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WHEN THE WINE CELLAR COMES UPSTAIRS

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WHEN THE WINE CELLAR COMES UPSTAIRS

A wine cellar isn't just for wine connoisseurs or collectors. It is for anyone who desires to store, witness, sip, and share wine with others. However, creating a wine cellar isn't as simple as selecting a corner of your home and stacking your favorite bottles. Several important factors need to be considered to ensure the space is designed to be beautiful, accessible, functional, and built to preserve your favorite wines for years to come.

When wine cellars started to become popular in homes in the last quarter of the 20th century, they were primarily constructed in the basement because this was where there was space in the house. The traditional home wine cellar often included a large dining table with seating. However, the wine cellars of today look quite different. First, seating is no longer being provided in the actual wine storage space. Cellars are often too cold to be comfortable for long events. Second, most cellars are now moving to the main floor of the house. The first project I designed in which the wine cellar came upstairs was approximately ten years ago, and we have seen the trend continue increasing in popularity.

While the basement location is excellent for large wine rooms, the downside of this

location is that it makes the wine cellar a destination space that is rarely seen, even by the homeowner. There are exceptions, however, in the form of unique cellar spaces custom designed to include adjacent rooms with special seating areas, smaller tasting tables, and catering kitchens to offer the ultimate wine-tasting experiences.

When the wine cellar comes upstairs, it commands a front-and-center view and becomes more of an everyday conversation piece. Ideally, the space is visible from the entertainment area, so it should be aligned so that the elongated vista captures views of the cellar. The entry door is almost always glass, as the allure of seeing the softly lit wine bottles through the glass door excites everyone. I love incorporating beautiful lighting into wine storage—when entertaining, the light becomes a beacon that draws guests near.

Wine storage on the main level, whether in a wine cellar or a wine refrigerator, also creates a practical and accessible “wine station” where hosts can serve from or our guests can help themselves.

When located on the main floor, the wine cellar is often smaller, as it now tucks into a beautiful custom built-in or becomes glass-wrapped corners of a dining room. The downside for some is that

BY CATHY PURPLE CHERRY, AIA, LEED-AP, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF PURPLE CHERRY ARCHITECTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BURROUGHS, DURSTON SAYLOR, AND DARREN SETLOW

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This custom designed wine cellar expresses the epitome of luxury



A wine cellar can be a fantastic addition to a home, whether you are a wine enthusiast or simply looking for a unique space to entertain guests. There is much to consider when designing the room, from the type of storage it offers to how it integrates into the surrounding areas.

the bottle count is typically limited to 500 bottles for these smaller spaces, which means it is not a solution for very, very large bottle collections. To combat this, I suggest a less expansive cellar in the basement for cases, with a more display type of space upstairs. A simple utilitarian design for the everyday wine collector could include an exposed basement concrete wall and three insulated walls to capture the earth's temperature.

Wine Cellar Design 101

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 wine to be displayed or stored further impacts the room size. Some owners prefer areas of tilted display, where the labels are all showing. Others want to store bottles horizontally, packing in as many as possible. Some may choose wall-mounted metal racks that display the wine label parallel to the body. And still, others like to keep the full case of wine together, requiring shelving that will accommodate wooden crates.

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.

On addition, creating wine storage in or near the kitchen is a great opportunity to create a beautiful work of art and a conversation piece. Ideally, the storage is visible from the entertainment area, so it should be aligned in a way that the elongated view captures views of the storage. I love to incorporate beautiful lighting into wine storage—when entertaining, the light becomes a beacon that draws guests near.

When calculating bottle count, there are multiple wine bottle sizes, up to twelve, to consider. A custom wine cellar is often prepared for three bottle sizes, including the magnum. This Goliath of the wine cellar—holding 1.5 liters of wine, enough to serve ten 5-ounce glasses—requires its own special place.

Wine storage is ideally located on an interior wall rather than an exterior wall for conditioning. This is preferred but optional. You will also want to ensure that the location of the storage limits sunlight exposure to the bottles themselves. Both efforts will support the space's ability to be appropriately temperature controlled. After all, an authentic wine cellar is like a large refrigerator. Its dedicated cooling unit keeps the temperature at 55 to 59°F with 55 to 75% humidity for reds. Red wine must be stored properly as it ages four times faster at room temperature. White and rose wines are ideally stored between 45 to 50°F but can also be stored with red wine. Like all refrigerators, the “box” that is the wine cellar must be ther-



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.



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



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mally 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. As you can see, building a wine cellar entails very specific construction knowledge.

Pushing the Limits of Luxury

When the home’s square footage allows for ample available basement space, it creates the opportunity to design a whole experiential component that integrates into the wine cellar—grand dining rooms, wine prep area, catering kitchen, bowling alley, golf simulator area, large serving bar, etc. In a recent project handled by my firm, the wine kitchen included a wood-burning pizza oven. This same entertainment area consists of reclaimed Chicago brick hand-laid on the barrel-vaulted ceiling with crossing barrels, creating amazing brick groin vaults. The space represents the epitome

of a wine cellar reminiscent of the castles of Italy. In these situations, the wine cellar becomes an extraordinary experience of its own.

In conclusion, a wine cellar can be a fantastic addition to a home, whether you are a wine enthusiast or simply looking for a unique space to entertain guests. There is much to consider when designing the room, from the type of storage it offers to how it integrates into the surrounding areas. However, the most satisfying aspect of a wine cellar is its beautiful and romantic ambiance; whether cozy and intimate or grand and awe-inspiring, a wine cellar can be custom designed to serve as the perfect setting for sharing a glass of your favorite vintage with loved ones. So, why not take the plunge and transform that unused space in your home into a wine lover’s paradise?

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. Today, the firm has four offices—Charlottesville, VA, Middleburg, VA, White Sulfur Springs, WV, and Annapolis, MD—and specializes in creating luxurious residences across the United States. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients’ dreams with the reality of the built environment. While she revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, Cathy is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts. She and her firm offer their design knowledge and sensitivity to the special needs community via the Purple Cherry Purposeful Architecture Studio. A true creative servant, Cathy Purple Cherry is unfailing in her efforts to positively impact all those around her.

Purple Cherry Architects
434-245-2211
purplecherry.com