Canada. He applied for a British patent on September 16, 1943 and it number 570,680 was accepted July 18, 1945. He filed for a Canadian patent on August 25, 1943 and it was issued July 11, 1944.

Gérard Bidault's presents several manufacturers of club type corkscrews in his book *Les Fabriques Françaises de Tire-Bouchons 1820-1970*:



On page 66 Bidault suggests that Victor Binétruy (1926-1945) may have been the manufacturer of the celebrated high quality CLUB wood corkscrew but unknown at the time of publication.



On pages 67-68 he traces the work of René Birambeau (1929-2000). Although two wood types are shown, there is no mention of the Club type in the text.

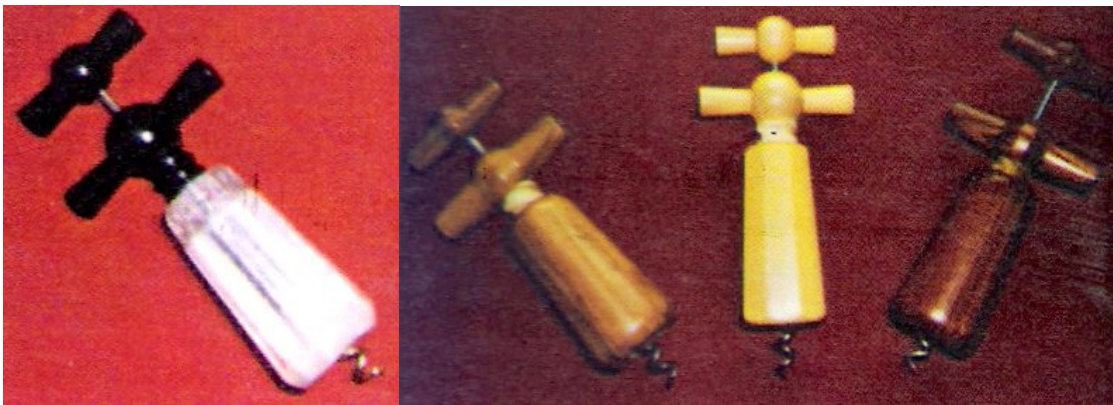


On page 140 Bidault shows a high quality beautiful Club type by Alphonse Fiedler & Fils (1926-1970)

On pages 211-213 Bidault examines the company of Felix & Camille Montange (1932-1972), a prolific manufacturer of Club action in wood (luxury model in horn). Several examples are pictured.



On pages 294-295 he looks at André Verpillat (1889-1972), another large manufacturer in Jura. Verpillat is responsible for many of the wood carved Basque faces in the barrels of club types. Verpillat sold his machinery to Boisson Frères et Fils SA, 17 Grande Rue 39260, Meussia. They are still producing club type corkscrews.



Collections



From the collection of Don Bull



From the collection of Ron MacLean



From the collection of Don Minzenmayer (1998)



From the collection of Falco Falconi (1980)

How Much?

From November 1996 through November 2003, at least nine French Club type corkscrews were offered for sale in individual lots at Christie's South Kensington auctions. None of the lots were sold until one offered in the November 2003 sale brought £47.

Date	Lot	Description	Estimate £	Sale £
4/30/1996	297	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	180-200	ns
11/26/1996	338	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	150-200	ns
5/15/1997	171	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	150-200	ns
8/6/1997	525	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	80-120	ns
5/21/1998	67	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	200-300	ns
5/21/1998	68	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE (tip broken/cracked)	150-200	ns
5/25/1999	196	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	120-140	ns
5/20/2003	259	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	150-200	ns
11/4/2003	443	French Boxwood marked THE CLUB MADE IN FRANCE	60-100	47

On May 22, 2001 a "package" lot was offered with this description: "Four club corkscrews, two turned boxwood examples, a modern hexagonal type; and a modern Club with advertising *Likeuren Feyten Wijnen*". The estimate selling price was £120-150. The hammer price was £141.

On October 23, 2004, a French Club was sold on eBay for £48 (approx \$88.00). There were seven bidders.



In 1996 an Italian Boxwood with Archimedian Screw sold at Christie's for £253. A year later, another was sold for £195.

A red Valezina was offered in the May 1997 Christie's catalog with an estimate of £70-100. It did not sell. Another red Valezina was offered in August 1997 with an estimate of £40-60. It sold for £40.

The common twentieth century floral and costume design examples, Copex and Cam marked corkscrews, plastic club types, and simple pieces turn up quite frequently on the eBay Internet auction website. Many do not get any starting bids and most sell for \$20.00 or less.

The club types with Basque carved figures range from \$60-150. More elaborate carvings are often in the \$90-200 range.

The Beechwood Bistro corkscrew can be found in many retail stores and on Internet bar supply websites for around \$10.

The price for the Picard patent is in the stratosphere.

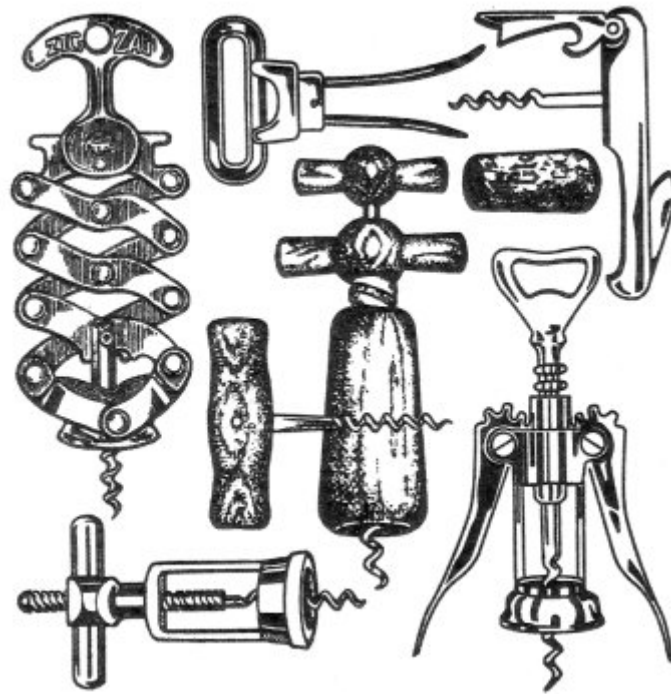
Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following for their help with this project:

Elide Albert
Jack Bandy
Bert Giulian
Trevor Holdsworth
Carroll Johnson
Howard Luterman
Ron MacLean
Don Minzenmayer
Guy Olive
Ferd Peters
Mike Sharp
Bob Roger
Joe Young

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A cocktail napkin from Cost Plus, Inc. ©1976