



Wallace and Nick.

Having their own stylish caves à vin is the latest design trend for discerning wine collectors.

The art and science behind wine storage has certainly evolved from the days when wines were housed in underground caves throughout Europe. For many years, vintners and stylish restaurateurs around the world have built elaborate wine cellars and tasting rooms to protect—and showcase—their precious collections. Now, it's becoming more popular for oenophiles to recreate these homages à vins in their own homes. These private wine cellars and tasting rooms are an evolution in the ongoing trend of consumers bringing experiences they have enjoyed in hotels or resorts into the privacy of their own homes.

Coined the “inspiration” movement by the cool hunters at Trendwatching.com, this trend explains the popularity of home gyms, movie theatres and spa-like bathrooms. With this increased emphasis on entertaining at home, having a wine cellar and tasting room is as coveted as having a gourmet kitchen.

Musings on stellar cellars

By Wallace Shaw and Nick Pezzo

While there may be a small group of people who buy wines as an investment, the current emphasis for most collectors has shifted to celebrating the experience of being a wine lover. If you're going to uncork your Inglenook Burgundy 1903 or Chateauneuf-Du-Pape/Red Rhone 1943, why not create an atmosphere at home that complements and enhances this experience? Just like a fine library of classic books, this is your library of wines and it deserves a setting that makes a statement. Since we designed our first private wine cellar and tasting room in 1992, three key cave à vin design trends have emerged. There is the classic Old World style, the chic contemporary and the earthy grotto. Deciding which style best suits your home is critical. Whatever you do, do not fight the

architecture. If you live in an 18th-century Georgian-style home, a modern-inspired cellar with chrome, glass and minimal details won't feel natural for the space.

It's like blending a full-bodied Mourvedre with a cool and crisp Tocai Friulano.

Pure classics

Clients interested in a classic or traditional cellar and tasting area often tell us they want the space to feel like a private club. It should be luxurious yet elegant and welcoming. To create that mood, we use rich materials such as hand-cut marble and granite as well as period embellishments like carved capitals, columns, cornice mouldings and trestles. Oak, walnut, mahogany or cherry wall panels finish beautifully when hand-rubbed,

giving the wood extra depth. We select warm, rich colours such as cinnamon, amber and hunter green. While your wine collection is the draw, the space is enhanced by other notable collectables or *objets d'art*. For one client, we commissioned an artist to paint classic English hunting scenes that were framed within the wall panels. Tapestries also create a baronial hall atmosphere.

For furnishings and accessories, key pieces in the 17th- and 18th-century styles from England, France or Italy will achieve atmosphere and elegance to complete the privileged haven. For example, in some projects, we have used silver Bacchus urns, a pair of cherub antique candelabras, tufted leather club chairs as well as an elaborately carved centre table with a pietra dura top.

Contemporary chic

Just as boutique hotels spawned the

in-home spa bathroom trend, posh restaurants have shaped the contemporary style for wine cellars and tasting areas. The dramatic 45-foot-high [14-metre-high] wine tower at Aureole, a restaurant that we have visited at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, is the *primo* example of a contemporary wine temple. Sleek, sophisticated and chic, this look is best suited for modern homes. Glass, steel, chrome and dark woods such as ebony are hallmarks of this design. In

keeping with the minimalist less-is-more mantra, the detailing is kept clean and the palette is limited to crisp, primary colours. As an unexpected counterpoint to mid-century classics from Eames, Noguchi and Jacobsen, we recommend you add an antique such as a rococo gilt mirror or a classical marble bust on a pedestal to personalize the space, giving it your own unique twist.



Photo: Rosehill Wine Cellars

Boho Grotto

The design aesthetic for the bohemian grotto style comes from the dark and rustic cave-like cellars you might find in old wine estates in France, Italy and Greece. Primitive materials such as wrought-iron gates, bricks, stones and plaster create a natural, earthy environment. Arches, vaulting and the French style of bordering a stone floor with gravel create a château-cave ambience. To add warmth, we recommend wainscoting made from wine crates and terra-cotta tiles. Complete the look with distressed-wood tables and chairs, iron candle chandeliers or scones and Bacchanalia-themed artwork. Once the wine cellar is completed, it's time to muse on the wisdom of elders, such as Homer, who said, “Wine can of their wits the wise beguile; make the sage frolic and the serious smile.”

