

BRIGHT SPARK LEADS TO WINE-ARK IN THE PARK

Ten years ago when architect Dean Taylor was storing wine for friends at his home, he thought there might be a niche in the market for doing this as a business.

He followed through with his bright idea and established a site at Camperdown that he thought might take five or six years to fill. Some 18 months later, this bottle bank was at maximum capacity, and another was opened at Chatswood. That is still operating and expansion plans saw Wine-Ark open at Sydney Corporate Park in 2005. (www.wine-ark.com.au)

This high security establishment is now home to over two million bottles of wine and is the flagship of the company's 12 sites around Australia.

General manager, John Cuff told Fringe that the key to looking after wine is keeping it in climate-controlled cellars with steady humidity levels. "What kills wine is fluctuations in temperature." The secure environment also prevents other disasters – such as the teenage daughter adding Dad's prized 1971 Grange to the spaghetti bolognese bubbling on the stove.

"When I was working in retail years ago, I knew a man who had been away overseas on business for a few weeks. On his return he spied a large number of wine bottles in the recycle crates in his garage and quizzed his wife about it. They had been cleaning out part of the house and found some white wine that they thought was so old it had gone 'brown and off'. Some 48 bottles were emptied down the sink. To the man's horror, it was his collection of Chateau d'Yquem of varying vintages which at the time were worth at least \$800 a bottle."

Wine-Ark provides not just a secure environment, but also takes delivery of your orders from retailers and wineries. "We also look after people's self-managed superannuation funds that buy and trade through here.

"Wine storage is a long term prospect and there is peace of mind for the clients because everything is insured behind that door." He pointed out there are over 40 cameras, 200 motion sensors, biometric scanners, PIN codes, remote CCTV monitoring and three alarm systems in place to protect the bottled bounty in the ark.

Wine-Ark also operates as a trading floor that lets clients buy and sell wine on-line, even if they live overseas. Buyers looking for good stock that has been looked after in style also like the link to Wine-Ark. As John Cuff noted "We have a '96 Grange that was released in 2000. It has been

stored since then at 14 degrees and it is especially popular with restaurants, because they have faith in where the wine has been kept."

Clients pay \$2.95 per dozen per month in storage fees for the optimal conditions and security, which is a lot cheaper than excavating the foundations of your home which could be hit by stormwater (where the labels float away in a sea of despair) or having a burglar clean out your garage cellar.

"We have walk-in vaults here that hold 220 to 600 cases. We take your case of wine, and it is catalogued and labelled with your own barcode. Your inventory is then uploaded into the online cellar management system. Your records are updated

each time you add or remove something from your collection." They also offer a delivery and collection service if you don't have time to visit your vault before the big dinner party.

Wine-Ark also runs a CellarClub for collectors of fine wines (check out www.cellarclub.com.au) or call 1800 111 275. "Members get an email once a week with details of wines that are rare or hard to source. Angus Hughson is the director of the club and he's an author, wine writer and wine show judge.

"The club gives you access to wine news and reviews, wine tastings and dinners. Recent speakers have included Grant Burge, Stephen and Prue Henschke and Trevor Jones from the Barossa."



John Cuff checking the stock at Wine-Ark. (Photo: VIP Media)



Wine-Ark...not storage people doing wine, but wine people doing storage