



INTRODUCING HALLIDAY EXPERIENCES

LUXURY AUSTRALIAN WINE TRIPS



HUNTER VALLEY *highlights*

- Five-star Halliday-rated winery tastings
 - Three-course Chef's Hatted restaurant lunch
 - Tailored tastings straight from barrels
 - Private driver



BAROSSA VALLEY *highlights*

- Five-star Halliday-rated winery tastings
 - Birth-year wine tastings
 - Vineyard suite stay
 - Private driver



MARGARET RIVER *highlights*

- Five-star Halliday-rated winery tastings
- Immersive sparkling tasting
- Four-course tasting menu at the region's restaurant of the year
 - Behind-the-scenes winemaking experience
 - Private driver

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FORTH & WONDER
LUXURY TRAVEL DESIGNERS

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GRAND DESIGNS



Step inside three distinctly different home cellars and learn about their design and build processes. We also share some expert insights on what to consider before creating a cellar, plus 10 essential wine storage rules.



COMPILED BY **AMELIA BALL**

LOCATION THROUGH THE BUTLER'S PANTRY IN THE KITCHEN **SIZE** 0.7M X 1.8M, TOTAL 2.5 SQUARE METRES **BOTTLE CAPACITY** 500
CHALLENGES DISCOVERING THE OLD HOME'S WALLS WERE NO LONGER SQUARE **THE BRIEF** TO CREATE A CELLAR FOR A BURGEONING WINE COLLECTION THAT CAN ALSO BECOME A FLEXIBLE SPACE FOR THE HOME'S NEXT OWNERS IF THEY DON'T COLLECT WINE.

THE FIRST CELLAR

PHOTOGRAPHY **RICHARD WHITFIELD**

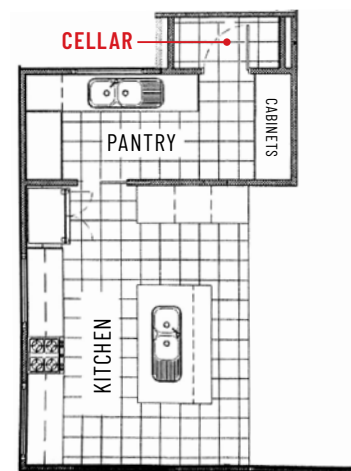


WHEN CIARA first started dating her now-husband Stewart, he didn't own a single wine glass. Times have definitely changed - the couple is about to finish renovating their 90-year-old Brisbane Queenslander, complete with a cellar for their growing wine collection. "Being in Queensland, the weather is pretty harsh, so we were particularly worried about the extreme heat fluctuations," Ciara says. "What we've done is position the room so it doesn't get any sunlight on the external wall," she says. They also ensured the walls were double thickness, and added high-grade insulation to the walls, floor and ceiling. The space doesn't get any direct light, with just a single, mellow downlight installed, and it is also in a low-traffic area of the home. "The biggest thing we struggled with at the time, and we probably made the right decision, is that the cellar was originally going to be twice as big," Ciara says. "But then we took into account this is not our 'forever home' and we still want it to be useful for the next family, so we added an additional metre of space to our ensuite. The double basin won!"

The couple has been doing most of the work on the house themselves, with the help of Stewart's dad Dennis, a master builder based in South Australia. Long before the couple found this house, Stewart and Dennis made a hardwood wine rack together, which was a key consideration when designing their cellar. "We built the back wall so it would fit the rack. It's a really special item that we'll never part with," Ciara says. They feel the same way about a fruit bowl that Stewart's dad made from an old jarrah post he salvaged from Penfolds after working on the winery's cellar. The bowl is on display in the cellar, along with their decanters, glasses and wine books. Stewart says a cellar was always going to take priority in their renovations. "We've spent some money on our wines, so we thought it would be appropriate," he says. "If we'd had an unlimited budget, we would have made the cellar temperature-controlled and put a door on it, although there is the ability to put one on." They hit a few hurdles while working on the house, but Stewart says they only

encountered a couple with the cellar. "We had to modify it a bit to make the ensuite slightly bigger, and for the ducted air-conditioning unit to be installed. And because the house is 90 years old, the walls had moved and weren't plumb, so that made it more challenging!"

The cellar space also incorporates a wine cabinet, which is home to their particularly special bottles, including a 2011 Grange - marking the year the couple met - plus their favourite Champagnes and South Australian reds. They plan to buy another wine cabinet and also look forward to fixing racking to the wall, with large brackets already in place that can hold more than 350kg. However, other elements elsewhere in the house must come first. When it's time to celebrate the house's completion, though, a bottle of Cristal is waiting. ●



"THE SPACE DOESN'T GET ANY DIRECT LIGHT, WITH JUST A SINGLE, MELLOW DOWNLIGHT INSTALLED, AND IT IS ALSO IN A LOW-TRAFFIC AREA OF THE HOME."



