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— HOW TO —

# Best Cellars

The essentials of adding a wine cellar to your home

by *David Graver*





**F**OR ANYONE who's disturbed a bottle of Krug Clos du Mesnil in the fridge or let a superb vintage of Cheval Blanc turn, perhaps it's time to start protecting your collection by adding a wine cellar to your home. Though options are plentiful, it's quite easy to choose a cellar suited to your needs. The key considerations to keep in mind are protecting your collection from light, humidity, and, most of all, temperature variation.

**FREESTANDING CELLARS:** Anyone with a little more than two square feet of space and an electric socket can purchase a EuroCave wine cellar. This brand has been the go-to "freestanding" cellar for both fledgling and serious collectors for more than 40 years. There's a compact version for smaller spaces and collections, while larger models hold 200+ bottles. Competitors (Transtherm, Sub-Zero, Vinotemp, etc.) deliver variations that are also suitable for many wine lovers' needs.


**BUILT-IN CELLARS:** Beyond the freestanding iteration, the world of wine cellars grows exponentially more interesting thanks to kit racks and customized options

that can be tailored to your taste just like the bottles they hold. In fact, whether you're looking at a closet-sized space in a city apartment or an entire basement in the countryside, custom pieces are easier to acquire than you might think—and they add value to a home once they've been installed.

To develop a custom wine cellar, collectors must first consider one overarching structural component: cooling. Here, price varies greatly. Cooling is necessary, but its circumstances vary based on things like the installation of moisture-resistant sheets and the allotment of space for ducting and a condenser.

After cooling, function steers design direction. People choose cellars for two reasons. The first is focal point. Where will everyone's attention go? To one special bottle? To many bottles? To the way they're organized? Everything from the racking system to the lighting design impacts the focal point. The second is capacity. Your cellar might simply be about storage and access. That's OK. Not everyone needs to show off their reds, whites, and rosés.

Marshall Tilden III, vice president of sales at custom-design organization and marketplace Wine Enthusiast, has overseen everything from pantries reborn as cellars to a custom-built 10K-bottle unit constructed for The Royal Sonesta Hotel in New Orleans. "People want to jump into the design discussion," he says, "but it's imperative to address function first." Function is the key to finding the best location for your home wine cellar, followed by size and aesthetic. Wine Enthusiast and its competitors offer kits with various rack styles and sizes that let collectors segue into custom design without breaking the bank. If money is no object, there are extraordinary, customized options featuring luxe touches from redwood finishes to acrylic racking that makes bottles appear to float in midair.

"I equate a wine cellar to a swimming pool," Tilden says. "If you're a wine lover and you see a cellar in a home, you're willing to pay more for it." With research showing that Americans are drinking more wine than ever before, a home cellar might well make you the toast of friends, family, and potential buyers alike. 

#### TIP:

To develop a custom wine cellar, collectors must first consider one overarching structural component: cooling.

