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How to Preserve an Open Bottle of Wine, According to Wine Experts

We asked wine sommeliers, a sommelier trainer, and a wine bar director what they thought of popular wine preservation systems like Coravin

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After a Saturday dinner party, you make a mental note to drink the leftover bottle of wine with dinner Tuesday evening. You're at the sink washing dishes post-dinner Friday evening when it hits you—you forgot the wine on

Tuesday, and on Wednesday, and on Thursday. By then, you pour a glass and immediately notice the smell is off. The first sip confirms it, it's gone bad.

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The reason for that flavor change after a bottle of wine has been left open for a few days is oxidation. Though oxygen is often introduced into some wines during the winemaking process, the oxygen that reaches wine when a bottle is opened interacts with molecules in the wine that convert the alcohol to a different chemical, giving wine an unpleasant flavor.

You could just put the cork back in the bottle or spray the wine with one of those nitrogen sprays before storing it, but according to some wine experts, there are better ways to keep a bottle tasting fresh. There are wine preservation systems that replace the oxygen in a bottle of wine with a heavier gas that doesn't change the taste of the wine, vacuum pump systems that keep oxygen out of a bottle, and neat stoppers that do the same (though with more finesse than regular rubber stoppers).

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Types of Wine Preservation Systems

There are dozens of wine preservation options, with prices ranging from under \$5 for a common rubber stopper to well into the thousands of dollars for the larger, multiple-bottle preservation systems used by restaurants. For most at-home users, the options are limited to vacuum pump stopper systems, gas systems,

and smaller stopper or stopper-adjacent products. The goal with any of these products is to minimize the amount of oxygen that is being introduced into the wine, thus keeping the flavor as close to its unopened state as possible.

Vacuum pump stoppers work by creating a vacuum inside the bottle, pumping the oxygen out from inside the bottle while also keeping oxygen from the air out. Vacu Vin claims its system preserves wines for up to 10 days. (Spoiler alert: This kind of system wasn't the most recommended option from wine experts.) Prices for these vacuum stoppers range from under \$10 to \$38 for an electric model.

The science behind **gas replacement systems** is simple. Instead of sealing a bottle full of oxygen, it replaces the oxygen in the bottle's empty space with a heavier gas. Some of the gases used in these systems are argon, nitrogen, and, for sparkling wines, carbon dioxide. With this kind of system, wines can be preserved for years at a time, according to Coravin, which makes gas replacement systems. The Coravin Timeless system does not require you to remove the cork as you typically would. Instead, it introduces the gas into the bottle through a small needle. With the press of a button, every time you pour a glass of wine while the Coravin system is attached to a bottle, an equal amount of gas replaces the wine that has been poured out.

Coravin founder Greg Lambert says preserving a bottle before it is even opened is important. "As the wine is pouring, oxygen is mixing with the wine, and you start the clock on how long the wine can be preserved," he says. "Traditional methods can extend the wine for a day or two, but nothing else allows you to come back to the bottle months or even years later." The brand offers systems that can preserve wines for up to four weeks (Pivot) and for years (Timeless), and a system that uses CO2 instead of argon for sparkling wines (Sparkling). The Pivot system uses the same argon gas to preserve a bottle of wine, but it's used after opening a bottle (hence the shorter preservation time).



Three popular wine preservation options, shown from left to right: Coravin, Vacu Vin, and Repour.

Photo: Manufacturers

What the Experts Think

We spoke to several wine sommeliers, the executive director of the Sommelier Society of America (which trains dozens of sommeliers every year), and the wine director of a popular wine bar in Philadelphia to find out which wine preservation methods they recommend and use.

For Dylan York, executive director of the Sommelier Society of America, the Coravin wine preservation systems is the gold standard, if it's used right. According to York, new students in the society's sommelier certification course have to taste around 100 bottles of wine in a semester that lasts four to five months. He recommends the Coravin Timeless to his students. The trick to using the Coravin correctly is sparging the needle before inserting it into the wine cork. "The first thing you have to do is just hit that little gas button, just sparge that needle, because if you just go right into the bottle, whatever oxygen might be lingering in that hypodermic needle when you go in, you're just basically just put a little shot of oxygen in the bottle," he says. He does caution against using the Coravin too much on the same bottle of wine and recommends "fully opening the bottle when it gets down to the last glass or so for best results." He adds, "They can be oxidized if they get too much oxygen, but if they don't get enough oxygen, they actually become what's called reductive."

Lucia Palm, certified wine sommelier and the creator behind the popular [lucialoveswine TikTok](#), also uses a Coravin preservation system at home. She recommends a system from the brand to anyone looking to preserve their wines for more than five days.

