

Incorporating wine storage can add to homes, condos

BY JANA SOELDNER DANGER
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Wine can add pleasure to life. For some individuals, it's a beverage to enjoy after work or with dinner. For others, learning about and drinking wine is a hobby. Still others become serious collectors who invest considerable sums in rare and prized vintages. Because interest in wine seems to be growing, interior designers, builders and developers are finding more ways to incorporate storage into houses and condominiums.

"Many people today are wine drinkers, and they want space in their homes to store their wines," said interior designer Steven Gurowitz, owner of Interiors by Steven G in Pompano Beach. Among Gurowitz's designs is a community wine room with a 1,000-bottle capacity at Privé on Williams Island. "As time goes on, you'll see more and more developers incorporating wine areas into condos and spec homes," Gurowitz said. "It's become a hot button."

Interior designer Susan LaChance, owner of Susan LaChance Interior Design in Boca Raton, is also seeing a growing interest in wine storage. "There's a trend towards wine rooms even in less expensive communities, and more builders are showing wine rooms in their models," she said,

IMPORTANT THREE

The three key factors that require control in wine storage are temperature, light and humidity. A homeowner who wants to keep a few bottles of wine on hand but prefers not to invest in refrigerators or other equipment should be careful about the location.

"Choose a cool place away from direct sunlight or heat," said Chris Meutsch, sales manager at Cincinnati-based Wine Cellar Innovations, which offers both standard and customized storage. "You want the temperature to be about 68 degrees. Fluctuations can ruin the wine."

"Treat your wine like a baby," said Andrew Lampasone, owner of Wine Watch, a wine boutique in Fort Lauderdale. "You wouldn't leave a baby in the hot trunk of a car or in the sun."

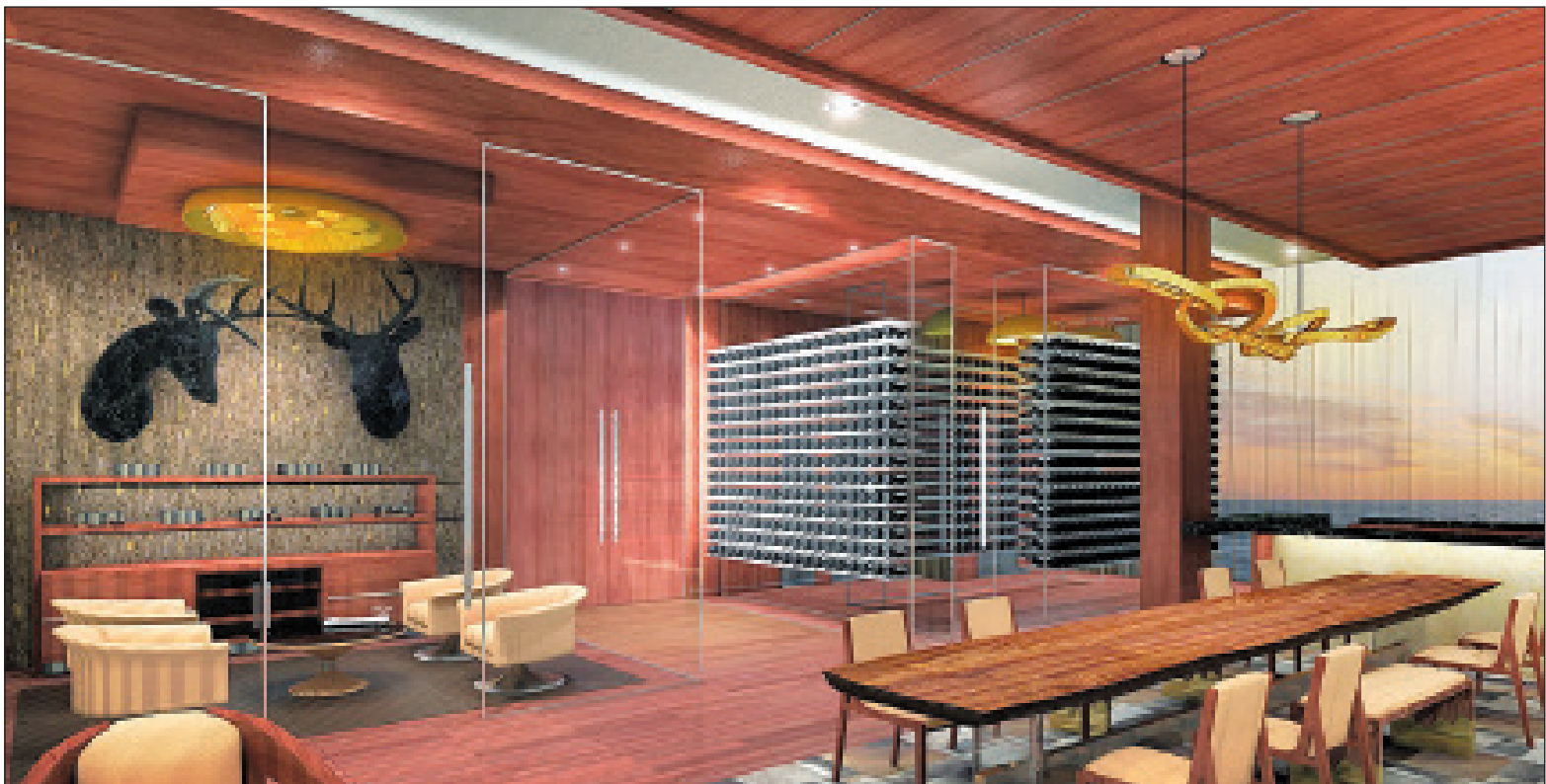
While it is usually recommended that bottles be kept lying on their sides so corks stay moist and swelled to avoid air leaks, it isn't quite as vital, at least for short-term storage, in South Florida as in other parts of the country, Lampasone said. "The humidity is so high here, the corks don't dry out as much."

