



FROM THE GROUND UP

MODERN WINE CELLARS HAVE BECOME TRUE WORKS OF ART

BY CATHY PURPLE CHERRY, AIA, FOUNDING PRINCIPAL OF PURPLE CHERRY ARCHITECTS

THE WINE CELLAR. It is one of those romantic spaces that you envision would be sexy to have and to use. A wine cellar isn't just for wine connoisseurs or collectors. It's for anyone who has had the fancy to store, witness, sip and share wine with others. It can be a space that people love to show off. A truly fabulous wine cellar can also be very expensive. Each wine cellar is unique to the individual that desires it to be built in their home.

For true wine experts, the wine cellar becomes a very technical space. It is temperature-controlled, with potentially two areas, one for reds and a second for whites. The space may also include a sophisticated inventory system that manages the stock in the space. This

system acts like a personal wine curator and is super cool. Design may work with an exposed basement concrete wall and three insulated walls to capture the temperature of the earth. The result is not merely sophisticated space, but it is a very inexpensive space that is cooler than any place in the house.

The starting point for wine cellar design is always the desired bottle count of the client. This is the basis of the room size. It is a pure mathematical evaluation that defines the shape and size of the room. In addition, how the homeowner likes the wine to be displayed or stored further impacts the room size. Some wine owners like a tilted display, where the labels are all showing. Others prefer to store horizontally but perpendicular to the body,

thereby packing in as many bottles as possible. Some may prefer wall-mounted metal racks that display the wine label parallel to the body. This system limits the storage to three bottles per rack. And still others like to keep the full case of wine together, requiring the wood crate to find a shelf. In this case, there are usually more boxes than shelves for true collectors, and the bottle count is exceeded.

When allowing for bottle count, there are multiple wine bottle sizes, up to twelve, to consider. More often than not, the custom wine cellar is prepared for three bottle sizes, including the magnum. This Goliath of the wine cellar—that holds 1.5 liters of wine, enough to serve ten 5-ounce glasses—needs its own special place.



Building a wine cellar entails very specific construction knowledge. It is not a space to be built by a novice without great research and guidance.

When wine cellars started becoming popular in homes near the last quarter of the 20th century, they were mostly constructed in the basement, to avoid natural light. The traditional home wine cellar often included large dining tables with seating and painted murals on the walls. Today, this trend is changing. First, no seating is being provided in the wine space. The rooms are too cold to be comfortable for long events. Only small tasting tables may be present. Second, some cellars are moving to the main floor of the house. While the basement location is great for large wine rooms, the downside of this location is it makes the wine cellar a destination space that is rarely seen, even by the homeowner. Further, finished basements are becoming obsolete, so

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the experience of going downstairs to a dedicated wine space is not as aesthetically pleasing.

When the wine cellar comes upstairs, it commands a front and center view. It is a space that wants to be seen by everyone as it is a true work of art. In the main floor location, it is often smaller, as the cellar now tucks into a beautiful custom built-in, or becomes glass-wrapped corners of the dining room. If an isolated room on this floor, a tasting table may not be present, to maximize the wine storage in a more petite space. The entry door is always glass when located here, as the sex-appeal of visualizing the softly-lit wine bottles through the door simply excites everyone.

