



Canadians are drinking and buying more wine than ever. The most recent data from Statistics Canada show a 5% annual increase in wine consumption. A nation once closely associated with drinking domestic beer and spirits is increasingly opting for a glass of wine made in one of the country's emerging growing regions or from around the world.

In February, Vinexpo released a detailed report on the world's wine and spirits consumption that revealed Canadians enjoy more than 15 litres of wine per capita, or roughly 100 glasses per year. Having already moved into the No. 7 spot in world wine consumption, Canada is projected to increase its consumption by nearly 8% by 2018, the 12th biannual report indicates—more the double the global average.

As our taste for wine evolves, Canadians are becoming more knowledgeable about the different styles available and the need to

properly store cherished bottles in the right conditions. Everyone from the occasional wine drinker to the ardent collector is bringing their passion home through various storage options, ranging from simple racking systems or small fridges for short-time cellaring to elaborate, purpose-built wine cellars or specialized “wine rooms.”

“It’s like golf,” says Janice Bednarz of Toronto’s Papro Wine Cellars & Consulting. “It’s become trendy. It’s become the thing to have.”

A company that’s been in the construction industry for more than 20 years, Papro has specialized in wine cellars for almost a decade and watched interest in their business grow alongside the wine boom, with clients including Mazenga Building Group, Mattamy Homes, Monarch Homes and Balmoral Custom Homes. With finished projects across the province and design work completed in the U.S. and Mexico, thanks to business garnered from their online site, Bednarz says the projects are as varied as their client base.



NOT?

Stellar cellars are on the rise

By Chris Waters

This \$60,000 Mediterranean-style cellar at Fourteen Estates' Barclay Fieldstone "Grand Villa" includes a wine barrel sink, a mahogany dinner table, a custom iron door with leaded glass, deadbolt lock and vine & grapes inlay—all built into a recessed arched tunnel entry—as well as slate flooring, LED lighting, custom stonework and wine racks made by one of the builder's own carpenters complete the stunning package.

“Wine has become a topic of social interaction. You have your trendy new young wine drinker right through to collectors who see their wine collections as an investment and desire optimum storage conditions for aging five, 10 to 15 years,” Bednarz explains.

The company's interests run the gamut from design to building to installation—virtually everything short of suggesting what fine vintages their clients should stock in their new cellars. For that, Bednarz says, they have a partnership with a wine management company that can advise on purchasing decisions and when to drink bottles for best enjoyment. “We don't claim to be wine specialists,” she says. “We know how to properly take care of wine.”

Wine cellars are still a niche product, but a growing one. Figures from the LBCO state that most purchases are made en route to consumption. It's typically only a matter of hours from the time of purchase to pouring. However, as sales at Ontario wineries continue

to spike and gourmet travellers return home with keepsake bottles from wine tours at home and abroad, personal cellars are being developed to safely store these prized collections.

And as wine cellars are becoming a significant selling feature in model homes in high-end developments, an efficient and stylish cellar is one way to add value and cachet to a new or remodelled property.

“People are reinventing their living spaces. They're looking at where they will be spending the most time in their homes and what their hobbies are and how to maximize those areas,” says Karen Anderson of Silvergate Homes, based in the heart of Niagara wine country.

A wine cellar might be a major enticement for some custom homebuyers in the same way that great room living, outdoor living or entertainment room might be for others, Anderson says. It's now

HOW TO STORE WINE

Having an eye-popping wine room is a source of pride, but it's somewhat self-defeating if the contents aren't cared for properly. All wine should be stored at a cool, constant temperature. It's the most important aspect for aging wines properly. The ideal cellaring temperature is between 10-16° C (roughly 50-60° F), but a more casual band of 5-18° C (40-65° F) is acceptable, as long as the temperature remains constant. Higher temperatures speed up the chemical reaction that occurs as a wine ages.

How big a deal is proper storage? A recent study conducted by the Edmund Mach Foundation wine academy in Italy looked at 200 bottles of red wine stored in a professional cellar versus 200 stored in a dark room without environmental controls. The bottles from the dark room were said to have aged four times faster, contained fewer antioxidants, less pigment and tasted blander than those from the proper cellar.

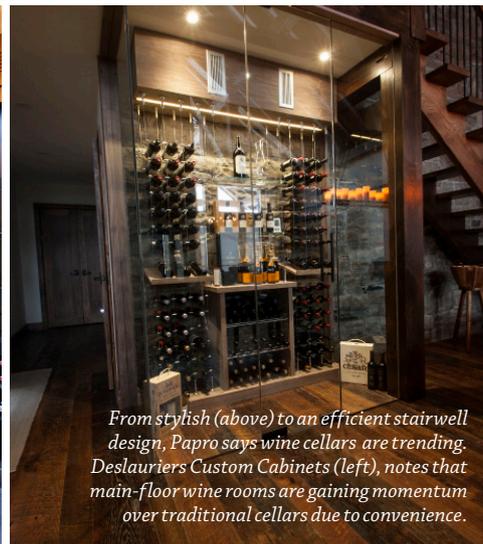
Humidity levels are another potential risk. Wines sealed with a natural cork, which is the closure used to seal trophy wines from the iconic estates of France, Italy and Spain, are best maintained in an environment with between 65-75% relative humidity. Lower humidity levels will dry out the cork and risk turning precious wine into vinegar.

