

Cool, dark, still and sideways

The perfect way to keep your growing wine collection

Tony Timmer is the owner of The Feathered Nest, a country pub, restaurant and inn set in the picturesque village of Nether Westcote and nestled in the heart of the Cotswolds. He regularly travels to South Africa to visit the wineries and vineyards to source and taste wines from boutique estates that are usually not represented by large distributors and importers. The aim is to bring in various bins of New World wine to add to the fantastic cellar selection (currently over 180 bins) at the restaurant.

Closures

Wine closures play an active role in preserving your favourite tippie.

Back In the 1600s, a French monk called Dom Pérignon, took a giant step forwards by utilising cork as a wine closure. He realised that natural cork allowed small amounts of oxygen to permeate the wine, which in turn allowed the wine to age gradually. It was during this period of trial and error that they realised the importance of humidity to prevent the corks from drying out.

This is still of paramount importance today.

However, the introduction of alternative stoppers has in a way reduced the need for perfect humidity levels.

Synthetic corks, made from plastic materials, are now found on many bottles. They may not dry out but the largest problem with these closures is the greater transfer of oxygen into the bottle, which then oxidizes the wine.

And then, love them or loathe them, we have the screw caps. They form a tighter seal and can keep out oxygen for a longer time than cork. These benefits do aid in maintaining the wine's overall quality and ageing potential, however they also raise the risk of wine reduction, a process that allows the development of sulphur aromas.

For pure enjoyment, indulgence and a little theatre, give me cork any time!

Storage

Wine has been kept in caves and underground cellars for centuries. It is here that the ideal storage conditions can be consistently met: cool, dark, humid and still surroundings

While, storing wine is not rocket science, there are a few key points to keep in mind that will help ensure your wine has the very best chance for long-term survival and optimal ageing.

For wine to reach its full potential and to stay in perfect condition, it must be stored in proper cellar conditions: 12 or 13 degrees Celsius without fluctuation, humidity at 60 - 80% and protected from light and vibration. Lay the wines sideways but keep Champagne upright!

Not all homes have the luxury of underground cellars, but with modern technology the perfect humidity and temperature can be set to keep your wines in optimum condition.

This allows you to turn part of your garage into an impressive wine cellar, obviously leaving the Aston outside, but hey! certain priorities have to be set.

For those in the city, a spare room can easily be converted into a cellar giving you the added advantage of fewer visits from the mother-in-law!



You may even consider a walk-in cupboard for your "wine cellar". All of the above options, with the aid of insulation and the correct wine cellar conditioning units, are easy solutions for storing and collecting the "Drink of the Gods".

Should your passion for wine be restricted to a few individual bottles, there are many specialised fridges on the market that can easily be incorporated into the kitchen, or under the stairs.

Temperature

Once your collection is sorted and stored, keep a few temperatures in mind when serving:

- Sparkling and champagne 8°C
- Unwooded whites, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc 10°C
- Wooded whites, Chardonnay 12°C
- Rosé and medium bodied wines 14°C
- Merlot, Pinot Noir 15°C
- Full bodied reds, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Ports 18°C

Cheers!
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