



“They say all great ideas hit you in a flash or come to you in a dream but this idea came to me through some unfortunate events. Many poorer communities are being affected by accidental fires in their shacks. Paraffin lamps or candles are knocked over, setting blankets alight often resulting in the death of children. What could we do to help to prevent this and how?”

By David Wibberly



vineyard hotel & spa

the perfect setting



the cork story

I recently had a meeting in Stellenbosch with Joaquim Sa, Managing Director of Amorim Cork, a large supplier of cork in South Africa with many interests in the sustainability and recycling opportunities possible with the use of this underrated product. I learnt that cork is used in the burners of space shuttles because of its fire retardant qualities and its lightweight mass, amongst other qualities, such as having elasticity, impermeability, resistance to wear and hypoallergenic qualities. I suddenly realised the potential of this product.

The Vineyard Hotel & Spa prides itself in its involvement in community projects as well as striving to be the 'greenest' hotel in South Africa. I chose to involve the 'Our Kids of the Cape' social investment initiative, whereby selected primary schools, outreach programmes, homes for abused teenage girls and other children's organisations in the Western Cape benefit.

With the help and advice of Joaquim Sa and assistance of Amorim Cork SA, we are collecting corks from our 5 Wine Partners - Klein Constantia, Warwick, Waterford, Simonsig and Meerlust plus other wine estates, restaurants, households, families and friends around the Western Cape. We are aiming to recycle these corks into "Cork Flooring" for playrooms, reading areas and games rooms for the children who benefit from the support of the "Kids of the Cape" Fund.

The aim is to take a product that is totally recyclable, but usually thrown away, and create from it something that will benefit the children of our Community.

The Wine Industry in the Western Cape is thriving and uses an immense amount of cork, and with the Vineyard Hotel & Spa having benchmarked wine involvement as one of its pillars, this is a truly worthwhile way that we can 'give back' to our Community.



cork facts

- **Lightness:** Cork is light and floats on water. For many thousands of years, this has been its most evident and most celebrated characteristic. Since ancient times, cork has been used in fishing equipment.
- **Elasticity and Resiliency:** The cell membranes of cork are highly flexible, making it both compressible and elastic. This means it returns to its original shape after being subjected to pressure. This and other characteristics explain why cork has become an indispensable material for making bottle stoppers. These physical qualities mean that cork can be fitted perfectly against the walls of the bottleneck. When cork is subjected to strong pressure, the gas in the cells is compressed and considerably reduced in volume. When the pressure is released, the cork immediately recovers its original shape and volume, showing no trace of having been subjected to any appreciable deformation.
- **Impermeability:** The presence of suberin (a complex mixture of fatty acids and heavy organic alcohol) renders cork impermeable to both liquids and gases. As a result, it does not rot, making it one of the best seals available.

- **Insulation and fire retardant qualities:** The value of cork is further enhanced by its low conductivity of heat, sound and vibration. This is because the gaseous elements it contains are sealed in tiny, impermeable compartments, insulated from each other by a moisture-resistant material. This endows cork with one of the best insulating capacities, both thermal and acoustic, of any natural substance. Cork is also a natural fire retardant: it neither spreads flames nor releases toxic gases during combustion.
- **Resistance to wear:** Cork is remarkably resistant to wear and has a high friction coefficient. Thanks to its honeycomb structure, it is less affected by impact or friction than other hard surfaces.
- **Hypoallergenic properties:** Because cork does not absorb dust, it helps protect against allergies and does not pose a risk to asthma sufferers. It also has an unchangeable constitution that guarantees efficiency.