Light is also important. Exposure to sunlight will prematurely age a bottle wine, while ultraviolet light will compromise the organic compounds in a negative way. Low voltage, LED, incandescent or sodium vapour lights are better options for wine cellars, as opposed to fluorescent lighting, which transmits significant amounts of UV light and heat. Motion detectors or timers can be useful additions to avoid lights being left on and potentially heating up the cellar over time.

Even vibration can be a concern. Constant vibration will agitate the contents of the bottle and speed up the chemical reactions occurring. It's best that a cellar keeps a cool, calm collection.

These factors have long led wine cellars to be built below grade to take advantage of generally cooler and more humid environments in basements. Any dark, still, well-ventilated and clean area could be suitable.

That said, the classic cold room or root cellar will typically pose many challenges for remodelling into a safe and secure cellar. What's good for storing potatoes isn't necessary ideal for Pinot Noir. It can be done, but experts point out that locating the cellar in another area of the basement or home often makes for an easier project. Looking for the area with better air quality, insulation and access offers an easier launching point.



From stylish (above) to an efficient stairwell design, Papro says wine cellars are trending. Deslauriers Custom Cabinets (left), notes that main-floor wine rooms are gaining momentum over traditional cellars due to convenience.

a fundamental part of the mix-and-match possibilities they offer to clients. "It's just opening their eyes to the possibilities," she explains. "Here's your next hang-out."

Kathy Chateauvert of Ajax-based custom home builder Fourteen Estates concurs. "Most of our cellars are walk-in style—most with a tempered seamless glass wall and door. It's nice to have an area to sit and uncork. We've had homeowners host a dinner party in their wine cellar! Right now we're doing one that includes a cigar humidor."

The details make all the difference, Chateauvert explains. "Some clients have opted for old wine barrels with sinks and faucets built in for 'spitting.' We use Indirect lighting, so as not to affect the contents of the bottles, custom on-site built cabinetry and handmade racks—some with a

slide-out magazine-style with hidden compartments in behind. Slate floors are typical. We also have to know where the drainage will be prior to construction and to ensure that proper insulation—usually foam with R12 minimum up to R22—goes in behind the cabinets/wine racking.

"All our wine rooms are climate and humidity controlled," Chateauvert adds. "We install an independent wine-chilling unit, which sets the wine temperature; not the room temperature."

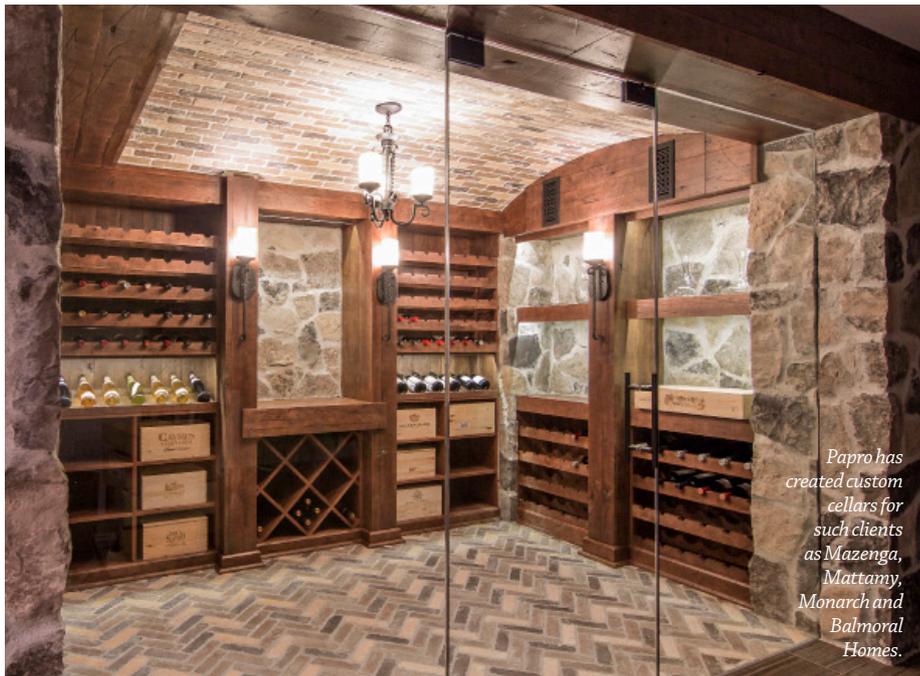
How big do these rooms need to be? "We always ask how many bottles their collection consists of or how big it will be, whether the room will be used for anything else and what dollar figure did they have in mind for such a room. We've done cellars for \$1,500 right up to \$60,000."

