





IN VINO VERITAS

Wine rooms trend away from Old World to contemporary

BY KIMBERLY NICOLETTI

Historians have traced the allure of wine back to 7000 B.C. in China. The oldest winery — to date — is in an Armenian cave dating back to 4100 B.C.

Yet, learning about, and collecting, vast amounts of wine has become highly fashionable only in the last 15 or so years, says Doug DeChant, president of Shepherd Resources, Inc. AIA Architects in Edwards.

Most wine aficionados enjoy the rich history of wine as much as they savor the aroma, taste and relaxation the elixir brings. Learning such details as how people considered wine safer to drink than water in the late 1300s as the Black Plague swept through Europe and Asia; how the French have considered winemaking an art for more than two thousand years; how monks protected wine-making knowledge during the turbulent Middle Ages until the French Revolution led to the confiscation of Church-owned vineyards; and how laws considered taking vines from a

specific region stealing fuels wine enthusiasts' passion for literally tasting history.

These days, books like "Wine Wars" by Mike Veseth claim that globalization, which is flooding the market with an array of varieties and branded products like Charles Shaw, sold in Trader Joe's, threaten to "dumb down" wine unless enthusiasts fight to save "wine's soul."

But whether wine lovers collect rare varieties to preserve the soul of wine or they simply indulgently sip great reds and whites, most need proper storage space, which is where wine rooms come into play.

UNCORKING NEW TRENDS

Though many Vail Valley residents possess some type of storage for wine, usually the most extensive wine rooms are found in second homes.

Rooms range from holding hundreds of bottles to thousands; DeChant has built a wine room for 5,000 to 6,000 bottles. Fortunately,

companies have devised electronic tracking and retrieving systems, which deliver a specific wine with a touch of a finger and even alert owners when a bottle mysteriously goes missing, which is important if you happen to be the proud owner of an 1869 Lafite-Rothschile, which sold in 2010 for \$230,000. In addition, wine apps help organize collections by factors like vintage date, grapes, life cycles and tasting notes.

Though some homeowners still desire Old World styled wine rooms complete with seating, the majority are building rooms for storage only, says Robyn Boylan, marketing assistant for Beck Building in Vail, particularly since the advent of electronic systems, which hold more bottles in an organized fashion.

"Homeowners are (trending toward) simple and contemporary," says Dan Higbee, senior designer of California Closets in Edwards.

However, simple doesn't mean boring. He designed a "showcase, a piece of art" for an Aspen Glen client using various acrylic, high-

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gloss colored drawer faces, floor-to-ceiling partitioned cabinets, tracks underneath shelves to store up to five different sized stemware, stone countertops, and flattering light.

"Incorporating different colors pulls the other colors that are outside of the room into the wine room (so) it feels like part of the home," Higbee says.

Any time he can, DeChant incorporates wine rooms with the architecture.

For example, he designed a wine room contained within a plaster cylinder, with stairs winding down the curve to the room. Within the cylinder, he embedded round clay "holes" in simple geometric patterns. The ceiling of the wine room, which he built flush with the wooden floor of the home's main entrance, glowed with more than a dozen 4-inch, round glass billets, illuminating the entrance. Inside the wine room, two large log beams crossed one another, supporting a metal chandelier. Lalique glass placed in the walls of the wine room further accentuated the design. Wine racks included custom formed, hexagonal clay tiles embedded in the plaster for specialty bottles.

'ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL PART OF THE HOME

Similarly, Dallas Lyon, owner of Lyon Design Group in Edwards, designed plans for a Red Sky home in which the entire wall leading downstairs was all glass, so guests could view the entire wine collection. Another project in Singletree focused on large glass walls with metal bottle racks, which displayed bottles horizontally for easy identification.

"People want to be more experiential ... (by) walking a guest down through an architectural passage, and choosing the right wine for the evening," DeChant says, "and then returning to another beautiful part of the home."

In the name of ultra-experiential, DeChant worked with a renowned CEO who wanted a wine room located a couple steps down from the living room, which was fine with his wife. But when the eccentric CEO dreamt up a scheme to add a trap door in the wine room's floor that would lead to the basement, where he could take another route into the living room to "reappear," his wife put the silly stamp on his plans, so out went the trap door idea.

Currently, DeChant is working on an approximately 7-foot high, 7-foot long, 2-foot



Wine rooms can be integrated into the home with drama and style, as in these designed by Shepherd Resources, Inc. AIA Architects.



Wine rooms are not just about function, but also about beauty, as seen in this Shepherd Resources, Inc. AIA Architects design.





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thick glass wine display case, in which dining room guests will be able to view all four sides of wines stacked two bottles deep. But perhaps the most unique aspect of the glass display is its disappearing act: With a push of a button, the entire glass case descends into the basement, becoming flush with the dining room's wooden floor.

Glass has become a popular material in wine displays because, generally speaking, it's the wine collections homeowners want to focus on and discuss, as opposed to the actual wine room, DeChant says.

"I think wine takes people places," DeChant says. "(Hosts) can talk about where the wine originated, appreciate the differences and nuances and savor how it marries with various cuisine."

A TASTE OF THE OLD WORLD

While sleek, contemporary wine rooms currently reign, some homeowners prefer the Old World atmosphere of a wine room, defined by large stone arches, stone or rustic wood flooring and ceilings, use of wine barrels or cork wall patterns, and an impressive, heavy door with ornate metal, sometimes reclaimed from jails century's past, or other historical landmarks.

"Most people associate wine with Europe," Lyon says, "so they like that European flair."

More traditionalists still occasionally request tables and chairs in their wine room, but the 55-60 degree temperature, lack of sunlight and extra humidity doesn't support an entirely relaxing experience. Still, some opt for such hosting — they just dress warmly, Boylan says.

"It's such a specialty room, you can do whatever ... make it fun and very user-friendly."