STEWART'S TIP

"Identify what you want and need, plan early and build around that. If we hadn't identified we wanted shelving and if everything had been gyprocked, the walls wouldn't be able to hold it."



LOCATION A FORMER STUDY, ADJOINING THE TV ROOM WITH A GLASS DOOR **SIZE** 3.5M X 3M, TOTAL 10.5 SQUARE METRES
BOTTLE CAPACITY 930 **CHALLENGES** MINIMAL, BUT IT DID INVOLVE A UNIQUE DESIGN SO ITS ELEMENTS WERE ALL CUSTOM MADE
THE BRIEF TO CREATE A WINE ROOM AND CELLAR THAT WOULD ACT AS A SHOWROOM AND BECOME A PART OF THE HOUSE

THE WINE ROOM

PHOTOGRAPHY **MICHAEL AMENDOLIA**



PAUL'S TIP

"Spend the time getting very clear on what you want and making sure the builder is in sync."

IT WAS A TRIP to New Zealand that did it. To Cloudy Bay, to be precise. The famed Marlborough winery has a private house on its property, complete with a secret cellar, and as soon as Paul and his wife Judi discovered it several years ago, they were inspired to create their own. "The Cloudy Bay cellar is hidden behind a wall, which you lean on and it opens," Paul says. "It took us two days to find it!" The resulting wine room in the couple's Sydney home may not be so secret – it's behind a glass door next to the TV room – but the couple did borrow a number of design ideas from their New Zealand inspiration. These include grey slate floor tiles and pebbles around the edges of the room, which all combines to create an impressive space that showcases much of the couple's wine collection.

The wine room was part of a total house renovation that Judi ran over a nine-month period, requiring all building works to align. "I'm absolutely thrilled with the results," Paul says. "We have a cellar under the house that can hold the same amount of bottles, and we built that when we moved in about 17 years ago, but that's a very basic storage space and hard to get to, so the intention was never to make it a place where we took guests." Paul knew from the outset he didn't want diamond-shaped racks, so to ensure the space became more of a showroom than storage area, the custom-made racks combine solid cedar, cedar veneer and powder-coated steel. "I didn't want timber between every bottle," Paul says. "Firstly, it takes up too much room, but it also means you see the timber rather than the wine." The use of timber throughout, however, helps to warm the space, including cedar veneer wall panelling. The display shelves are fitted with LED lighting, which is also used around the room, chosen for its low heat emissions.

