

The **Ultimate** Food + Wine Guide

* **PLUS:** OUR THIRD ANNUAL
WASHINGTON WINE AWARDS

seattle

THE PREMIER SEATTLE MONTHLY

APRIL 2008

BEST RESTAURANTS

LATE-NIGHT DINING > STREET FOOD > FRENCH FRIES > BREAKFAST JOINTS

AND 190 OTHER THINGS
YOU MUST TASTE NOW!



COMEDIANS WITHOUT
BORDERS: SURPRISING
PLACES TO FIND A LAUGH

INSIDE THE SCHOOL
SYSTEM'S TOUGHEST
MATH PROBLEM

BRIGHTEN UP!
SPRING FASHION
GOES COLORFUL

BONUS
INSERT:
**BEST WEALTH
MANAGERS**
(p. 163)



A trap door hides a spiral staircase lined with as many as 1,600 bottles of wine

PRIVATE RESERVE

RESIDENTIAL
CELLARING OPTIONS
COME IN ALL SHAPES,
SIZES AND PRICES
BY JANE HODGES

LIKE MANY EMERGING WINE AFICIONADOS, Rob Dent and his wife, Naomi Ruiz, eventually encountered the problem of where to store their burgeoning assortment of liquid treasures. The West Seattle couple initially cellared their wines in a low-ceilinged closet below a stairway near their dining room. ¶ “We knew we had to come up with some other sort of solution,” Dent says. ¶ Dent, who works in finance, and Ruiz, an advertising executive, were willing to pay a premium to add a residential wine cellar, but they didn’t want to sacrifice interior space to make room for it. They talked to a contractor about remodeling their unfinished basement and building a cellar, but the wine cellar would be far from the dining area—and would have been very expensive, Ruiz says. They also considered creating a cellar in the garage, but that would have required moving the car whenever they wanted to harvest a bottle. ¶ The couple took a tip from Seattle wine store Esquin and called Spiral Cellars, a United Kingdom-based company that creates underground cellars that can store as many as



This in-home wine cellar with tasting area was built by Apex Cellars and accommodates a large wine collection



1,600 bottles of wine in racks surrounding a spiral staircase. For homeowners with substantial collections, space constraints and a desire for an environmentally friendly cellar, Spiral's system fits the bill because it uses outdoor air and the earth (versus a separate refrigeration or air conditioning system) to keep wine cool.

Dent and Ruiz's cellar, installed last year for less than \$50,000, was the second Spiral Cellar completed in the United States. Conveniently sited just steps from their dining table, beneath a 3-by-5-foot trap door that matches their home's hardwood flooring, the cellar easily holds their current 400-bottle collection in racks lining a spiral staircase.

Cellars are nothing new in the Northwest, of course. But as wineries proliferate (the Washington Wine Commission estimates that there are more than 500 wineries in the state, collectively creating a \$3 billion industry) and collectors accumulate, homeowners are increasingly debating how—and where—to make room for their

growing stocks of sensitive libations. Storing wine unprotected in basements and garages—a common tactic—isn't considered a viable long-term solution.

Wine needs to be kept at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit, stored on its side and in an odorless environment with the proper humidity and lighting—factors that, left uncontrolled, can interfere with wine's preservation over time, says Mark Pountain, a designer with Bellevue's Apex Wine Cellars. Apex designs and installs custom wine cellars and racking, working directly with homeowners or in conjunction with their architects.

It's not necessary, however, to invest tens of thousands in a professional remodel in order to house wine. Wine refrigerators (or "coolers") will cellar as many as 100 bottles of wine, for prices ranging from less than \$1,000 to \$7,000. Matt Gehrts, a sales associate at Albert Lee's Seattle showroom, says that for more than a decade major appliance manufacturers have offered wine coolers in under-counter and

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CELLAR

DRINK IN OUR LIST OF RESIDENTIAL WINE STORAGE OPTIONS TO FIND THE RIGHT HOME FOR YOUR VINO

Custom cellars

PROS: In-home cellars offer instant access to cherished bottles.

CONS: Some contractors are uncomfortable building wine cellars or unfamiliar with working with their refrigeration systems.

Homeowners who add a cellar to an already-remodeled space may be surprised at the extent of the demolition required to install lighting, electrical, vapor barriers and cooling systems.

