



Wine Cellar Design

Today's wine cellars are far more than closets full of wine bottles. The best of them include fine architectural details, works of art, and—behind the redwood paneling—high-tech features that keep the wine at the peak of perfection. Text: Mark Ray; Editor & Layout Design: Kirsten E. Silven

If your image of a wine cellar comes straight out of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado"—a place that's insufferably damp, encrusted with niter, and adorned with the occasional skeleton—you should visit

one of the creations of modern wine cellar builders. The cellars they create for clients around the country often rival wood-paneled libraries for elegance.

"People love them and don't want

to leave," says Louisville wine cellar specialist Evan Comer, "even if it is 55 degrees." More than once a client has told Comer how her guests all migrated to her wine cellar during a party.

Increasing interest in wine cel-

Above: A flooded basement prompted the owners of this Norbourne Estates home to undertake a major renovation that included this compact wine cellar. Jon D. Hobson turned a pair of coat closets into a 4- by 10-foot cellar that holds just over 400 bottles of wine. Solid maple doors with etched glass panels lead into the space, whose focal point is an art-glass sculpture by Steve Heine of Cranium Glass. All three doors open, allowing easy access to the custom redwood racking.

Facing Page: This Oldham County wine cellar, designed by Holly R. Gregor Designs with interiors by Gianpaolo Bianconcini of Ewald Associates, evokes the look of Italy's ancient, cave-like wine cellars. Stucco finish, rough brick (which hides a support column), antique furniture, and a tapestry combine to give the wine cellar an Old World feel—even though the home was built in the 1990s. Buffalo Construction built the room, Judy Rosenfield handled the stonework, and Frances Lee Jasper Oriental Rugs provided the rug.





lars mirrors trends in the local wine scene. "More people have gotten into wine and know more about it," said Robin Garr, who's been writing about wine in Louisville since the early 1980s. "That follows the national scene, where wine appreciation has become much more widespread, at least in urban and suburban areas, over the past 20 years or so."

Comer is not alone in creating aesthetically pleasing wine cellars. Jon D. Hobson, another local cellar specialist, focuses much of his attention on architectural details and design elements designed to show off a client's wine collection.

"People want aesthetics in addition to storage. They want a showplace, not just regular racking down in the basement," he said.

Cellar Placement

Most wine cellars do remain in the basement, however, where temperature and light conditions are better than, say, in the butler's pantry. That's changing as cellars become more attractive and inviting—and as homeowners find themselves traipsing up and down the stairs more often.

Today, it's not uncommon to find

Facing Page: Builder Tim Menard of TMC Construction turned a "pocket" in the foundation of this Prospect home's basement into a convenient wine cellar that holds roughly 400 bottles of wine. People sitting at the bar can look in on the homeowner's wine collection without being chilled by the cellar's cold air. Rich woods and warm paint colors tie the two areas together. Top and Above: Wine is a social beverage, so locating a wine cellar near entertainment areas often makes sense. When the owner of this Eastwood home renovated the home's lower level, he brought Evan Comer in to create a wine cellar adjacent to a game room, home theater, and sunroom. As he usually does, Comer selected unfinished redwood for the racking and paneling; the wood helps maintain humidity levels by absorbing and retaining moisture. Features like the cello-shaped wine rack outside the glazed-glass door draw visitors toward the wine cellar and encourage them to peek inside.



Nestled in the lower level of a home in the Estates of Hunting Creek, this 15- by 15-foot wine cellar has room for more than two thousand bottles of wine. The etched glass window and racking supplied by Wine Cellar Innovations, along with the exterior-grade etched glass door, make the cellar a showpiece. Focal points of the design by Jon D. Hobson include floor-to-ceiling racking with radius corners, waterfall racking, and abundant display areas. A painting by the homeowner hangs in a place of honor and can be illuminated by a separate switch located outside the room.



a wine cellar adjacent to the kitchen or dining room. Even those that remain in the basement are more integrated into the rest of the space. Instead of hiding a wine cellar behind a closet door, a builder might use an etched glass door or add a large picture window to open up the space visually.

Racking

Racking lies at the heart of any wine cellar and can easily account for half the room's cost. Traditional all-heart redwood racking is a popular option since it's durable, attractive, and odorless—something that's critical when you consider that wine can easily absorb odors in the room. ("If you left a chocolate bar in there, your wine could end up having a chocolate taste," Hobson explained.)

Many local builders use modular racking from companies like Wine Cellar Innovations in Cincinnati, which bills itself as the world's foremost racking manufacturer. Like other vendors, the company offers rack units to meet a variety of needs. There are individual bottle racks, radius corner units, diamond cubes, racks for oversized bottles, display and case racks, and waterfalls, which let owners showcase their favorite bottles in dramatic fashion. Builders can mix and match the units to create just the right array of storage options.

But redwood is not the only option, nor do racks have to come from a factory. Simpsonville resident Mike Hart built natural-finish poplar for his wine cellar, for example. And many homeowners prefer the look of terra cotta drain tiles (basically hexagonal tubes

slightly larger than a wine bottle), which can be stacked to create visually interesting storage solutions.

Aesthetics

Although they dominate most wine cellars, racks aren't the only elements that give cellars character. Other furnishings, lighting, and wall colors all play a role.

Hart dressed up his cellar with rope lighting above a strip of crown molding, for example. The white molding accentuates the color of the grout in the tile floor, while a strip of poplar above the crown molding matches the racks.

Tim French of French Construction by Design used a shade of granite on a wine cellar table that mimicked the green of a wine bottle. He also painted the room's walls and ceiling to match the redwood racks.



Rather than install a wine cellar, the owners of this Fisherville home had Glenn Coxon Builders of Anchorage create this wine room, which evokes the feel of an Italian street scene. M&M Tile used contrasting tile colors to create a path that meanders past doors of several different styles. The room's focal point, however, is the bistro, where guests can sit and enjoy a glass of wine. A large wooden cabinet, designed by Glenn Coxon and built by Mike's Woodworking, holds a broad selection of wines. The lighting is by Rueff Lighting.



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Above: Tim French of French Construction by Design carved this 15- by 16-foot wine cellar out of an unfinished area in the basement of a home in the Estates of Hunting Creek. The cellar holds 3,100 bottles of wine in traditional, waterfall, display, and case racks. A custom-built granite-topped tasting table anchors the space. Perhaps the most striking feature, however, is the Silver Oak wine label that French glazed onto ceramic tile at one end of the room.

Left: Hexagonal terra cotta tiles provide visual interest and convenience to this wine cellar beneath a historic Bowling Green home. Two-foot-thick stone walls ensure cool temperatures year round. The late designer Bill Hamilton of Nashville, Tenn., designed the space when the 1852-vintage home was restored. The space had previously been used to store potatoes, but the homeowner suspects it also held wine at one time in its history.

