



BY LINDA BARRETT

Sold on Wine Cellars

Friends are coming for dinner. You have the menu all planned, and you go downstairs into your own well-stocked wine cellar to pick just the right bottle of wine to pair with the meal.

Wait. You don't have a wine cellar? It may be time to consider one.

One of the fastest growing trends in the U.S. this year is the addition of custom wine cellars into homes. In 2012, 2.8 percent of U.S. households with a household income of \$100,000 or more had wine cellars. (source: Statista)

Technically, a wine cellar is a storage room for wine in bottles or barrels, designed to protect alcoholic beverages from potentially harmful external influences. Since wine is a perishable product, cellars provide darkness, temperature, and humidity controls to prohibit wine spoilage and allow wines to age gracefully, thus improving their aromas, flavors, and complexities.

A wine cellar that is condition-controlled is called an "active" wine cellar. Passive wine cellars are natural storage

areas, like caves, usually built underground to reduce temperature swings. Even more technically, an aboveground wine cellar may be called a "wine room," while a small wine cellar (less than 500 bottles) may be called a "wine closet."

Wine Cellars Aren't New

The concept of wine cellars isn't new, as proven by the recent discovery of one of the oldest wine cellars ever found. Digging this summer in northern Israel, archaeologists broke through into a banquet hall at the ruins of a 1700 B.C. Canaanite palace known as Tel Kabri to find a storage room holding the remains of 40 large ceramic jars.

The jars were broken and the contents gone, but a chemical analysis of residues in the jars detected traces of organic acids. These acids, such as honey, mint, cinnamon bark, juniper berries, and resins are commonly used preservatives in all wine and popular in ancient winemaking. The equivalent of about 3,000 bottles of red and white wines was stored here.

Designing Your Wine Cellar

"When designing a wine cellar, the first thing we consider is the budget," explained Matthew Furlong, president of Furlong Construction Company. "You can build a wine cellar for as little as \$10,000 or as much as \$200,000 or more."

"Then we look at the space," he continued. "We have to take into consideration the size of the space allocated for the cellar, the number of bottles you anticipate keeping on hand, and how many people you want to be able to fit into the room as an entertaining option."

Dedicated wine cellars for storing and aging wine can be built into a new home, or added in basements, closets, or additions.

Building a Wine Cellar

Building a wine cellar is like constructing a refrigerator. The room must be built, or converted properly, to consider vapor barriers, sealed concrete floors (where applicable), insulation, doors, ventilation, flooring, ceiling, wall surfaces, lighting, and the cooling system. Not converting the room properly could cause damage to the walls, ceilings, and certainly the wine.

Wine racks and cabinetry are essential to any wine cellar. Wine racks offer a variety of horizontal storage options in diagonal, horizontal, and vertical rack designs. For the warmest feeling, choose wood; other styles, such as metal or unique hook styles are also available. Custom cabinetry sets the tone for the room and provides storage for wine glasses and other essentials, as well as customization.

Wine Cellar Management

When adding or removing wines from your cellar, update your finds and preferences on a wine cellar management system. There are many software options available for PC, Mac, and mobile devices. Organize your wines and provide detailed reports and lists on demand with options such as "drink by" dates, bar code printers and scanners for easy location, and tasting notes.

Building Your Wine Collection

Experts recommend building your wine collection slowly and tasting the wines you will cellar. Purchase no more than six bottles at a time of the same wine; your tastes will change over time. Also, keep a balance of wines of those ready for drinking, those needing to be stored for a short time, and those that require aging. This way you build up an inventory and a selection for any occasion. Record every bottle going in and out, and track the best time to drink each bottle. And for your own enjoyment, keep a log of tasting notes and pairings.

RESOURCES:

Furlong Construction Company
Matthew Furlong, president
248-877-1071

www.novacustombuilders.com

AUTHOR: Linda Barrett learns more about wine every day. She is a professional writer and the president of All the Buzz, a writing, design, and public relations firm that helps businesses grow and profit. www.allthebuzzcreative.wordpress.com.

Personalization

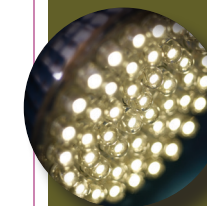
As a custom wine cellar builder, Matthew Furlong gives us his thoughts about the types of things that can be personalized. Here's where we can really have fun:



CARVINGS: Custom carvings into the stone, cement, or wood elements can get quite elaborate. Imagine clawfoot legs on the tables; grapes and grapevines carved into the cabinetry, corbels, or doorways; or your family crest carved and lit as a focal point. Concrete countertops can be customized during pouring with inlays or imprints of natural elements like leaves.



ENTRANCE STYLES: Consider a custom hand-forged iron gate as a stunning entrance or a glassed door showcasing the cellar when lit from within. How about a speakeasy door or a secret or hidden entrance?



LIGHTING OPTIONS: Modern LED lighting doesn't add heat to the room and helps create ambiance. Consider display lighting, under-cabinet lighting, interior cabinet lighting, dimmers, or spotlighting for that \$1000 bottle of wine.



TASTING AREAS: Tasting areas where wine can be poured allow friends to sit or stand nearby. Sealed natural stone, granite, or cement countertops add a distinctive element and resist staining.



CEILING AND FLOORS: Create ambiance through stucco finishes designed to reflect a Mediterranean style; a warm "man cave" with heavily beamed, stone, or coffered ceilings; or a tile or stone floor in a myriad of colors and textures.



FURNISHINGS: Many wine cellars don't just contain wine. They are rooms in their own right, outfitted with overstuffed chairs, bookcases, and hidden TV options like Vision Art. (The picture in the frame rolls out of sight to reveal a hidden television).