

ACCENT

ON HOME & GARDEN

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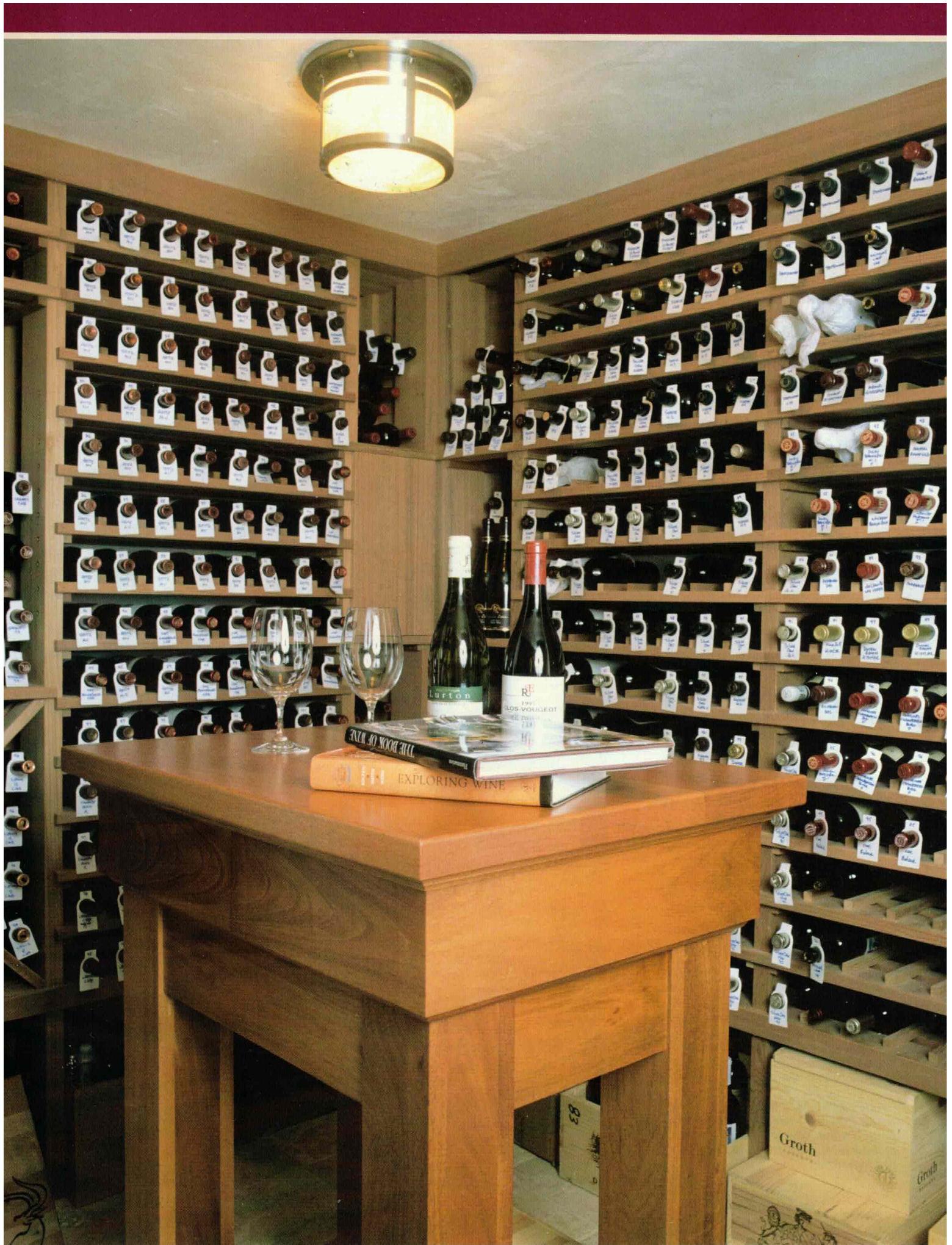
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Safekeeping Your Wine

BY ANDI AXMAN

Whether your collection amounts to five or five hundred bottles of wine, where you keep it makes all the difference.

Imagine the disappointment, not to mention the embarrassment—you've prepared a feast, from soup to nuts, and as you open the \$50 Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape, the cork crumbles. You pour some wine in a glass but when you take a whiff you realize it's gone bad. What went wrong?

Chances are good that the wine was not properly stored—a dried-out cork can result from either not laying the bottle on its side or from keeping the wine in too dry an environment. "There are four enemies of wine," says Charlie Griffiths, president of Vigilant, a Candia, New Hampshire, company that builds components for wine cellars. "Heat breaks down the tannins in wine, improper humidity dries out corks and oxygenates the wine, vibration shakes the solids out of wine and light accelerates the aging of the wine."