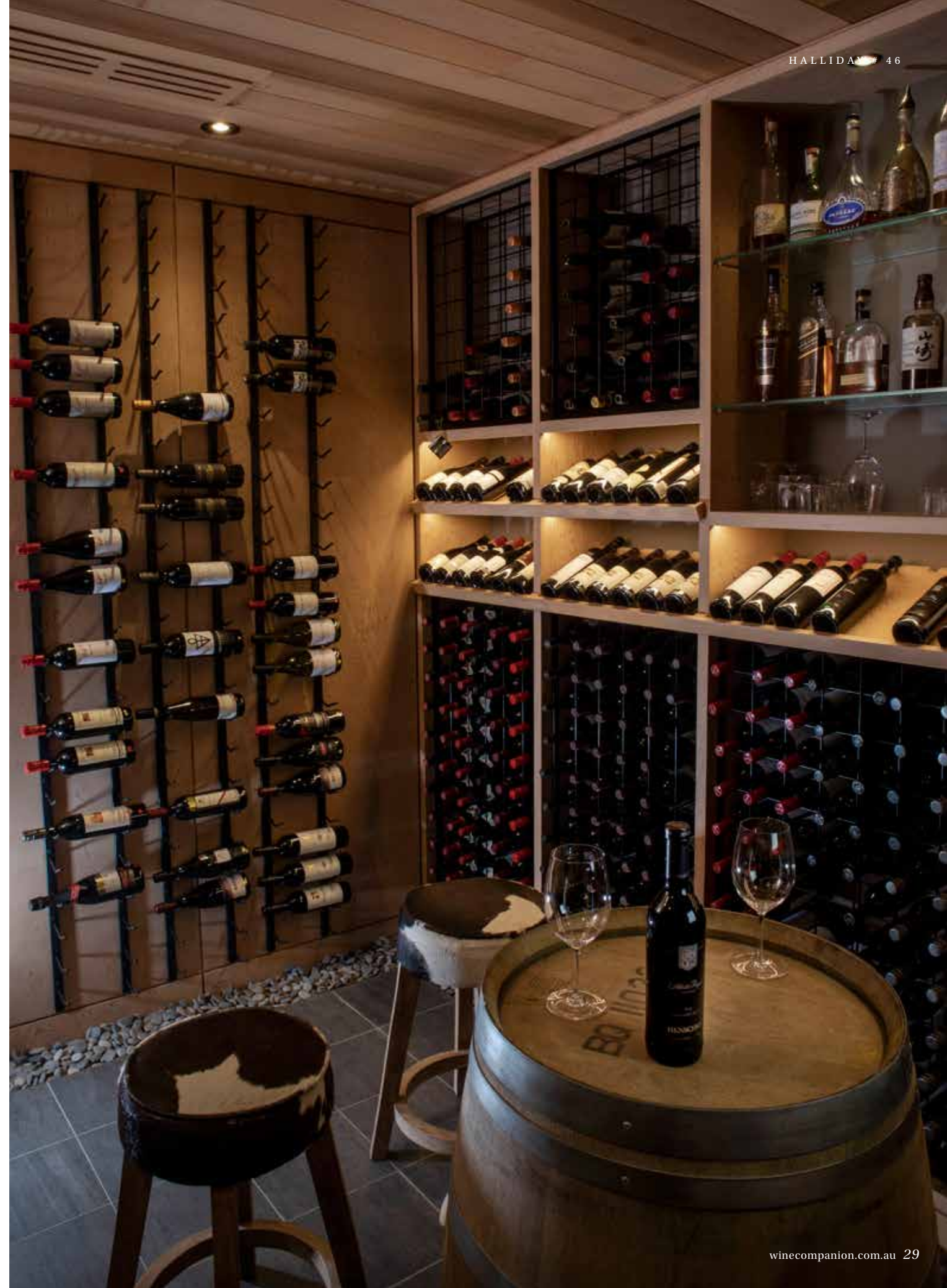
The wine room, created by Signature Cellars, has proven so reliable that Paul doesn't need to tinker with settings. A concealed refrigeration system controls the temperature and humidity, incorporating a continuous running fan. This circulates the air to maintain a constant temperature, ensuring consistency from floor level to the ceiling.

In addition, the walls and ceiling were lined with extruded polystyrene coolroom panels to create an insulated 'box'. The room also includes a wine cabinet to keep a selection of whites and rosés at drinking temperature.

Paul says about 85 per cent of their wines are red, and while the collection was once mostly Australian, around half now consists of French and Italian wines. Judi's preference for shiraz has also switched to pinot noir over time. "That's why I get a bottle of shiraz out as often as I can!" Paul says. They tend to drink most of their wines at around eight to 10 years old, which Paul manages with a colour-coded sticker system. Red indicates a wine needs to be opened "sooner rather than later", green indicates a wine is ready, yellow shows it's almost ready, and if a bottle doesn't have a sticker, the rule is to leave it alone. Most of their wines cost between \$40 and \$75, as that's where Paul says he finds the most value. "While I can tell the difference between a \$15, \$25 and \$35 bottle of wine, once it gets past \$100, in my view you really have to be an expert to appreciate the difference in quality and value, so I don't buy high-end wines very often."

And with just one minor thing Paul would change about the room – he wishes he'd made better use of one wall with display shelving – the couple is extremely happy. "We had a very good interior designer and architect on the project, but I was very clear on what I wanted, so that's always worth talking through." ●

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LOCATION UNDER THE HOUSE, IN A FORMER STORAGE AREA WITH A WELL **SIZE** 5.6M X 5.2M, TOTAL 30 SQUARE METRES
BOTTLE CAPACITY 4400 **CHALLENGES** BEING IN THE BASEMENT, DRAINAGE AND WATERPROOFING WORKS WERE VITAL
THE BRIEF TO CREATE A FUNCTIONAL BUT ATTRACTIVE PERMANENT CELLAR THAT ALSO ALLOWS FOR ENTERTAINING GUESTS

UNDER THE HOUSE



ANDREW'S TIP

"Work with someone who is experienced in building cellars. If you've never built one, you don't know what you don't know. And don't cut costs - this is an investment in your property and protects your investment in your wines."



SOMETIMES A HOUSE manages to tick all the boxes with the perfect space to convert into a cellar. This was the case for Andrew when he set about creating one in his Melbourne home. The original owners may not have had future wine storage in mind when they built the house in the 1850s, but the unique basement area, complete with storage space and a well, has proven ideal.

