

# House doctor



Sussex Life interiors expert Antonia Edwards answers your questions

## A cellars' market

*Now that I've retired, I intend to indulge my passion for collecting fine wine. I'd like to create a new area in the house to hold a collection and wondered if you had any advice on storage options.*

**Richard Whitemore, Winchelsea**

When it comes to storing large quantities of wine, professional offsite storage options are available but this results in a collection that you can't very easily get to. There are, however, wine storage solutions emerging on the market which allow you have a showcase wine cellar or room in your very own home.

Getting the right environmental conditions is key to preserving the quality of a wine and allowing its flavour to improve as it matures.

Bottles should be stored somewhere clean, dark and humid, in a place where there is a constant temperature, free from vibration. Insufficient humidity can lead to corks becoming

inelastic to the point of shrinking which can oxidise the wine, but if it's too damp, mould and mildew can develop around the corks and labels. Some companies recommend storing wine at a steady 13°C, others argue that a temperature that fluctuates slowly across a small range will have no ill effect. But a too high temperature can damage wine irreparably.

All things considered, simply keeping your bottles under the stairs with the wellies is a definite no-no, or anywhere that will be affected by heat from an oven, vibrations from a washing machine or constant light.

It's worth consulting a specialist company such as Spiral Cellars, who supply and install elegant wine cellars that are built into the ground, directly beneath say a kitchen or garage and entered down a spiral stairwell.

The company also build Mini Cellars which can store up to 770 bottles and have a simple wooden staircase leading from a trapdoor (Spiral Cellars, Pulborough 0845 241 2768).

Although there are plenty of racking options on the high street, cheaper versions should be avoided by serious collectors at all costs. Anything that isn't sturdy could break the bottles – potentially disastrous. In dampish cellars, wooden racks can attract mildew and deteriorate more quickly than galvanised or coated metal racks.

Wild Grapes is another company that deal with wine cellars, rooms and storage and can help you find efficient but attractive storage that can aesthetically enhance a room as well as serve a function.

Graham Drage from Wild Grapes says: "A good cellar needs to have solid racking which keeps bottles in a secure horizontal position and a variety of bin types for half bottles, standards, magnums, cases and so on.

"They should allow for fast identification and easy access to your bottles without tearing their labels, which can reduce a bottle's value by about 10 per cent. Low-voltage lighting is also advisable because it will generate less heat." (Wild Grapes, Lurgashall, Petworth 01428 707862).

Lastly, wine refrigerators have become a common addition to modern kitchens. The Sense Wi151 from Caple is a discreet, slimline fridge that holds seven bottles and has an anti-vibration gasket and white LED interior lighting both heat and UV free, ensuring that the aroma, flavour and wine structure remain undisturbed.

Caple's Sense wine cabinets have compressor cooling technology to ensure the selected temperature is consistently maintained, irrespective of heat in the room (available at Real Wood Kitchens, Haywards Heath 01444 457770).



## Over to you!

If you have a query you'd like Antonia to answer, simply send your question to: Antonia Edwards, Sussex Life, 28 Teville Road, Worthing BN11 1UG or email [antonia@sussexlife.co.uk](mailto:antonia@sussexlife.co.uk). You'll also find more helpful solutions at [www.sussexlife.co.uk](http://www.sussexlife.co.uk). To subscribe call 01858 438832