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Wines need pampering too!

- 1. Determine your storage needs.** To create a combined cellar and wine-tasting area, we suggest you have at least 500 square feet [46 or 47 square metres]. It's a common mistake to overestimate the amount of space required to store wine. In some cases, you may be able to blend the two areas into one by using freestanding wine refrigerators. Often referred to as cellars or captains, these units can hold anywhere from 20 to 2,000 bottles and can be incorporated into your design so that they blend into the space. If you require a separate refrigerated area, it's important you and your designer work with a qualified contractor who has experience building wine storage rooms.
- 2. Create a cool space—but not that cool.** We're often asked whether it's possible to combine the tasting room with the cellar because clients want their guests to be able to view their collection while savouring their wine. We wouldn't recommend this for several reasons. The combined body heat may alter the required 50 to 55 degree storage temperature. Your guests will be too cold and the wines may not open up, which inhibits their bouquet. If the tasting area is built adjacent to the cellar, you could still offer a glimpse into the collection through glass walls or windows.
- 3. Be bold with your design and budget.** Once you have settled on your style—whether it's classic, contemporary or grotto, don't be intimidated. Settle on a budget and work within it. Holding back on the embellishments and details that will create a space with character will result in a homogenized area without personality or warmth. Versailles is a wonderful example of this emboldened sensibility. Some people might think they have gone too far, but then it would not be Versailles, would it?
- 4. Lighting is everything.** Any effort you have made to create an interesting space will be lost if it's not properly lit. All the furnishings, details and embellishments are enhanced with a good lighting plan. While you may use period lighting fixtures to enhance the look, recessed halogen downlights accent key pieces and create drama.

Best advice for wine storage

Why does wine require special storage? Wine is a natural, perishable food product. Left exposed to heat, light, vibration or fluctuations in temperature and humidity, all types of wine, including red, white, sparkling, fortified, can spoil. When properly stored, wines not only maintain their quality, but many actually improve in aroma, flavour, and complexity as they mature.

What is the ideal temperature for wines?

Temperature centred around 57 degrees Fahrenheit or 14 degrees Celsius, much like the cool caves used to store wine in France, is ideal for both short-term storage and long-term aging for all types of wines. There are exceptions such as when people want to store only white wine or any type of sparkling wine.

What role does humidity play in wine storage?

Proper humidity is required to prevent corks from drying out, therefore preventing oxidation that can lead to spoilage. In the past there has been growing hysteria regarding the need for very high humidity, and in reality it shouldn't be a major concern if you are over 50%. When it is too high, mould can form and your labels will be ruined, and mould can be a health concern.

How should bottles be stored? Storing bottles on their sides is also vital for keeping the corks moist. This horizontal position can be achieved with various types of racking

including, individual bottle, bins, diamonds, champagne, case storage, etc., that helps you organize your collection.

How does a wine cellar work? The heart of a wine cellar is a cooling unit. A thermostat senses temperature variation, leading the cooling unit to turn on and off as needed to maintain constant temperature at 57 degrees Fahrenheit or 14 degrees Celsius, and humidity between 50-65 percent. Passive cellars are built sometimes and they have more of a seasonal temperature swing.

Why are there so many kinds of wine cellars?

Because there are so many kinds of wine collectors! Some people want to keep their wines on display so they choose a furniture-grade cellar. Some choose to utilize spare space under their stairs, or in a corner of a basement. Still others convert a closet or larger area of their house into a custom wine cellar. There is a wine cellar to fit every collection and budget. As the French would say, “à chacun son gout” – to each his own taste.

Where would I put a wine cellar? A self-contained wine cellar simply plugs into a standard household outlet, so you can put one virtually anywhere in your home. A walk-in room typically goes into the basement but there is a growing trend to place them on the first floor.

Source: www.rosehillwinecellars.com