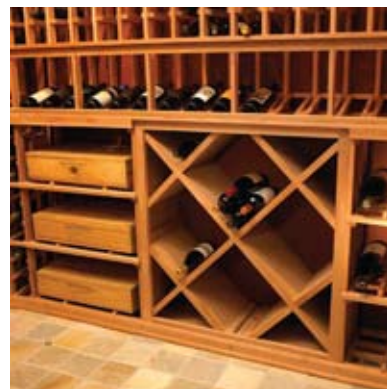




The **ART** of Storing Wine

PART II



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BY TODD NEEDHAM

ou made it through my first article and are back for a second drink. Excellent! This time we'll explore more of the "nuts-n-bolts" of wine cellars.

A wine cellar is the perfect home addition for the serious collector. It gives you an elegant, sophisticated place to display your favorite wines and the perfect environment in which to store them so that they improve with age. Wine cellars come in all shapes, sizes and styles. We'll explore just a few of the options here.

TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY

One of the major components of a proper wine cellar is climate control. You'll want to control your wine cellar's temperature and humidity to protect your investment. A cool temperature keeps your wine from spoiling and slows the aging of your wine. Higher humidity levels keep your corks moist—a dried out cork increases the chances of air getting into your wine and spoiling it.

If you have selected a space for your cellar, first determine your wine cellar's current temperature and humidity. This is important because some locations in the home naturally have a cooler temperature and higher humidity and you may or may not need to add or subtract temperature or

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humidity in the room. You could install a thermostat and hygrometer, and then you would be able to keep a constant eye on the conditions inside the wine cellar.

But, the truth is, seasons change and no one room is perfect. The temperature should remain constant at 55 F, and 70 percent humidity is recommended. To hold these consistent, installing a cooling unit is the way to go.

Most cooling units have the humidity component integrated into the heating/cooling system. You would not have an independent humidifier.

Do your homework on cooling units, or talk to a professional wine cellar installer, because there is a broad range of systems available, and you'll want to steer clear of the ones listed in some of those wine accessory magazines. There are many systems that carry a 1-year warranty. After your 1-year warranty is up, there is absolutely no support from the company.

In most cases, you'll also need a drain line; if you don't have access to plumbing then you need a condensation pump to pump the water to a drain.

There are three types of cooling units: through-wall, split and ducted systems.

Through-wall literally means the unit sticks through the wall into an adjacent space. The adjacent space should be 2.5 times larger than your wine cellar because the unit will exhaust a considerable amount of heat when functioning. Ideally a through-wall system exhausts into a large mechanical room of your house. This is the least expensive option and easy to replace.

The split system leaves you with what looks like a wall-mounted air conditioner – not super attractive – but enables you to put a compressor in a mechanical room elsewhere in the house. This option works well when you don't have a place to go through the wall into another area.

A ducted system is the ultimate way to go. Like the furnace in

your house, it has vents and ducts and functions like a forced air furnace/air conditioner. So, no machinery is visible in the wine cellar itself. The compressor can be located inside or out.

WALLS AND DOORS

The room needs proper insulation, so whatever you choose for your walls, wood, drywall, brick, or whatever, you need a defined vapor barrier. Consult a professional wine cellar installer to make sure your space is done properly. There's a lot of bad advice on the Internet.

You can choose a glass wall and/or door to turn your wine cellar into a fantastic showcase, but the glass needs to be insulated glass, like the front door to your house.

WOOD OPTIONS

Redwood, mahogany and cedar are the woods most commonly used for wine rack construction. The theory behind these three species is that they are resistant to mold, mildew and rot. And although this may be true, if the cellar is properly cooled and humidified any species will

work.

I had a customer who had a supply of cherry wood that he had collected, and we were able to custom mill his wood to accommodate his 3,500 bottle cellar. But cherry is so hard and brittle that it took 13 laminations of cherry to make the radius of the curved wall in his cellar!

RACK OPTIONS

Everyone thinks of a wine cellar as a place where you "lay your wine down". But, there are several rack and display options to choose from depending on your needs. Options include diamond bins, case storage, magnum racks, display rows, drawers, curved shelves, horizontal displays, and more. A professional wine cellar installer will measure the room you have targeted for your cellar, and customize a design to fit your specific needs.



LIGHTING

Much drama and effect can be added to a wine cellar with lighting. Display rows can be lit, while dimmers on switches make for an adjustable mood.

FEATURES

Here is where you and your wine cellar designer/installer can have some serious fun. Accents and personal touches make the wine cellar yours. You can add detail in the flooring, in the trim, in arches, built-in artwork, in a granite slab counter, and more. We once added a waterfall in a 4,000-bottle cellar!

Most of all, installing your wine cellar should be fun and exciting. Work with someone who knows how to do it. It's really not recommended for what I call "weekend warriors" to take on as a project. There are a lot of details that need to come together to really make the space not just the right environment technically, but also a showcase you can be proud of. Talented builders can construct the room and then the racking and details can be installed by industry professionals.

The value a well-constructed wine cellar adds to your home can be measured in many ways from providing an exciting and unexpected entertainment experience to increasing your home's market value.

As always, remember: the greatest wine ever made is the one you like the best. Cheers! ☐

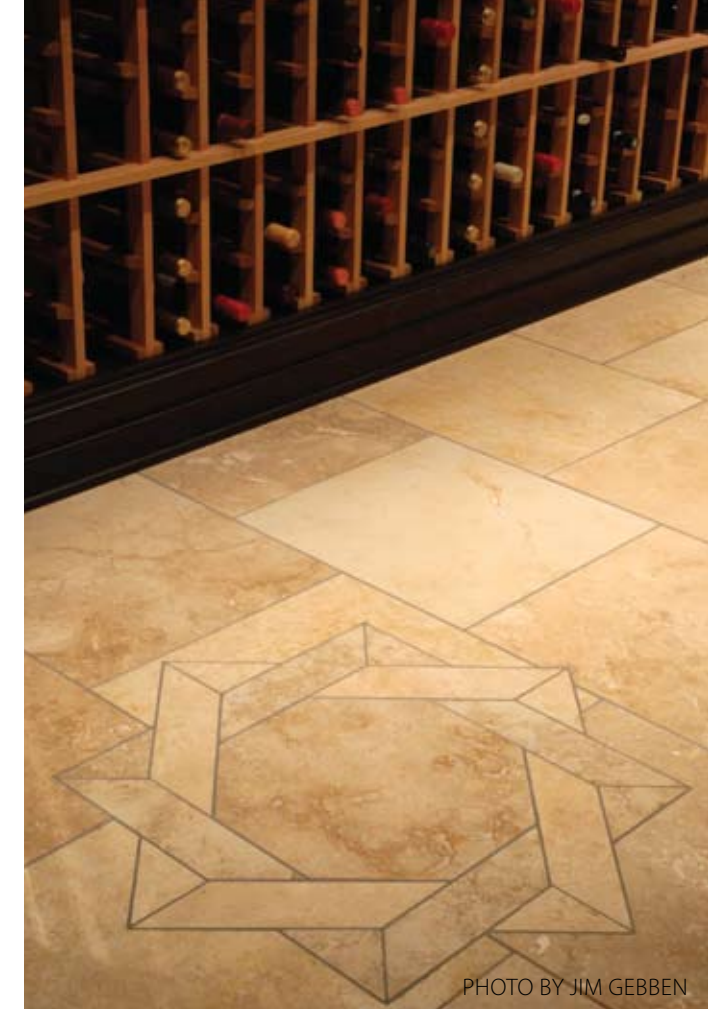


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