

ORANGE COUNTY HOME

Wine cellar is the new 'necessity' in luxury home

Designing a wine cellar requires a combination of art and science. Although many cellars are strictly reserved for serious collections, with a little imagination these dark, musty caverns can be transformed into intriguing spaces.



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At the Newport Beach home of interior designer Ann Glassman and her husband, John Stoscher, dinner guests are first invited to their wine cellar, designed to look like a tasting room at a vineyard.

"We serve appetizers, choose the wine and open it up down there," Glassman said. "It's the perfect place to start a dinner party."

Requests for wine-cellar designs have increased with the trend toward entertaining at home, she says. And new-home builders have begun to recognize the connection between wine cellars and entertainment as part of an affluent lifestyle.

"It's the new necessity in high-end homes," said Donna Boatman, sales counselor for Altamura, a new-home devel-

opment in Nellie Gail Ranch.

The neighborhood of 52 luxury homes under construction by the Newport Beach-based William Lyon Homes offers optional wine storage in each of its three plans. Because the options range from closet-type storage to a 395-square-foot, walk-in cellar complete with racking and cooling systems, buyers have to make this decision early in the building phase, Boatman said.

About half of these early buyers chose one of the available wine storage options, she said. Ron Loutherbach, owner and founder of The Wine Club in Santa Ana, has been helping customers fill their cellars for more than 30 years. Although his shop offers one of the largest selections of wines west of Chicago, he says not to be too quick to fill your cellar in the first year.

"Your taste changes," Loutherbach said. "You'll want to try different vintages and selections."

If you're a true oenophile (wine lover) who would like to collect and age wine properly, then a wine cellar is a necessity. Having it look nice is just a bonus.

For a short course on wine storage, remember the key elements: temperature, humidity, light and vibration.

The most important consideration to remember is to keep a constant, cool temperature, because fluctuations can damage your wine investment. Higher temperatures increase a wine's maturity, while cooler temperatures retard the aging process.

Loutherbach recommends a temperature range of 55-65 degrees Fahrenheit for storing and aging wine to drink. Lower temperatures are used for long-term storage of wine kept for investment purposes, to slow the aging process. He keeps his \$4 million wine inventory at 65 with a relative humidity of 70 percent.

"Humidity higher than that can cause some mold to grow around the labels," he said. Lower humidity levels can dry the outside of the cork, allowing air to leak into the wine. Exposure to oxygen causes immediate aging and that nasty vinegar taste, he explained.

Visitors to The Wine Club may notice the absence of windows. That's because ultraviolet light causes premature aging of wine, just as it does skin. The light breaks down some of the wine's components and can produce unpleasant aromas.

And finally, don't shake the wine. Excessive vibration can



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VINTAGE LOOKS: For the 2003 Philharmonic Society's House of Design in Orange Park Acres, designer Barbara McLane transformed the basement storage room into a subterranean wine cellar, above. Below, French doors open to the wine cellar at the Newport Beach home of interior designer Ann Glassman and John Stoscher.

disturb a wine's sediment balance. Wine should be organized and stored so the bottles do not have to be moved frequently.

If there's no room for a cellar in your home, a wine cabinet can be a convenient storage solution. Most wine cabinets are basically refrigeration units that maintain the proper temperatures and humidity. A wine cabinet is less costly than building a cellar, and when you move, you

