

SINCE 1996, 3.2 MILLION people in the United States have had Lasik surgery to repair their vision. It's an impressive number for a procedure that involves peeling back a layer of the eye to allow a laser to reshape the surface of the cornea. But it's only a small fraction of the 160 million people in the United States who wear glasses or contacts. Many patients don't want elective surgery

on their eyes or can't afford the \$1,000-plus-per-eye procedure, which insurance doesn't cover.

Alternatives are on the way.

CRT, or corneal reshaping, was approved by the FDA in June. There's no surgery; doctors use computers to map the surface of the eye, then make



\$12

mimic Burgundies, but in a simpler key.

Wine Spectator

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YUAN LEVY—PHOTOTAKE

lenses that patients wear while they sleep. The lenses reshape the epithelium, the surface of the cornea, redistributing cells from the center to the periphery to compensate for refractive errors and astigmatism. Vision is improved after only a week, though patients need to wear the lenses at least every other night or the effect subsides, according to Paragon Vision Systems

(paragoncrt.com), the maker of CRT lenses. In FDA trials, 93.3 percent of patients ended up with 20/32 vision—good enough to drive without glasses. Meanwhile, Pasadena, Calif.-based Calhoun Vision Systems is testing photo-sensitive silicone lenses, which would be surgically implanted

into the eyes of cataract and other patients. After surgery, the lenses can be adjusted with flashes of light that rearrange their polymer structure, so any vision change could be fixed with a quick trip to the doctor. Approval in Europe is expected next year, but FDA trials in the United States won't be complete until 2006.

—BRAD STONE