Denis Staples of Ottawa's Deslaurier

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

The popularity of wine in Ontario is expected to increase as both the quality and marketing of local wines pushes forward throughout the province in the coming years. There's also been a decided trend in tastes in recent years, with Canadians moving away from alcohol distilled from hops to that distilled from grapes. According to Statistics Canada data released last spring, beer sales were down 0.1% from the level seen in the previous 12 months, and a notable 6.7% fall (from 83.6 litres per person to 78 litres pp) since 2003.

By contrast, wine sales grew by 4.9% in 2013 to \$6.8 billion in total sales. In terms of dollar value, beer owned 43% of the wine/beer/spirits market in 2013, down from roughly half the market in 2003. Wine, on the other hand, stood at 32%, up from 24% over the same time period.



Papro has created custom cellars for such clients as Mazenga, Mattamy, Monarch and Balmoral Homes.

Custom Cabinets Inc. is also seeing more interest in modern wine rooms as opposed to traditional cellars. When he renovated his family home in 2012, he worked with Chuck Mills Residential Design and cabinetmaker Gina Godin to build a wine room on the main floor, located off the kitchen pantry and butler's bar.

"I understand the origins of the wine cellars, but they led you to so many unnecessary steps," he says. Purchases must be lugged downstairs for storage, only to be fetched later on and carried up to the living areas of the house where they will be opened and enjoyed.

Wine rooms are a distinctive addition to an interior that makes a statement, says Staples, who modified the capacity of his own cellar during the planning stages. Originally envisioned as having storage for 400 bottles, Staples realized that didn't leave much wiggle room for his existing 350-plus collection. By re-orientating the racking system, he was able to provide space for 700 bottles without having to change the room's footprint.

Inspired by interior design he saw in Köln, Germany, the glass-encased room mixes ultra-modern cabinetry and finishings with a rustic wood table to great effect. Feature lighting is used for drama. "It's nicely lit so you can admire the beautiful cabinetry," he says. "Why not show it off?"

Deslaurier Custom Cabinets offers its clients and a dealer network across the province a catalogue of 48,000 items that

can be tailored to their needs. Projects range from simple wine fridge units and wine cubbies integrated into kitchen designs to more extensive cellars or wine rooms.

The typical challenges? From Bednarz's vantage, budget or space restrictions tend to be the biggest issues for consumer projects. Types of flooring, racking systems, finishing and furnishing can be chosen to match the overall decor theme of the cellar or home. Racking options vary dramatically, from simple, industrial storage to sophisticated, custom-made units made of exotic hardwoods. Glassed-in areas are becoming popular, as are reach-in cellars that are effective storage options for wine lovers living in a smaller footprint.

Bednarz says reach-ins that house 150 to 300 bottles are popular with clients. But they have also built extensive wine cellars to house 5,000 bottles. "It all depends on people's drinking habits," she says.

Since glass is a poor insulator, cooling units with great BTU output is suggested to compensate for the diminished R-value of glass-encased cube storage areas. "The cooling systems have to work a little bit harder, but typically these cellars aren't very big," she explains.

They do, however, make a big impression on a room's decor. "It's just like your Christmas tree accent light that gives a nice glow," she adds.

From a design perspective, Design First Interiors founder Friedemann Weinhardt says creating a wine cellar is no different

than conjuring up a great entertainment room or kitchen. "All design is an extension of the people living in the design," Weinhardt explains. "Style taste varies as much as the personality of people and good design will resonate with the particular taste of the client we are designing for."

Design First Interiors specializes in modern design work, ultimately drawing inspiration from the clients they work with. In some instances, he has also completed cellars fashioned after traditional models—"something you may find in a chateau in the south of France, with stone surfaces, barrel-vaulted ceilings and so on," he says.

"Wine rooms are a design specialty but not overly complicated," Weinhardt continues. "In general terms, the storage temperature of wine is not nearly as cold as that of a refrigerator, and because of that, the exact sealing of a glass-enclosed room is not critical.

"Because a 'glass box' wine room is very visible to the space it resides in, it really needs to incorporate design elements from its environment so as to harmonize within the overall design."

Weinhardt has worked on projects that called for dedicated wine storage either in the kitchen, a separate space or sometimes both. These specialty projects add to the cost of the renovation or building expense, he notes, but the homeowners ultimately reap the reward of experiencing greater enjoyment of their wine and quality of life. **OHB**