

# Some notes on storing your fine wines

Wine drinking is now firmly established here in the UK. Drinkers are becoming more knowledgeable and as a result the interest in, and enjoyment of, better quality wines priced in the £6.00 to £20.00 price bracket is growing.

These more interesting wines improve and mature as they age and generally increase in price. Longer term cellaring of wine is normally done by the chateau, shippers or a specialist cellar here in the UK; but this is a costly business for the wine buyer.

The alternative is to buy the wines when young and store them yourself at home; however this requires the correct situation and conditions. The guide below offers some recommendations:-

<b>Stable temperature</b>	Ideally 12/14 C°
<b>Darkness</b>	To avoid UV light affecting the wine
<b>Vibration</b>	Fine wines can be harmed or 'bruised' by shock and rough handling
<b>Ventilation</b>	To avoid absorption of unwanted odours
<b>Storage</b>	Bottles laid on side to keep cork moist
<b>Access</b>	Easy access to individual bottles, so each can be removed without disturbing others and positioned so the label can be read with the minimum amount of movement.
<b>Location</b>	A tidy and organised storage system so bottles are easily found
<b>Flexibility</b>	Bottles come in different shapes and sizes so it is an advantage to have a system that will accommodate these variations
<b>Humidity</b>	The ideal condition is 60 to 75Rh

To replicate chateau, shipper or specialist storage situation and to meet the 'ideal' can cost a lot of money. But at home the wine lover can, with a bit of care and the right layout achieve near perfect conditions. Now to look at the options available:-

First, temperature – it is worth providing the simplest of insulation and use a storage system that helps stabilize the temperature of stored bottles. If the temperature ranges from 12C° to 18 C° this is not the end of the world if the process is slow and certainly better than an open rack in the kitchen. Darkness in the crudest form could be covering with a blanket. Be sure not to locate next to a refrigerator or any other item that creates vibration.

A garage is often a popular location, be sure to line the wall with some insulation before erecting the racking. If at all possible do not run the car engine in the garage or store strong chemicals or anything with a penetrating odour.

If space allows build an enclosure- say (150mm thermalite, 60mm insulation, a membrane plus 20mm cladding,) and the ceiling to a similar level of insulation. This will provide an ideal enclosure that could have a chiller fitted or try two small fans one supplying air and the other extracting, both operating via a thermostat and time clock set at say 0300hrs to 0500hrs to use the cold night air providing the temperature is lower than the enclosure.

This is the basic specification we use when creating an insulated room for our customers, prior to fitting their Bacchus Cavovin storage system. Alternatively we can prepare a specification for your builder/carpenter for a small fee.

The racking can be chosen from the many on the market. We obviously would suggest you look at our CAVOvin it has both insulation and balanced humidity properties, easy to install – despite being rugged and strong it can be taken with you if you move house.

To maintain a more constant and accurate temperature you will need to look at a conditioner designed for a wine cellar. This can be a through the wall unit or a split system and there is also one that fits into a door which has the advantage of not taking up valuable racking space.

In addition to temperature control there are humidity control systems and although expensive they can be necessary in dry atmospheres or where the very best wines are being kept for investment.

To summarise there are many ways to store your wine and cost is an important factor so it is certainly worth speaking to a specialist.

Whatever type of storage is chosen, a wine should rest undisturbed in a dark location, away from vibration and at a reasonably stable temperature. If so, it will certainly fare better than being left in the corner of the garage or kitchen!

Remember, a cellar is an investment which will protect your fine wines for years to come!

**We are always happy to give advice just call me at the office, Roger Gillett**

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