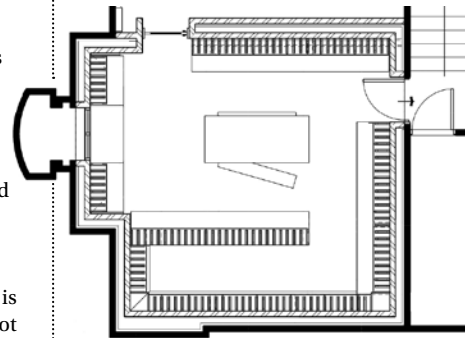
"When Cellar Creations came out to see it, Robert [Rolls] said, 'I don't give guarantees, but I'm 99.9 per cent confident you will never have a problem,'" Andrew says. And so far so good, despite a tense experience during torrential downpours soon after the cellar's completion six years ago. "I was really worried because water was draining into the well and I thought it was going to spill," he says. Happily, it did its job and the cellar remained unaffected. "I've never once had an issue," Andrew says.

After spending 11 years in the UK, Andrew and his wife, Sam, had acquired "a few thousand" mostly European wines, which needed a new home when the family returned to Australia. The treasured collection includes Champagne, "a smattering" of white Burgundy and riesling, plus other wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux and Tuscany. Today, the collection is around 4000 bottles strong, with 20 per cent made up of Australian wines. One of the first things the couple needed to determine was their required bottle capacity. "We have now almost stopped buying wine and the reason is that we drink about three bottles a week, which is 150 bottles a year, and that means I've got 30 years of drinking in the cellar, which will put me into my 80s," he says. "If we start to get through it too quickly, we can always buy more."

The building process involved dealing with rising damp, drainage works, waterproofing and a new internal wall. This all worked to restrict any water issues and future moisture from wreaking havoc. The space was then insulated, allowing for a break between the panels and walls, and a cooling unit was installed. "Again we got very lucky because the unit sits outside the house, and there was an existing cavity to run the piping," Andrew says.

The couple's initial vision was for exposed brick walls, but this can sometimes lead to drainage issues, so they instead opted for a full timber fit-out. This incorporates hand-cut cedar lining and racking, which is two bottles deep to accommodate the extensive collection. The timber panelling also features on the roof, which wasn't the original idea. "We had wanted exposed beams, but when they were revealed, they weren't very attractive," Andrew says. "Even six years later, you can still smell the cedar."

Andrew and Sam love to take guests into their cellar for a pre-dinner drink when entertaining. And while the space has a dining table for 10 people, they don't tend to linger. "No one wants to sit in a cellar for dinner when it's 16 degrees," he says. They are extremely happy with their space, which holds a number of sentimental bottles, including wines from their sons' birth years, plus others that mark their wedding. "We have some 1991 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti and we open a bottle each year on our anniversary." ●



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SO, YOU'RE READY TO CREATE A CELLAR IN YOUR HOME. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW? WE GATHER SOME EXPERT ADVICE.

Not everyone has the ability to excavate under the house or can spare a room solely for wine, but almost any space can be converted into a cellar, according to Robert Rolls of Cellar Creations on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. "If you're eliminating structural works and not creating a new space, you've got a good cost-saving point," says the long-time registered builder. "We sometimes also pinch a section of a room."

A key thing to note, Robert says, is that once a cellar is fully insulated, the area will have lost some space. Ensuring easy access to the area is also essential, and ceilings need to be able to incorporate piping for ducted climate-control systems, which are commonly installed in cellars both above and below the ground. "The unit can be remote, and the system takes care of the temperature and humidity levels," Robert says.

Insulation is critical for all wine cellar spaces, as are thermal breaks, which Robert says are vital for preventing condensation. When going underground, a building approach that considers sensible structural, waterproofing and drainage solutions is imperative, so it's critical to engage a registered builder. After these initial works, a cellar space is ready for insulating, a climate-control system and fitting out.

"Putting in a basement is much more common than 10 years ago, and customised design and creative use of space is at the forefront of our cellars," Robert says. He suggests going below ground is ideal for new homes, especially with city property sizes often being small, and the required green space for new residential sites at around 35 per cent. "Going underground can have its challenges, but anything is possible."

Costs will always vary according to the project, but Neil Smallman of Sydney-based Signature Cellars tends to be upfront about ballpark figures so people understand the prices involved. Bespoke cedar wine racking, for example, can cost up to \$25,000 alone. Neil suggests medium-scale wine rooms cost around \$55,000 to \$65,000, but some can cost up to \$200,000, depending on size, scope and fit-out.