York's second favorite way to preserve a bottle of wine isn't a preservation system at all, but a stopper called a [Repour Wine Saver](#) that absorbs the oxygen inside a bottle. We spoke to Tom Lutz, founder and CEO of the brand to find out how these wine stoppers work. He compares the Repour to the small oxygen-absorbing packets you find in bags of beef jerky. "I like to call it a sponge, a reactive, but it's technically a chemical reaction. If you were to cut open that packet that's inside of the stopper, you'll find iron and some other ingredients that make iron oxidize rapidly in a wine environment." According to Lutz, who holds a PhD in physical chemistry, when you remove the Repour from a bottle of wine, it is like you are opening the bottle for the first time again, and you'll need to let it aerate for a bit to allow the aromatic molecules in the wine to open back up. The stoppers are made from recycled materials. Repour stoppers cost between \$10 for a pack of four and \$120 for a pack of 72.

Amanda McCrossin, wine sommelier and [social media content creator](#), is also a fan of Repour Wine Savers. It's her second-favorite way to preserve a bottle of wine, after the Coravin system. She likes that they are affordable and has used them for up to one month at home. The only other wine preservation method she recommends are wine condoms. "It's great especially if you're trying to put the wine in the fridge and are worried about the cork being too tall/getting knocked out or the bottle falling," she says.

Vacuum wine saver pumps are York's third recommendation for wine preservation. At Tria, a wine bar in Philadelphia, wine director Lauren Harris uses a [Vacu Vin](#) to remove extra oxygen from any open bottles nightly, but isn't sure how much of a difference they make. According to the brand's site, Vacu Vin's vacuum wine saver can preserve wines for up to 10 days.

Are Wine Preservers Worth It?

All but one of the experts we spoke with seemed to think so. Dylan York thinks it could change the way people drink wine at home, allowing consumers to have their own at-home tastings and experiment with different kinds of wine. “At the end of the day, a wine preservation system is going to allow people to drink better wines and also not feel guilty about having to finish the entire bottle before it completely oxidizes,” he says. “Hands down, that’s the best element.” But Harris thinks the best wine preservation tool is refrigeration. “So I honestly believe if you want to buy some time for the wine, the best way is to lower the temperature, it’s also wonderfully the least expensive way to preserve wine.”

So what’s the verdict? If you regularly host your own five-course meals with unique wine pairings at home or are an avid wine collector, a wine preservation system like Coravin could be a sound investment. For the more casual drinkers who only open one bottle of wine at a time, it may not be worth the \$100-plus price. Instead, consider some of the more lower-priced options recommended by experts, like Repour Wine Savers, vacuum stoppers, and wine condoms. Keep in mind that

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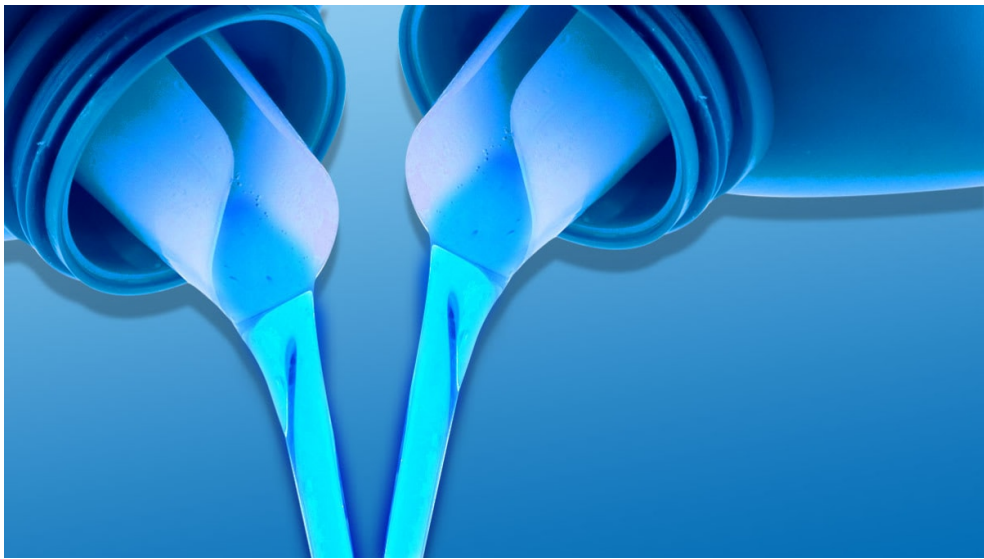


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Jodhaira Rodriguez is a multimedia content creator at Consumer Reports. Before joining CR, she tested and wrote about cleaning and organizing products and major appliances like washing machines and dishwashers at Good Housekeeping. In her free time, you’ll find her reading, listening to true crime podcasts, or working on her latest hobby of the month.

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