

UPSTATE  
WINE  
ENTHUSIASTS  
PICK RACKS  
FROM  
SIMPLE TO  
STUNNING

WRITTEN BY  
LEIGH SAVAGE

# Storage with Style

Just as wine enthusiasts run the gamut from casual collector to obsessed oenophile, wine storage can be found in every size and configuration and at every price point. But three keys to successful storage maximize flavor for all who buy bottles: consistency of temperature, darkness and lack of movement.

The ideal temperature for wine storage is between 55 and 60 degrees, says Robert Bass, owner of Greenville-based Kessick LLC, which designs and installs custom wine storage. » 44

RIGHT: Label out or vintage view racks allow collectors to showcase favorite bottles.

BELOW: This rack includes plentiful storage as well as a display row and an arched niche.

However, since most wine is consumed within 24 hours of purchase, a room temperature rack is fine for the more casual collector, he says.

Bass and his team often build sophisticated cellars with built-in temperature and humidity controls, along with insulation, lighting and more. But he says not every customer needs that attention to detail. "A corner closet that's not on an outside wall, anywhere that's nice and dark, is a good place," Bass says.

David Williams, co-owner of Northampton Wines in Greenville, agrees that cellars are great for enthusiasts, but any dark spot where the temperature stays constant can work. "The average person coming here stores wine for 10 minutes, not 10 years," he says. But for those who are keeping bottles around a



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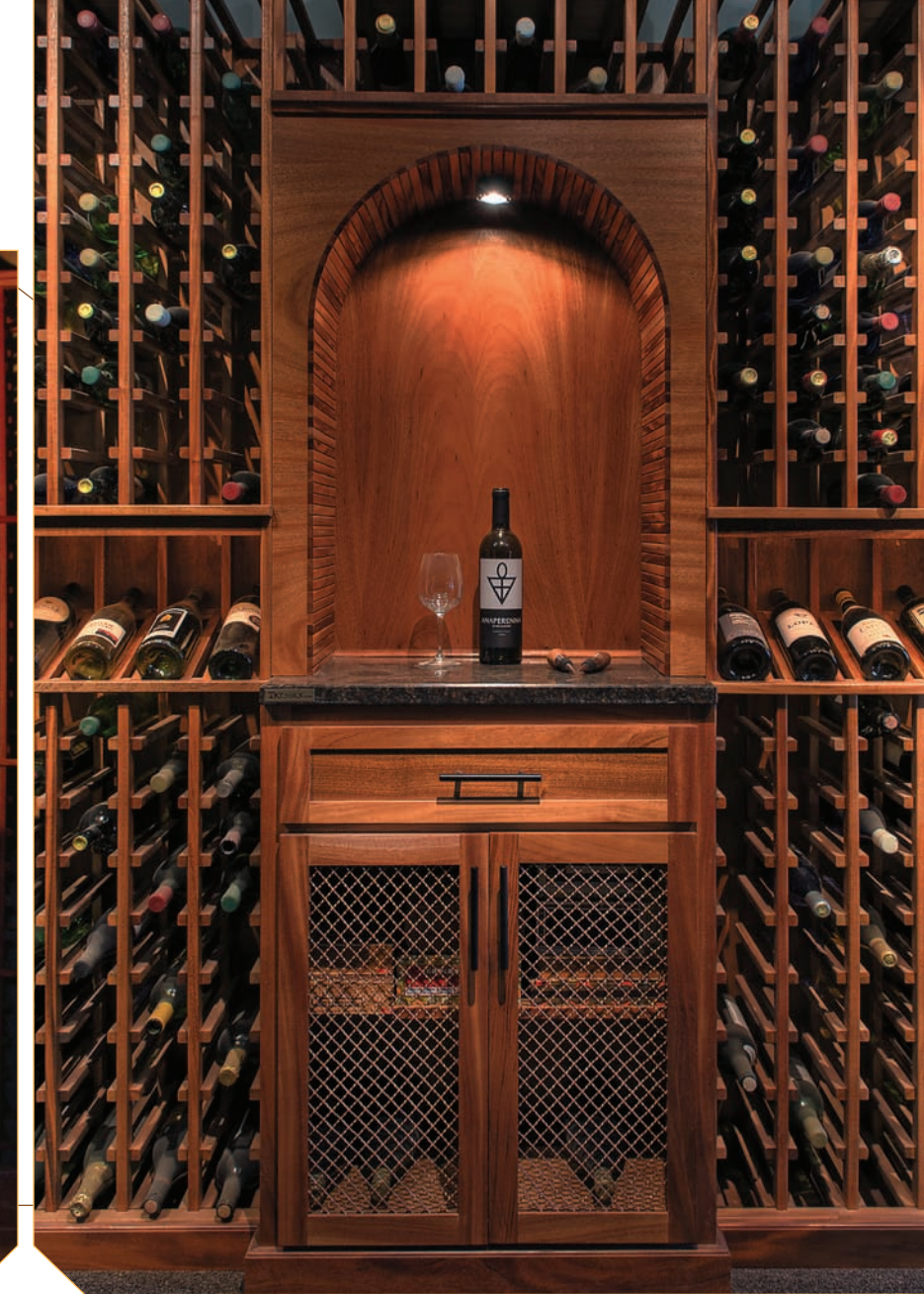