Neil says that a common challenge in the building process is allocating space for the cellar's services, such as piping, ducting, electrical and drainage, plus climate-control systems need access to an external wall. From a wine perspective, it's also important to assess exactly what makes up each wine collection. "Bottles are different shapes and sizes, from half-bottles to magnums, and a lot of serious collectors also keep wine in wooden boxes," he says. "Getting the balance between great aesthetic looks and the most practical storage capacity is the key."

Overall, engage experienced professionals early and plan well from the start. "We've had customers who've had their builder fit out a cellar with insulation, but not made any provision for the climate control or electrics, so we've had to rip it out and replace it to fit the right services," Neil says. "Other customers have ordered wine racking online or from overseas only to find it doesn't fit once the room has been properly insulated." ●

"Getting the balance between great aesthetic looks and the most practical storage capacity is the key."

Neil Smallman, Signature Cellars

LEE HARDCASTLE, DIRECTOR OF BRISBANE'S ENIGMA INTERIORS, SHARES HIS TIPS ON CREATING THE ULTIMATE HOME CELLAR.



- Consider storage for magnums and larger Champagnes, as well as traditional 750ml bottles
- Use materials that won't ruin wine labels
- Allow space for your wine collection to grow
- Plan ahead to maximise bottle capacity, using a cellar's full height in savvy ways
- Incorporate areas for serving and decanting, and glassware storage, if needed

- Determine whether you will want to entertain in the space
- Consider space for placing boxes of wines before they get transferred into the racking
- Choose natural materials over synthetics to reduce chemical odours
- Consider security, even if it's simply a door that locks
- Decide whether you need space for a wine cabinet to keep some bottles at ready-to-drink temperatures

- Ensure shelving is over-engineered so the racks and walls can hold your quantity
- Consider a feature display area for your most prized bottles
- Section the space so as to categorise your wines, whether by style or region, when bottles are ready, or another approach
- Good lighting is essential, and LED is ideal as it doesn't heat up. Warm lighting is suggested for classic designs, with cool, bright options better suited to contemporary fit-outs.

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CELLARING GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER WHETHER YOU'RE PLANNING AN UNDERGROUND CELLAR OR ASSESSING THE BEST SPOT TO STASH BOXES OF WINE IN YOUR HOUSE.



BUY MORE THAN ONE

Stocking up on dozens of a wine is not always feasible, but try to buy multiples when you can. That way, you won't have to agonise over when to open just the one bottle, and you'll also get insights into its development by opening each bottle at a different point.



BUY DIVERSELY

Don't fill your collection with just one type of wine. Even if you love only one or two grape varieties or styles, source examples from different regions and overseas, and ask your retailer or favourite sommelier about wines with similar flavour profiles, and stock up for later. You'll be glad you did.



UP AND DOWN

Wines sealed with screwcaps can be stored in any position, but if a bottle has a cork, the wine should remain in contact with it - ideally on its side. This will prevent the cork from drying out, which can lead to oxidation and other issues.



SEIZE THE DAY

Waiting for that elusive moment when a wine is at its peak can be futile. It's easy to think a wine isn't ready, or an occasion not quite right for a special bottle, but drinking a wine early - while it's still drinking well - is always better than opening it too late.



KEEP IT CONSISTENT

The ideal temperature for wine storage lies between 12 and 16 degrees, but minimising climatic fluctuations can prove more important than the actual degrees. Even if your wines are stored in warmer conditions, a consistent temperature will help them stay in peak form.



DARK IS BEST

Exposing your collection to light, particularly UV and fluorescent lighting, can seriously damage your wines; light can trigger a chemical reaction that leads to changes in a wine's flavours. Keep your collection in a dark place and the wines will reward you.



DO NOT DISTURB

Aside from regularly checking cork-sealed bottles for damage (emerging corks and low levels are two sure signs of trouble), bottles should not be moved. This also means avoiding storage near vibrating fridges and well-trod thoroughfares where frequent footsteps will disturb their slumber.



SEEK BALANCE

Wines that will age well tend to show balance on release, with all elements in harmony. If any one character is too obvious in a young wine - tannins, oak and alcohol are regular offenders - age can make it more pronounced, rather than improve the wine.



KNOW WHAT YOU LOVE

Visiting wineries that offer museum wines, attending back-vintage dinners and sourcing older wines can show you what you truly want in your collection. Sampling new releases against their older counterparts is an excellent way to learn what you can look forward to over time - or not!



HAVE A SYSTEM

Whether it's a simple spreadsheet or the Halliday Virtual Cellar, set up a system so you know what's in your collection. List your wines, their region, vintage and price, plus the bottles you've already enjoyed and when, with a few notes about them.