

The Wine Guy: Simple Steps To Storing Wine



by Neil
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Wine cellars still captures the imagination and envy of many people. A private sanctum where the collected trophies of rare and best-loved wines are showcased, is the dream of many wine lovers. I have been fortunate to see dimly lit caves where bottle upon bottle lie in dusty repose, undisturbed for generations. I have also seen modern cellars that rival many medical facilities, both in sterility and technology, where computers regulate the environment and send notification when a wine is ready to drink.

While these are the most common ideas of what wine cellars are, it certainly represents the extravagant and not the norm.

To the average person (myself included), a wine cellar is a spot in the corner of the basement or in a little used closet. In order to keep wine properly stored there are only a few, but very important, things to consider.



Most wine cellars aren't of
the spiral staircase

variety.

The most important factor is the temperature of the storage space. Ideally, you want a cool and constant temperature. The magic number seems to fall between 55 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and you should never store wine where the temperature would exceed 70 degrees. Excessive exposure to heat will accelerate the maturation of the wine. While this might sound like a great idea at first, keep in mind that the changes that happen while the wine ages naturally will be forced, and could result in an unbalanced wine that will deteriorate very quickly.

Cork is still the most common closure for wine bottles, and the simple act of storing a wine on its side or upside down enables the cork to protect the wine. Much of the cork used in bottling is the natural kind, harvested from the bark of a tree found mostly in Portugal. Laying a bottle on its side enables the cork to stay damp, preventing it from drying out and letting oxygen slowly seep in. This process will eventually oxidize the wine, rendering it lacking and tasteless.

Light is another culprit in the storage of wine. The ultraviolet light of sunlight will attack the wine and force a rapid oxidation of the wine.



An example of a custom wine cellar.

Lastly, vibration should be kept to a minimum. While there is no scientific evidence to support any detriment to the wine, there is plenty anecdotal support for it. “Bottle Shock” is a term used among wine professionals to describe a condition where the wine shows very little, and its flavors are tight and very stubborn in opening.

What are the best places to store your wine? Stay away from kitchens: the extreme heat fluctuations makes it a killer of wine. The same goes for attics and garages. The best places are the cool, dark, and quiet spaces of the house. Basements are always best, or a closet in an unused room. It really is as simple as that!

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