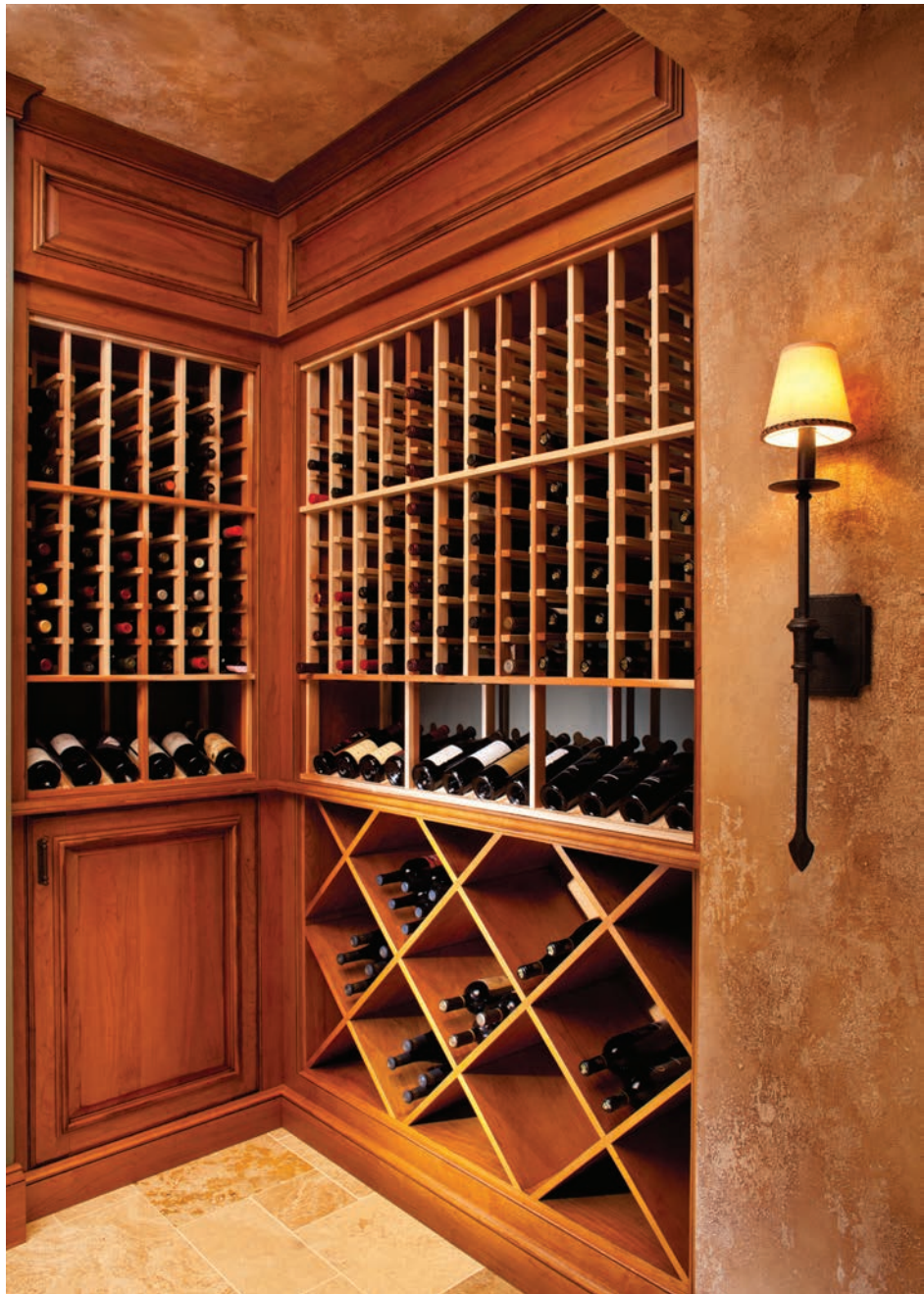
Now, for the behind-the-scenes look at this space. A true wine cellar is like a large refrigerator. It contains its own dedicated cooling unit that keeps the temperature at 55 to 59°F with 55 to 75%

humidity for reds. As red wine ages 4 times faster at room temperature, it must be stored properly. White/rose wines ideally is stored between 45 to 50°F, but it can also be stored with red wine. Like all refrigerators, the “box” that is the wine cellar must be thermally separated from the abutting spaces. Insulation and a waterproofing membrane help ensure that moisture does not build up in the surrounding walls causing rot and mold. Thus, building a wine cellar entails very specific construction knowledge. It is not a space to be built by a novice without great research and guidance.

Pushing the Limits of Luxury—Create Something Truly Yours and One-of-a-Kind

When going off the deep end, basement wine cellars can attach to grand

dining rooms, including wine prep spaces outfitted with three types of glassware, designated for the proper beverage. Also attached to this massive entertainment area can be a catering kitchen. In a current project handled by my firm, the wine kitchen includes a pizza oven which had to be lowered into the basement by a crane before the floor framing above was installed. This same area consists of reclaimed Chicago brick hand-laid on the barrel vaulted ceiling with crossing barrels creating amazing brick groin vaults. All of these ceilings are being installed by one master mason, whose efforts are truly a lost art. When completed, this space will represent the epitome of a wine cellar reminiscent of the castles of Italy. Tasting and sharing wine is a social event deserving a glorious space in all wine lovers’ homes.



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PLEASE EXCUSE OUR DUST

When completed, this custom wine cellar will be the epitome of luxury.



When completed, this space will be a spectacular wine cellar reminiscent of the castles of Italy.



Reclaimed Chicago brick is hand-laid on the barrel vaulted ceiling, with crossing barrels creating amazing brick groin vaults.



Born and raised in Virginia, **Cathy Purple Cherry** ultimately landed in Annapolis where she grew a large architectural firm specializing in high-end custom homes and estates. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients' dreams with the reality of the built environment. While Cathy revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, Cathy is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts and her work serving the special needs community through the firm's Purposeful Architecture studio. An award-winning residential architecture and interior design firm specializing in exceptional homes and luxurious estates throughout the East Coast from Plymouth, MA to Warm Springs, VA, Cathy has grown her team two-fold in the past three years! And, for nearly 30 years, her studio has been dedicated to creating homes that are beautifully built, emotionally inspiring and yet incredibly functional. Cathy believes in stunning architecture. Every one

of her team's projects results from intentional, mindful collaboration and sensibilities derived from a true love of the craft. "Our architecture and interiors are responsive to our clients' expectations, and no two clients are alike", said Cathy Purple Cherry. "We approach each project without preconceptions. At Purple Cherry Architects, we truly love the journey of bringing together our clients with stunning pieces of property where they can build the home of their dreams. Consider us as a part of your team!" With established offices in Annapolis, MD and Charlottesville, VA, we are excited to announce Middleburg, VA and Greenbrier, WV are new homes to us as well!

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