COST: At least \$5,000–\$30,000, plus ongoing costs for cooling systems, electrical consumption and alarm monitoring. Cellars can range from refrigerated closets to 100-square-foot rooms filled with decorative racks, a humidor and a tasting table. All require proper insulation, vapor barriers, racking systems, refrigeration, controlled lighting and slate or stone flooring.

WHERE TO GO: Apex Wine Cellars, Bellevue, 425.644.1178, apexwinecellars.com; Vintage Solutions, Seattle, 206.937.5145, vintagesolutions.net; and Wine Cellar Innovations, Seattle, 206.930.7304, winecellarinnovations.com.

Spiral Cellars

PROS: These earth-cooled cellars don't consume interior square footage and don't require added cooling systems, yet can store as many as 1,600 bottles.

CONS: No "tasting room" space. They work well in the cool, damp Northwest, but not in all American climates. Cellar placement on a property is best at a home's north or northwest corner, which may not coordinate with a home's layout.

COST: \$30,000–\$50,000

WHERE TO GO: Spiral Cellars; 800.598.7530; spiralcellars.com/us.

Basements

PROS: They make use of what is often an underutilized space in a home. It's also low-cost.

CONS: They're prone to physical disruption—the jiggly washer/dryer, the rumbling furnace—and, while cooler than the rest of a home, their temperature can fluctuate.

COST: Stand alone racking made from various types of wood or metal starts at \$100 per wine shelf, depending on height, width and bottle capacity.

WHERE TO GO: Racking kits are sold locally via Apex Wine Cellars and Wine Cellar Innovations or online via businesses such as Wine Racks America (wineracksamerica.com) and Beverage Factory (beveragefactory.com).

Wine refrigerators

(also known as "wine coolers")

PROS: They're compact and can easily fit into a kitchen, wet bar or entertainment room. They fit under counters or occupy the same space as a typical refrigerator and can be transported during relocation.

CONS: They hold a limited number of bottles: 50 for an under-counter model, as many as 160 for a full-size wine refrigerator.

COST: \$1,000–\$3,000 for an under-counter model, as much as \$7,000 for a full-

size refrigerator.

WHERE TO GO: Albert Lee, Seattle, 206.282.2110, albertleecappliance.com; Arnold's Appliance, Bellevue, 425.454.7929, arnoldsappliance.com; and Basco, Tukwila, 206.352.2726, bascoappliances.com.

External storage

PROS: External storage sites ensure that wine is kept at a consistent temperature; they're a solution for collectors who have only a few dozen cases, or who lack time, space or budget for an in-home cellar installation.

CONS: Facilities aren't accessible 24/7, so collectors with a spontaneous itch to break out the good stuff won't get to do so. Many local facilities have low vacancy.

COST: Quarterly and annual rental costs vary based on the amount of wine stored. Small case amounts (fewer than 15 cases) typically cost from \$5 to \$6 per case per quarter, while larger case amounts (say, 90 cases) can cost from \$4 to \$5 per case.

WHERE TO GO: Local facilities include Bellevue Wine Storage, 425.644.1178, bellevuewinestorage.com; Cellar 46, Mercer Island, 206.407.3016, cellar46.com; Esquin, Seattle, 206.682.7374, esquin.com; and Seattle Wine Storage, Seattle, 206.628.4802, seattlewinestorage.biz.



SODO's Esquin, where you can store wine in climate-controlled environments

full-size models; recently, manufacturers have begun including dual-cooling systems so that red and white wines can be chilled at separate temperatures. Another trend: Homeowners are replacing kitchen trash compactors with wine mini-coolers, designed to fit a compactor's 15-inch width.

Condo buildings are also offering "locker style" cellars for residents. Three of the six buildings at the forthcoming Woodinville Village will include climate-controlled storage for as many as 24 bottles of wine per resident in a shared building cellar, says Kim Sharpe Jones, marketing director for MCM Group. Other downtown Seattle buildings, such as The Cristalla and Escala, offer buyers lockable climate-controlled wine storage.

Independent wine storage companies, including Esquin and a handful of others, charge collectors on a quarterly or annual basis to store wine in climate-controlled environments. "If you're starting to have 500 bottles or more, or plan to, you need your own cellar," says Esquin's Arnie Millan. "If you have a couple of hundred bottles, you don't need one."

Of course, Millan notes, wine cellars are a discretionary purchase, so "need" is subjective. **S**

