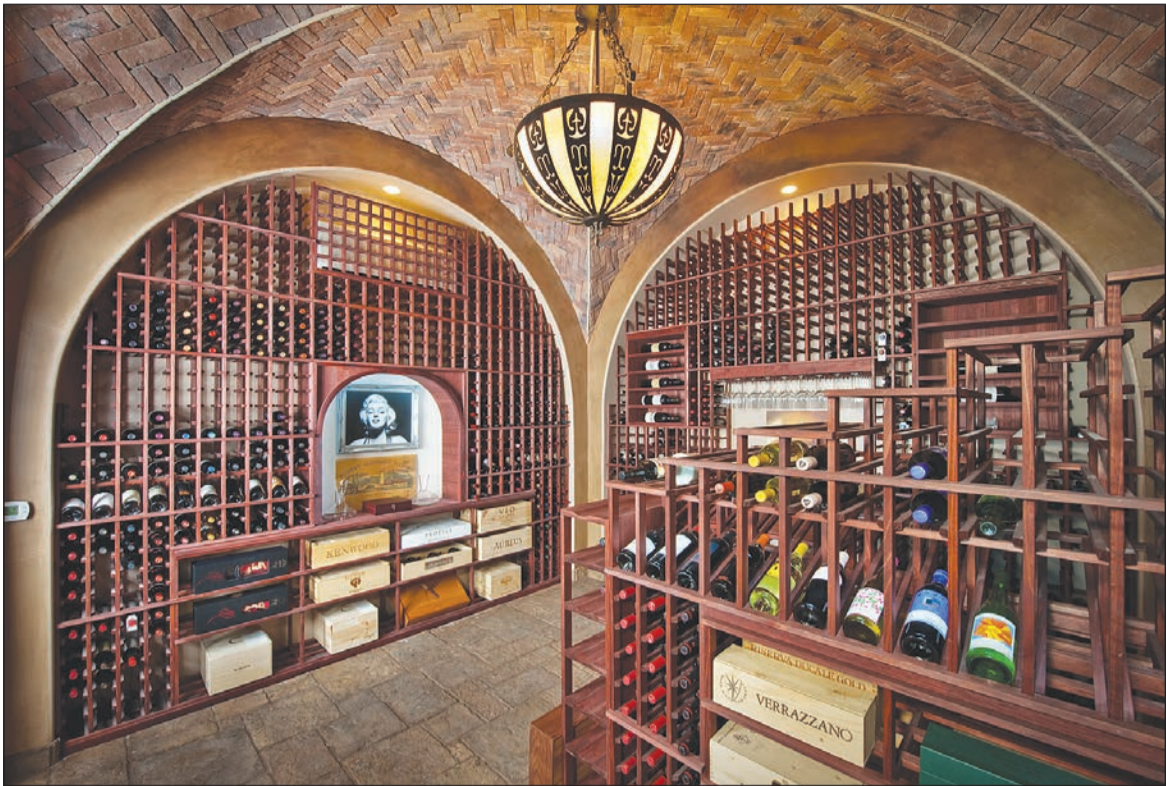




A mini-stack is an inexpensive way for a casual wine drinker to display bottles. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)



A serious collector may want to devote an entire room to storing and displaying wines. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)

Creative wine storage can enhance décor

BY JANA SOELDNER DANGER
Special to South Florida Home

Can't find the right piece of artwork for that empty wall? How about a wine rack that turns a collection of bottles into a decorative display? Naples-based Aluminum Home Solutions calls it art by wine, and offers the metal racks in a variety of sizes. There's also a unit that fits in the space that is often wasted under a staircase. The company had been

making hurricane shutters exclusively for more than a decade when owner Jaime Zabala decided to expand his product line. "Hurricane shutters are very seasonal," says company representative Debra Parsley. "The owner put a wine wall into his own home and people saw it and wanted one. It's a piece of art on the wall." The racks are lightweight and easy to install, Parsley says. Three different finishes are available: antiqued bronze,

shiny white, and mill, which looks like stainless steel. Different sizes can accommodate 12, 18 or 30 bottles, and curved edges keep them firmly in place. Prices range from \$400 to \$2,000. Eric Flores of Cincinnati-based Wine Cellar Innovations says the demand for metal wall racks has increased in part because they blend well with contemporary décor, which is popular now. But there are other ways to display wines, including more traditional wood storage units.

"There's growing interest in displaying wines because it's a way people differentiate their homes from others," Flores says. "It's something unique in a world where so much décor has become homogeneous. There are so many creative wine storage solutions."

While serious aficionados may want to dedicate an entire room as a wine "cellar," the casual wine drinker may want to start small. Kits are available in a variety of woods like pine, cherry, oak, poplar, redwood and mahogany, as well as several different finishes, that a homeowner can put together him- or herself. "You can try to match the rest of your décor, or contrast with it, and you can create a custom look," he says.

It is important that the finish is wine-friendly, however. Otherwise, chemicals exuded into the air may permeate the corks and alter the wine, Flores says.

The price may be less than many people think. Mini racks that hold a dozen bottles can cost as little as \$30. "And the casual collector can have a rack system that stores 50 to 60 bottles for less than \$100," Flores says.



This wine rack by Aluminum Home Solutions uses space under the stairs that might otherwise be wasted. (Photo courtesy AHS)



A wine rack by Aluminum Home Solutions hangs on the wall and becomes a decorative art piece. (Photo by AHS)

The amount of wood used in a storage unit is a main cost factor, Flores says. A shallow rack where the bottles protrude is likely to cost less than one where the bottles are completely encased. But wood and metal aren't the only options. "Small glass cellars are the newest fad," Flores says.

An individual who wants temperature control can expect to pay more. Some wines benefit from aging and others do not, but if aging is a goal, the right kind of environment is required. The proper way

to store wine is at 55 degrees Fahrenheit and 75 percent relative humidity, Flores says. "If you don't have proper humidity, the corks will dry out and the wine will turn to vinegar."

Elaborate wine cellars can cost thousands of dollars. Someone who is just beginning to learn about and enjoy wine may want to start with a small storage unit to which additional units can be added in case he or she is bitten by the vino bug. "You can do one wall at a time," Flores says. "Wine can be an investment."



This built-in wine cabinet can be an attractive part of a room's decor as well as an efficient way to store a wine collection. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)



Stackable racks allow a wine collector to add additional units as interest in the hobby and the collection grows. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)



A glass-enclosed wine cellar allows to control the temperature of stored wines. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)