"People ask me on a daily basis how to store wine," says Win Rhoades, owner of South Street and Vine wine shop in Portsmouth. "And I ask them whether they're going to be keeping it for a year or two or for a longer period of time. If you have a place in the house that meets the criteria of proper storage, you'll do fine for the short term. Thankfully, here in New England, most houses have basements,

which work well for short-term storage of wine. For longer-term storage of pricier wines, those that cost \$25 to \$30 a bottle and up, it is advantageous to create a special place for storing them. An example are the French bordeaux bottled in 2000 that cost anywhere from \$60 to \$450 now but won't be ready to drink until 2008—that kind of investment needs to be protected."

Options for storing wine

If you find yourself buying multiple bottles because you enjoyed drinking a particular wine when you went out to dinner, or you buy a case because it's on sale or because you want to let it age and drink at different times, or you want to sample, say, a variety of pinot noirs from around the world, then you might be more than just a casual wine lover. While a handsome wrought-iron or hardwood wine rack works fine for several bottles, it's not sufficient if you buy wine quicker than you consume it.

Mini cellars are wine storage units that hold anywhere between a dozen and 50 bottles, but larger ones designed for long-term storage can hold hundreds. These refrigerator-like units have controls for both temperature and humidity. They're a little

Facing page: The Gossetts' wine cellar in Seabrook, New Hampshire, has a pedestal table made of cherry by YFI Builders in York, Maine. Photo by Sandy Agrafiotis.

smaller than a dishwasher and fit under a kitchen counter, and range in price from a few hundred dollars to thousands for higher-end models.

Wine storage units have become standard fare in new kitchens, thanks to a rising demand for wine. According to the Wine Institute, a public policy advocacy group for California wine growers, sales of wine in the U. S. are rising steadily and have never been higher. One reason for that is that doctors agree that moderate drinking is good for our health, and one British physician found that a specific Chilean cabernet actually helped prevent blood clotting and cholesterol buildup in the blood of cardiac patients. "While bar-code analysis and industry statistics show that 90 percent of wine bought is consumed within a few days of purchase," says Win, "there are those collectors who like to have a steady supply of wines for their table as well as those who buy wine as a collectible. If you're buying wine that you'd like to age for five or 10



Photo courtesy of Vigilant, Inc., Candia, New Hampshire.

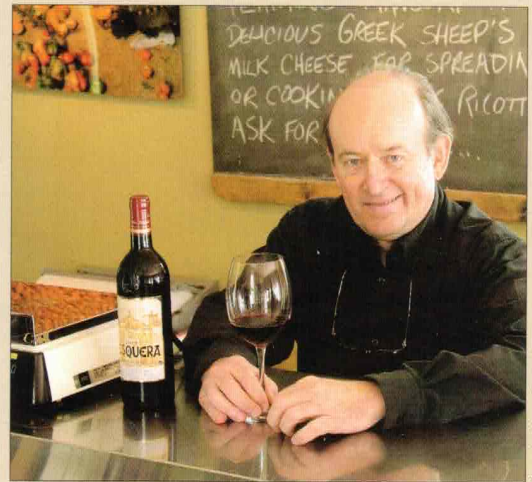


Photo by Nance Trueworthy.

Win Rhoades at his wine shop, South Street and Vine, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

years or you're buying it as an investment, then you need to think seriously about a wine cellar."

A wine cellar provides ideal conditions for storing wine—temperatures ranging between 50 and 58° F and humidity of between 60 and 70 percent—and this ensures that the wine will age properly. "There are other advantages of wine cellars," adds Charlie. "They're tremendous entertainment vehicles, as people love to congregate in the wine cellar for tastings. Also, a wine cellar is a great way to take a part of the house (the basement) that's normally not attractive and spiff it up. Third, it allows the homeowner to buy wines and let them age. For example, French burgundy and bordeaux are complex wines that improve with age. They're at their peak 10 to 20 years after bottling."

Charlie says that the average wine cellar holds between 900 and 2,100 bottles, and that a 10-by-12-foot space is certainly adequate. As far as cost, he breaks that down to being \$5 per bottle for design of the space, \$5 per bottle for components

In a wine cellar custom-made by Vigilant, Inc., in Candia, New Hampshire, an arched top sits above a granite counter. The racking to the side of the arched top flows into a radius curve with curved crown molding.

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