



Ever feel guilty about tossing a wine cork into the trash? You should! Truth be told, I've thrown away a few wine corks myself. But not anymore. Cork is a renewable, recyclable material that doesn't belong in our landfills. What to do? Bring your corks to our stores, drop them in the handy Cork ReHarvest boxes and feel good again!

Starting today, Whole Foods Market partners with Cork ReHarvest to make it easy for wine enthusiasts to properly dispose of cork at all of our 292 stores in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Since 2008, the nonprofit and Rainforest Alliance-endorsed Cork ReHarvest has led the cork recycling movement in North America, helping to collect and recycle some of the 13 billion natural corks that are produced each year. Cork recycling helps to reduce demand placed on cork plantations while maintaining the delicate ecosystem of the Mediterranean forests and helps thousands of producers maintain a sustainable income to support their families.

Thanks to World Wildlife Fund and Rainforest Alliance, here are some interesting facts and figures on the Mediterranean cork forests:

- Approximately 6.6 million acres of Mediterranean cork forest extend across Portugal, Spain, Algeria, Morocco, Italy, Tunisia and France.
- Oak forests support one of the world's highest levels of forest biodiversity.
- Natural cork extraction is one of the most environmentally friendly harvesting methods in the world. Not a single tree is cut down in the process. Instead, renewable bark is stripped by hand every 9-12 years and cork oaks can live up to 300 years.
- Cork oak trees store carbon in order to regenerate their bark, and a harvested cork oak tree absorbs up to five times more [carbon dioxide] than one that isn't harvested.
- Additionally, no bark is wasted during the cork production process, and the residue is granulated to make other cork products and even cork dust is used for fuel.





I'm betting some astute readers out there are asking: "What's the environmental impact of this recycling program? Does it make sense to pack up and ship cork around the country for recycling?" We thought about that too. Here's the deal: Corks make their entire journey from our stores to recycling centers on trucks already in-route to each destination with virtually zero increase in carbon footprint. Corks are sent to our distribution centers on trucks already headed that way then picked up by FedEx trucks (another Cork ReHarvest partner) that are passing by our distribution centers en route to their destinations, which include a stop at cork recycling partners.

Curious what all those corks become in their new life? West of the Rockies, corks will be delivered to Western Pulp, where they will be turned into recyclable wine shippers containing 10% cork. In the Midwest, corks will be sent to Yemm & Hart, which produces cork floor tiles. And on the East Coast and in the UK, corks will be transported to Jelinek Cork Group, one of the oldest cork manufacturers in North America, where old corks will be made into post-consumer products.



So, enjoy that next bottle of wine with a newfound satisfaction of knowing exactly what to do with the cork!