

TEXT JUDY SARRIS

Out of the Ark

Australia's largest wine storage provider reveals the results of its cellaring survey, and offers *WINE* readers the chance to win some top drops to put away for a rainy day.

It was only less than a decade ago that architect Dean Taylor's buddies used to beg for spots in his spacious studio to keep their wines. By the time he was up to the rafters with bottles and crates, he finally twigged that it might be a good idea to set up a proper facility for those lean on storage space.

Since its accidental beginnings in 1999, Wine Ark has become the largest wine storage provider in Australia, and now has more than a million bottles stashed away in its climate-controlled concrete bunkers.

As fast as people are discovering the joys of collecting wine of quality and age, they are also finding out that poor storage can easily result in tipping what promised to be a brilliant batch of Burgundy down the sink – and that it's wise to take proper measures to conserve wine.

Today, Wine Ark has become much more than just a place to stash precious cargo. A cellar club has evolved to help identify wines most suitable for long-term cellaring and obtain rare or difficult-to-find wines. Through sheer buying power and strong industry connections, Wine Ark often gets dibs on allocations of hard-to-source wines. Members are kept abreast of what's on offer and are invited to monthly tastings. Anything bought through the company is delivered directly into members' cellar facilities, with Wine Ark keeping extra bottles on hand in case of cork faults or other complaints.

So what exactly are these enthusiasts, who are predominantly based in New South Wales, collecting? Towards the end of the last financial year, the crew at Wine Ark decided to find out. Drawing on their well-kept database, in which each and every bottle stored is recorded, they were able to come up with a survey detailing the total volume of each wine held by private collectors and produce a list of the combined vintages of the top 100 wines held on their premises.

No surprises here. Red (84 per cent) easily outdid white, with shiraz the most popular grape (46 per cent), followed by cabernet sauvignon (33 per cent). Most of the wines were from South Australia (66 per cent), with the Barossa and Coonawarra taking out line honours, each making up 19 per cent of the total wines stored.

Interestingly, not a single import made the count, despite the survey not discriminating against any country of origin. However, this is probably due to collectors' overseas selections being incredibly varied.

We have included the list of the most collected wines of Wine Ark's private clients. And while the scales may have been tipped by the labels that have been offered to members through the Wine Ark Club (though wines such as Penfolds and Rockford have never been on that list), it's always good to take a peep at what well-qualified, serious collectors like to stick in the cellar.

TOP 25 LABELS COLLECTED

- Penfolds Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz Blend
- Penfolds Bin 95 Grange Shiraz
- Wynns Coonawarra Estate Cabernet Sauvignon
- Lake's Folly Cabernet Blend
- Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon
- Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon
- Wynns Coonawarra Estate John Riddoch Cabernet Sauvignon
- Penfolds St Henri Shiraz
- Cullen Cabernet Merlot (including Diana Madeline)
- Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz
- Rockford Basket Press Shiraz
- Penfolds Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon
- Wynns Coonawarra Estate Michael Shiraz
- Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay
- Petaluma Riesling (including Hanlin Hill)
- Grosset Polish Hill Riesling
- Orlando St Hugo Cabernet Sauvignon
- Howard Park Cabernet Merlot
- Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Shiraz
- Penfolds Bin 128 Shiraz
- Henschke Mount Edelstone Shiraz
- Dalwhinnie Moonambel Shiraz
- Petaluma Coonawarra Cabernet Merlot
- Mount Mary Quintet Cabernet Blend
- Lindemans Limestone Ridge Shiraz Cabernet Blend

