



Best cellars

For wine connoisseurs, it isn't just about what you drink – it's also about how you store it. Here, **Upward Curve** uncorks the work of the world's leading custom wine cellar designers, who can create a unique home for your vintages

When tech entrepreneur Craig Weiss began to plan the construction of his dream home, his prized 3,000-bottle wine collection was foremost in his mind. But while most wine cellars typically emerge after a home is built, Weiss – the Vice President of Tower Ventures in Memphis – was adamant that his would be an integral part of the house's design from day one.

"Not knowing what the costs to cover my pet project would tally, yet determined to design a cellar worthy of my collection, I kept the wine cellar separate from the cost of building the home so it would not be part of my contractor's meticulous budget," he explains.

With the investment value of his wine collection far surpassing the cost of the cellar, Weiss had all the more reason to seek out the best in wine storage design. After thoroughly researching his options online, he found that Forbes.com had described Michigan's Revel Cellars (www.revelcellars.com) as the builders of "the world's best wine cellars".

"I soon realised that the unique designs offered by Revel would best suit the needs of my collection," he explains.

Working through the endless details of design and construction with acclaimed Memphis architecture firm Shapiro and Company, Ray & Baudoin

Interior Design and Barnett General Contractors, the end result is considered by Jim Cash, Revel's founder, to be one of the company's finest wine cellar projects to date.

"We were thrilled to design and deliver this 'statement' cellar for our client that would do justice to his well-curated collection," he says. And it's easy to see why Cash is so pleased with his company's work.

A stunning mix of brick, stone and Fijian Mahogany comprises the inner sanctum of the cellar, while warm LED accent lighting highlights the wine itself, which is nestled in sliding drawers and rotating wine wheels. Solid mahogany ceiling beams then dramatically tie the wine cabinetry into the gracious setting.

Weiss's collection includes multiple vintages from prestigious Napa Valley wineries such as Dominus, Far Niente, Continuum, Harlan and Opus One, as well as some iconic Italian gems including Sassacaia and Ornellaia. And with his cellar now in place, he can be

sure the significant investment he has made in his collection receives the protection it deserves – all in a beautiful setting.

"For me, it's not just about aesthetics," explains Weiss. "The sliding drawers and rotating wheels allow me to view my collection without ever actually touching a bottle. And minimising the handling of the bottles means reducing the risk of breakage or damage to the labels."

Weiss's dedication to properly protecting and showcasing his wine in a beautiful custom cellar typifies the approach of the discerning modern collector, with connoisseurs moving away from humdrum racking in traditional basements in favour of stunning, glass-encased, dedicated wine rooms. Revel's racking systems typically cost US\$25,000 to US\$35,000 for a 1,000-bottle ➤

Above: An increasing number of wine connoisseurs are seeking out companies to build impressive, custom-designed wine rooms for their collections



cellar, which doesn't include lighting, cooling or basic cellar construction, but for many it as an investment worth making.

"People have finally realised that if they're going to spend all this money on a wine cellar, they want it to look good from the outside looking in," explains Cash.

With the modern concept of wine storage changing so dramatically, Revel and other custom cellar designers have found a growing customer base, as collectors seek to show off their treasured hoards in ever more impressive and inventive ways.

For instance, Focus Wine Cellars (www.focuswinecellars.com) has been commissioned to design custom cellars from Hong Kong and Macau to the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Turkey and throughout Europe.

While its clients have included celebrities and even Heads of State, some of the company's most celebrated work can be seen in high-end hotels and restaurants around the world.

At the entrance to the Dubai Conrad Hotel's Marco Pierre White Grill Restaurant, for example, Focus constructed an 'archway' of wine, with guests welcomed by

16 select wines in barrel-shaped window displays on each side and four rows of illuminated bottles in the ceiling. At the Divan Istanbul Hotel in Turkey, meanwhile, Focus created a massive, 2,000-bottle wine cellar that stretches across the top of the hotel's bar and down either side, completely framing the bar area with a seven-metre-high glass cellar façade, clad with wine bottles.

While private collectors may not have room for such a towering edifice of wine, they can still create a stunning home for their vintages. With space at a premium in many historic London properties, for instance, British-based Spiral Cellars has devised an ingenious subterranean solution that doesn't compromise on aesthetics. The company's spiral-shaped concrete cellars are sunk up to three metres into the ground, with glass trapdoors ensuring your valued collection is still visible through the floor of the room above. With a diameter of 2.5 metres and wide steps for an easy descent, the largest cellar will easily house up to 1,780 bottles – all stored at optimum humidity and temperature below your feet. Prices range from

Below: Revel's cellars feature a rotating wine wheels and sliding drawers (top), while Spiral Cellars offer unique underground solutions (bottom)

US\$20,000 to US\$75,000, with high profile clients including London chef Mark Hix and Superman actor Henry Cavill.

"Our stylish, hand-crafted cellaring solutions are increasingly becoming the 'must have' feature in many homes across the country," explains Lucy Hargreaves, the managing director of Spiral Cellars.

"Home owners want cellars to sit in the middle of their modern living space where guests can congregate and admire. It's all about where wine can be accessed easily at any time."

From classic glass-panelled wooden displays to LED lighting, temperature controls and space-saving spiral designs, it seems modern collectors are spoilt for choice when creating a custom home for their wines. And we'll certainly raise a glass to that. ■

