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Stellar Cellars

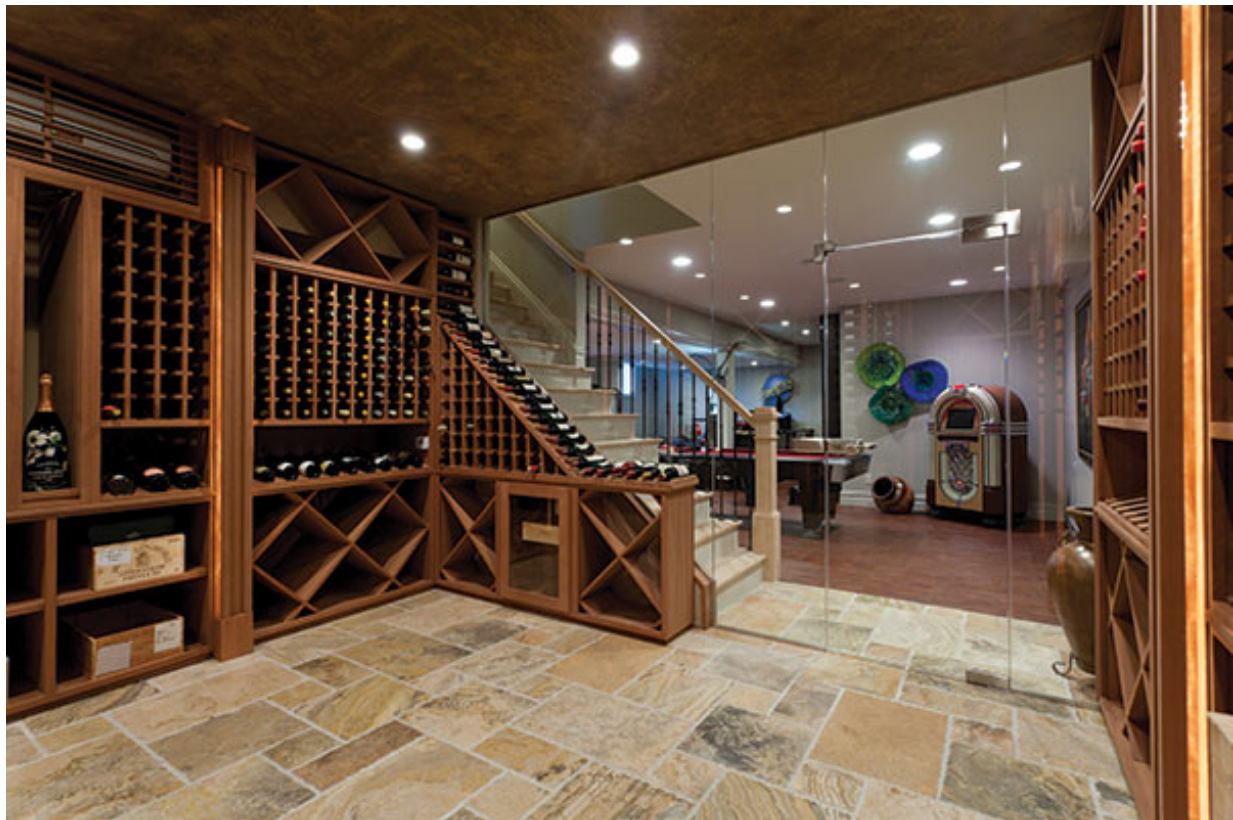
By Lauren
Payne



Consider the statistics: New Jersey ranks fourth in the nation in wine consumption, trailing only California, Florida and New York. Garden State consumers purchased a total of 13.7 million cases of wine in 2010, up 3.1 percent from the previous year, according to the Beverage Information Group. The United States as a whole is now the top wine-consuming nation in the world, at 330 million cases in 2010. Just where are we supposed to put all that vino?