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little longer, he suggests a closet instead of a well-lit dining room or kitchen.

Both reds and whites do best in a cool environment, though consistency is more important than temperature, according to experts. Bright light and sunlight can damage wine as it ages, as can movement and vibration from heavy foot traffic or even a vacuum cleaner. Williams says wine that will be stored for more than a few days should be kept on its side, which keeps the wine in contact with the cork, preventing it from drying out. Dry corks shrink and allow air into the bottle, which can cause oxidation and ruin the flavor.

Another issue to consider for those with ample collections is the mix of storage, which often

needs to accommodate thinner Bordeaux bottles and chunkier Burgundy bottles in addition to magnums and champagne bottles. A combination of diamond bins, bulk storage and wire racks, called label out or vintage view, ensures every wine find can be accommodated. Bass takes this into consideration when he first meets with clients and works with them to create a custom design based on their particular needs.

While wine cellars and storage were once the domain of only the most upscale homebuyers, they can now be found in homes of many sizes and prices. "Wine cellars are the new home theaters," Bass says. "Before, home theaters were exciting and new, and now they are more expected. They >46

TOP, LEFT: With diamond bins, bulk storage and shelves, this rack will accommodate bottles of various sizes and shapes.

TOP, RIGHT: The lighted niche adds aesthetic appeal as well as table space ideal for entertaining.

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add appeal to a home. Similarly, if one home has a cellar and the other doesn't, it adds a real amount of appeal."

His custom-built units, which can take on a variety of configurations, are typically made from mahogany, which resists mildew and moisture – a must in an environment with elevated humidity. While a full wine cellar requires a larger space, he has created many in closets or in the unused space underneath staircases. "We can add proper insulation, a cooling unit, lighting, doors and wall materials," he says. "It can be as simple or as involved as someone wants it to be."

Many customers are seeking the aesthetic flourishes that add function and style to the area. "Entertainment is what it's all about," Bass says. "A wine cellar adds an element of entertainment for guests, and most people do like to show off their storage space."


Stemware racks, tasting tables and areas to display artwork are all increasingly popular. Many also like arched niches and a display row, which allows collectors to show off their favorite bottles. Kessick also sells tasting tables crafted from reclaimed wine barrels, some of which still show the purple evidence of their former role.

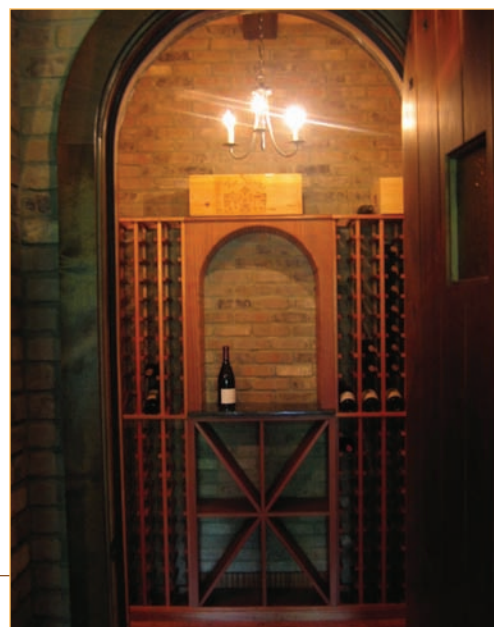
Williams says wine collecting is growing in popularity, and the Upstate is no exception.



Customers who enjoy the occasional glass of wine sometimes turn into enthusiasts with massive collections and increasing storage needs.

In response to growing demand, Bass is currently building a wine cellar that could be considered a boarding facility for collectors' favorite vintages. He'll have 40 lockers that customers can rent to expand their storage space or to use while storage is being built. Each will have climate control, a security system and even a backup generator to ensure proper storage in any condition.

He says similar services are springing up in other areas, and he expects local wine aficionados to jump at the chance to use it. "They are looking for an excuse to buy more wine," he says. "This gives them one." 



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