

Old Joy

Is it finally time to open that 1959 Château Latour? You're going to want the Durand
By *Elin McCoy* Photograph by *Janelle Jones*



Mature, pricey wines are a treat to taste but stressful to open: Will the inevitably fragile corks crumble? At a recent 23-vintage retrospective of Bordeaux Château Troplong Mondot, Managing Director Aymeric de Gironde pulled corks with the \$135 Durand corkscrew to ensure the answer would be no. As a wine ages, so does the cork, often disintegrating or drying out even if bottles are perfectly stored. Fishing out floating bits is a time-consuming chore, and filtering can affect the taste, not for the better. This scenario inspired Atlanta wine collector Mark Taylor to invent the Durand in 2007. Its patented design has been the standard-bearer for precise pulling of even the most compromised corks ever since.

THE COMPETITION

- Westmark's \$23 Monopol Ah-So two-pronged cork puller is sturdy, inexpensive and works well—but not always. Without a screw to hold the cork in place, it sometimes pushes porous aged ones down into the bottle.
- You probably already have Pulltap's Classic 500 corkscrew (\$25), or a version of it, in your kitchen drawer. Its double hinge adds leverage control, but the pulling action through an old cork can rip or break it.
- The \$160 Coravin Timeless Three+ preservation system obviates the need to remove the cork at all. A thin hollow needle plunges through it to siphon wine into a glass. That's great for single servings, but not if you want to share a bottle with friends.

THE CASE

The no-frills Durand, named to honor sommelier Yves Durand, is tailored to perform a single task effortlessly—that is, popping old bottles. It isn't a fast, all-purpose wine opener. Made from sturdy high-quality steel, its two-part design combines the old-fashioned "worm" of a standard corkscrew and a handle with two prongs that resembles an Ah-So. A YouTube video shows the method: The screw and stabilizer bar hold the cork steady while the second part's metal blades slide between the cork and the glass, eliminating side tension. Lock the two together; then, while slowly turning the unit, a gentle, smooth pull will extract the cork in one clean piece. I've never seen it fail. \$135; thedurand.com