In a wine cellar, of course. "Wine cellars have become what the theater room was in the '90s," says Curt Dahl, who, with his partner Joe Kline, own Joseph & Curtis Custom Wine Cellars in Watchung. "Our business has exploded in the last few years, along with the explosion of wine sales."

The pair has built custom wine cellars all over the state and at any given time have about 25 projects under way. "They are all sizes," Dahl says. "One is for 210 bottles and another is for 6,000." Designed and built in basements, dining rooms, off kitchens, even taking over a home office, each cellar is unique. "Give me a niche and I can make a wine cellar out of it," jokes Dahl. Some have simple wooden racks, others are built into rock; some are enclosed spaces, others have elaborate tasting rooms.



Building a wine cellar is a personal, quality-of-life decision. Does it add to the value of your home? That depends. "It's like a pool. Some buyers want one and others do not," says Christine Haley, a Realtor with Ocean Pointe Realtors, in Sea Girt. "It will add value in that it's a quality amenity, but ultimately, a wine cellar should be installed for personal enjoyment."

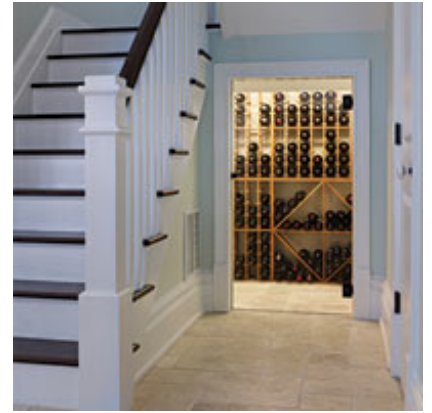
"It absolutely adds value to a house," says Dahl, "but most importantly, a wine cellar adds value to day-to-day life."

Red, White, and Cool

Curt Dahl of Joseph & Curtis Custom Wine Cellars (908-337-2204; josephandcurtis.com) offers these tips for starting a collection and storing wine:

- Identify your wine-drinking patterns. Are you buying wine that you're going to drink in the next two to three months? If so, you don't really need a cooling system, he says. Wine racks work fine and are available in a plethora of shapes, styles and prices. On the other hand, if you're exploring complex vintages and want to wait and drink the wine when it's ready, start off with a small cellar or even a wine fridge. Many under-counter wine refrigerators fit in the space of a dishwasher and hold 50-some bottles for about \$800.

- What's your space situation and how many bottles do you want to store? Dahl and Kline have built cellars in a china closet, under a staircase, in a home office and more. They've built them for as few as 100 bottles and as many as 100,000 bottles. "My wife recently said, 'We don't use the living room; let's make it a wine cellar.' So we're slowly putting it together," says Dahl. "It'll be a cross between a wine cellar and a tasting room—a destination spot for people to sit, drink and relax."



- Hire a professional to do it right. Yes, you can buy a wine-cellar kit online, but it still needs to be installed correctly. Proper insulation is the single most important feature of a wine cellar, says Dahl. "It's not air conditioning, it's refrigeration. What's behind the walls is really important."



•Proper temperature is also important. You should cool the whites and the reds. “Most people drink whites too cold and reds too warm,” Dahl says. He suggests the reds be stored at 60 degrees and the whites at 55 degrees. If space doesn’t allow for separate zones, set the temperature at 60 degrees and put the whites on the bottom racks since cold air sinks.



Resources:

Architect: John Lederer, AIA, Lederer & Wright Partnership, Bay Head; 732-892-0020

Builder/designer: Joseph & Curtis Custom Wine Cellars, Watchung; 908-337-2204

Builder/designer: Robert Klaus, Freehold; 732-625-8188

Builder/designer: Cellars this page, Joseph & Curtis Custom Wine Cellars.

For more information, here are a few websites we found helpful:

Wineinstitute.org

Wineenthusiast.com

Wineracksamerica.com

Winecellarinnovations.com

Vintagecellars.com

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