VARIED OPTIONS

Wine storage areas can range from a simple rack on the counter to small refrigerators to entire temperature-controlled rooms with racks for hundreds of bottles, tasting tables and wine-related art work. "Think about your budget and your goals," LaChance said. "Some people want real wine cellars with all the cooling equipment, and others just want the look. You can have a tiny wine feature or a whole blowout of a cellar."

GETTING STARTED

Think of wine storage as an integral element of the home's furnishings. "Whether you put your wine storage solution on a countertop or on the floor, it needs to fit with your décor," said Franklin Taylor, manager at The Container Store at Gulfstream Village in Hallandale Beach.



Interior designer Steven Gurowitz designed this wine room, which has a 1,000-bottle capacity, for a development on Williams Island. Wine areas are becoming a popular feature for developers to add to homes and condominiums. (Courtesy of Interiors by Steven G)



Wood and brick create an attractive wine storage area. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)



A simple rack like this one from The Container Store can be right for a homeowner who wants to start storing wine. (Courtesy of The Container Store)

That might mean wood racks or shelves for homes with traditional or transitional decor, and metal or glass for contemporary homes. Taylor's customers can choose from 40-bottle unfinished or finished wood racks, iron racks in a pewter finish, or stackable racks with chrome or brushed silver finishes.

IKEA also offers storage solutions that vary from small four-bottle racks to 48-bottle units. "Our most popular wine storage solution is made of galvanized steel," said Cristobal Nogues, home organization shopkeeper at IKEA Miami, in an email. The rack comes in two sizes, one that holds 24 bottles and another that accommodates 48 bottles.

MORE ELABORATE DESIGNS

Those who want more elaborate, dedicated wine spaces can incorporate them into a home in many ways. Gurowitz once transformed a nook meant for a buffet table in a condo dining room into a temperature-controlled wine storage area by installing three small refrigerators along with back lighting and wood and glass doors. "The owner wanted to store between 300 and 400 bottles," he recalled.

LaChance gutted a small closet, insulated it and installed a cooling unit and customized metal racking system. "If you don't insulate properly, you end up with mildew," LaChance said. "The closet was on an outside wall, so the humidity



Interior designer Susan LaChance used wine instead of a painting to create a visual focal point on this dining room wall. (Courtesy of Susan LaChance Interior Design)



Stainless steel racks are a popular way to store wine. (Courtesy of Wine Cellar Innovations)

could be vented out so there's no condensation in the closet." A decorative door completed the transformation.

In another home, LaChance installed polished stainless racks enclosed in glass as a room divider. In still another, she added temperature-controlled racks with slanted glass shelving all the way up one of the dining room walls to create a visual focal point. "Instead of a painting on the wall, you have a full view of the wine," she said.

Many homeowners want lighting in their wine areas, and LEDs can be better than traditional bulbs because they don't heat up, LaChance said. "Never put a wine room near a window. A wine room is also a perfect place to store your specialty olive oils."

WINE ROOMS

A homeowner lucky enough to have an entire extra room to turn into a wine cellar can cre-

ate a place for storage, tasting and entertaining. A first-floor bedroom no longer needed by grown children can be a good option, Meutsch said. The process begins with removing the drywall and installing a vapor barrier of plastic sheeting to contain humidity. "Humidity is good for keeping natural corks swelled," Meutsch said.

The vapor barrier is followed by moisture-resistant dry wall which can be painted, tiled or stuccoed. Next come shelving, racks and even artwork.

Many homeowners want glass doors so their wine rooms are visible from other areas of the house. But it is important to choose the right one. "You want an exterior grade door," Meutsch said. "You're building a separate environment within your home, so you need to seal in the temperature and moisture."

For a collector, a tasting table can be a nice touch, Meutsch added. "You can also set wine cases or glasses on it."