



Above from left: Smith & Taylor wine inventory system; LG Signature's multi-temperature control storage

THE FUTURE OF WINE CELLARING

No cobwebbed old brick cellar to fill with dusty bottles and boxes? Technology is putting a different spin on wine storage: not so much hiding it away as centrepiece of your home decor, says **James Button**

Wine drinkers have long relied on the steady subterranean temperature and ideal humidity of cellars to store their wine. But modern technology has brought the joy of storing fine wine at home to those without a traditional underground space. Whether you'd prefer to put your wines on display behind a wall of glass, build a spiral cellar beneath your kitchen, or simply store prized wines in a temperature- and humidity-controlled wine fridge, there are plenty of options when it comes to looking after your favourite bottles.

The wine fridge or wine cabinet is the entry-point into professional-level wine storage. These can be small and discreet enough to tuck under a kitchen countertop, but the largest models can store more than 200 bottles and can form a focal point for the room – much like the multi-tiered wine fridges on display in many fine-dining venues.

Some wine fridges offer multi-zone temperature control as well as humidity control, allowing wines to be chilled ready to serve while other wines are maturing at 'cellar' temperature. These have been around

for decades, but nowadays you can buy examples with various LED colour settings, charcoal filters to prevent odours entering the fridge and affecting the wine, hygrometers to measure humidity, digital temperature control to within 0.1°C and anti-UV glass to prevent the wine from spoiling due to exposure to harmful ultraviolet rays.

The **LG Signature Wine Cellar** (www.lg.com) takes things a step further with its auto-open door – controllable by voice command or by triggering a sensor with your foot – while its connected smartphone app can adjust temperature settings on the fly.

'2020 has seen a consumer-led shift towards a more tailored service'

Fiona Love, Spiral Cellars



Cellar Maison's wine wall can offer remote monitoring



Understairs wine storage system installed by Sorrells (see p66)

In full view

One of the newest trends in the home is the 'wine wall', allowing wines to be showcased behind glass, often in a kitchen, dining room or living room. **Cellar Maison** (www.cellarmaison.com) has developed its own evaporator system to distribute an even curtain of cool air over the wines, controlled by a touchscreen panel which can be connected to remote monitoring and automation systems.

A key benefit of wine walls – as offered by UK specialist **WineWalls** (www.winewalls.co.uk) – is that they are only 50cm-65cm deep and easily integrate into the design of an entertainment space. They don't store mountains of wine like a traditional cellar, but more than a typical wine cabinet. And it's a great way to showcase your finest wines as a feature for guests. >



LG Signature



Sorrells



Wineracks

Best use of space

Another trend is downsizing, coupled with the rising general cost of housing, which have resulted in the rising popularity of storage built into spare cupboards, under stairs and in other under-utilised spaces. Mark Wellman, online marketing manager for **Wineware** (www.wineware.co.uk), explains that using CAD (computer aided design) software is 'key for our design team' where space is at a premium, allowing them to ensure that functionality is maximised, and enabling the client to see their cellar in 3D before work has commenced. Similarly, **Sorrells** (www.sorrells-wineracks.co.uk) uses virtual-reality technology to allow clients to 'step into the cellar' before it's built, with the ability to open doors and even pick items up.

In the best light

Andrew Speer, founder and MD of Cellar Maison, cites UV filters and switchable glass (changing from clear to opaque at the press of a button) as features perfect for a modern wine storage solution, allowing the wines to be on display yet protecting them from harmful UV light. The latter can also provide owners with a dazzling 'reveal' effect that is sure to impress at dinner parties!

LED lighting is becoming increasingly popular, according to Adam Moore of **Wineracks** (www.wineracks.co.uk). As a wine-friendly lighting solution, LED offers several



A Wineware wine room that combines solid oak racks, shelves and cubes



Smith & Taylor

'Wine storage for the home has evolved into an integral part of the entertainment space'

glass to create a 'bird's eye view' of a traditional underground cellar, allowing owners to walk over and peer down at their collection. Lighting both below and above ground can be linked and controlled via an app for atmospheric ambient lighting effects.

James Button is a *Decanter* regional editor

Safe and sound

So the design and lighting has been decided, but what about protecting your valuable bottles? Cellar Maison's Speer asserts that 'keypad or biometric wine room door-entry systems are becoming more common'. Modern electronic keypads can support multiple codes for various members of the family or for property/cellar managers, and can push notifications to an app every time the door is unlocked. Fingerprint and retina scanners, based on similar >

advantages over traditional bulbs: it is efficient, meaning that LED bulbs consume far less power and emit next to no heat, which is vital when placing them close to valuable wine bottles; LEDs have a lifespan of up to 10 times that of a typical energy-saving bulb; and they can be set via app or touchscreen to any one of near-infinite colour variations, perfect for mood lighting or spotlighting certain wines.

Sebastian Riley-Smith, founder and MD of **Smith & Taylor** (www.smithandtaylor.com), explains that his company uses toughened



technology to that used in smartphones, provide completely personalised security that is very difficult, if not impossible, to crack.

Chubb, the largest publicly traded property insurance company in the world, is running a pilot scheme which it hopes to roll out to all of its wine cellar clients early next year, using IoT (Internet of Things) sensors and a connected app. This technology provides 24/7 monitoring of temperature, humidity and vibration and can alert the owner or property manager to fluctuations outside preset ranges. A text is triggered when minor, sustained fluctuations are detected, while more noticeable sustained fluctuations will trigger a phone call.

As well as giving its clients peace of mind in safeguarding their wines, Chubb's Sean Ringstead points out that early warning also saves his company time and money processing claims that can be avoided. Laura Doyle, Chubb's VP art & jewellery and valuable collections manager, adds that another benefit of this technology is that it provides a documented history of cellar conditions that could prove very useful for owners considering selling part of their collection.

Do it yourself?

Fiona Love, head of marketing at **Spiral Cellars** (www.spiralcellars.co.uk), notes that 2020 has seen 'a significant consumer-led shift towards a more tailored service, which has been driven by the home improvement market during lockdown'. As a result, Spiral Cellars has introduced a 'design only' service, as well as a 'self-build' kit, both retailing for less than the cost of a complete professional installation.

Could professionally designed, self-built cellars be the future of home wine storage?

Wine storage for the home has evolved into an integral part of the entertainment space, combining functionality with art – and it's all thanks to modern technology. We can only imagine what the next few decades will bring for wine lovers. **D**



Fingertip control: put your trust in the tech to track your collection

Wine inventory software – such as the solutions offered by **eSommelier** (www.esommelier.com), **CellarTracker** (www.cellartracker.com), **VinoCell** (www.vinocell.com) and **MyCellarMaison** (www.mycellarmaison.com) – is a must for those with medium to large collections. Gone are the days of clunky spreadsheets – modern software provides tools for mapping and locating each wine, as well as recording purchase prices and displaying current market valuations, scores, tasting notes, drinking windows and label images.

Integration with barcode scanners and label printers takes this to another level. Smith & Taylor MD Sebastian Riley-Smith explains: 'Each bottle can be scanned into and out of a cellar, all linked to wine social media, valuations and appraisals if desired.'

Meanwhile, wine inventory apps are taking inventory software into the entertainment or dining space itself, enabling an owner or guests to peruse their cellar stock on a tablet before selecting a bottle for dinner.

Live information can also be accessed from anywhere in the world. Cellar Maison MD Andrew Speer states that his company is 'looking to integrate its wine inventory software with other technology to improve the user experience, such as label recognition software, pressure and light sensors, augmented reality and AI'.