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Pam's Wine Cellar design and project featured in the December 2010 issue of Milwaukee's Lifestyle Magazine



Stellar Cellars

DON'T LET BUDGET OR SPACE LIMIT YOUR DREAMS OF A WINE ROOM

BY ANNE WANGMAN

The size of one's wine cellar isn't necessarily indicative of one's passion for wine. "A wine cellar can be as simple as a converted walk-in closet in the basement to more elaborate spaces like building a whole new room," says Jim Hackbarth owner of Sonoma Wine Galleries in Menomonee Falls.

Spaces without cooling systems are considered "natural" wine cellars. They are often located in the basements of older homes and are isolated from anything that could drastically change the temperature like a furnace or windows. Because temperature and humidity should be regulated and maintained (temperature between 55 and 65 degrees and a humidity level of 60 to 70 percent), insulation and cooling systems can be installed in most custom cellars.

Pam Kopp, a designer for Chicago's Wine Cellar Innovations, has installed numerous cellars in the Milwaukee area. "If you are an informal collector, wine can be stored in your pantry or basement. However, once the bottles grow in number and there is no longer extra room for storage, a wine cellar will keep them intact. Custom cellars not only provide storage for your wine bottles, but also give aesthetic value to your home," Kopp says.

Both Hackbarth and Kopp recommend redwood or mahogany for racking. "These woods are very durable. Raised in the cool, damp forests of California, redwood is naturally resistant to the cool, humid atmosphere desired for long-term wine storage," Kopp says. "It resists rot and mildew, shrinking and warping. Mahogany also resists warping, swelling, moisture and decay and can be stained to keep it from mildew and deterioration due to temperature changes," she says.

The most economical choice of racking wood is pine. It can be stained to match any décor. However, because it is soft, it cannot be used for temperature-controlled cellars. Be sure to use stains and finishes that are water-based to avoid odors and vapors that can contaminate your collection.



Wine cellars add aesthetic value to any home, such as this one designed by Pam Kopp.