

Some simple cellaring advice for those who have little to those who want the lot.

WORDS SALLY FISK

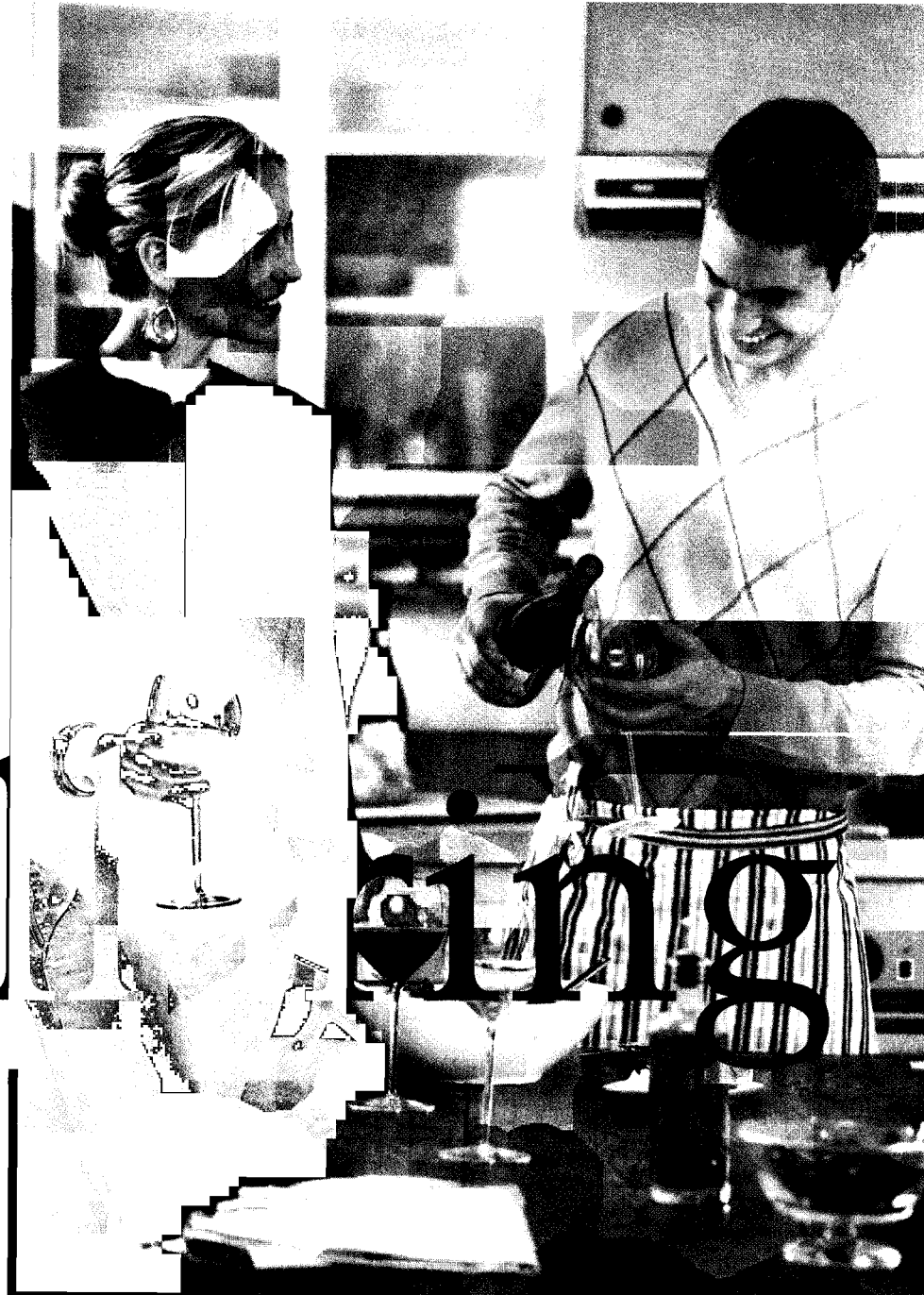
Sage cellaring

With wineries releasing wines onto the market earlier than in the past, the onus is on you to cellar your wines until optimum drinking age. However before you embark on setting up your own wine cellar, it's important to consider which wines will deliver satisfaction years down the track and what wine storage system is best suited to your needs and budget.

Which wines should you cellar?

Each year several paperback wine guides are published which review current release wines. Most of these publications include a summary or rating of recent vintages from the major wine regions and reveal which vintages will be the most suitable for cellaring. *Wine Companion* by James Halliday, *The Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide* by Huon Hooke and Ralph Kyte-Powell, and *Don't Buy Wine Without Me* by Stuart Gregor are just a few that come to mind.

Aside from vintage, grape variety is also an important consideration. As a rule of thumb, stick to the variety a particular wine region does best. Hunter Valley Semillon, Clare Valley Riesling, Barossa Valley Shiraz, Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon



and Margaret River Chardonnay are just a few examples. Consider the acid structure in white wines and the tannin profile in red wines. Generally speaking these two components in wines help them stand up over time.

Bottle size and closure type

Cellaring wine for an anniversary or child's 21st birthday is always a nice way to mark the occasion. In this scenario big is better. Purchasing a magnum (1.5 litre) bottle will not only allow more people to enjoy the wine but it will also have aged slower in the bottle. An aged magnum rather than an aged 750ml bottle will be more in tune with the flavour profile of the younger drinking white and red wines our palates are used to.

Without weighing into the cork versus

screw cap debate, choosing wines for cellaring that have a screw cap closure will negate the possibility of discovering years down the track that the wine is corked. Bottles that have synthetic closures are fine for early drinking styles but it's best to avoid them when choosing to cellar wine for extended periods.

Correct wine storage

There are no ifs or buts about it; wine is very fussy when it comes to storage.

A constant temperature between day and night, and summer and winter should be a high priority. A wine that experiences marked fluctuations in temperature will age more quickly than desired. If bottled with a cork closure the cork will expand and contract in the neck of the bottle, altering its resilient condition and allowing

oxygen to seep in and wine to leak out.

A cool temperature between 12°C – 17°C is desirable. If you reside in a warm climate, the wine is better off stored at a constant temperature around 19°C or 20°C than a fluctuating temperature of over 10 degrees between the heat of the day and cool of the night.

A dark environment is important, especially if you are cellaring white wines. Prolonged exposure to either natural or artificial light will cause the colour of the wine to bleach in the bottle as well as premature aging of the wine, reducing its aesthetic appeal.

Choosing to lie your bottles down or have them standing up vertical is not an issue with screw-cap closures, nor is storing the wine in a slightly humid environment. However if the bottles have cork closures they must be lying down to keep the wine in contact with the cork and expanded in the neck of the bottle. Similarly, 75% room

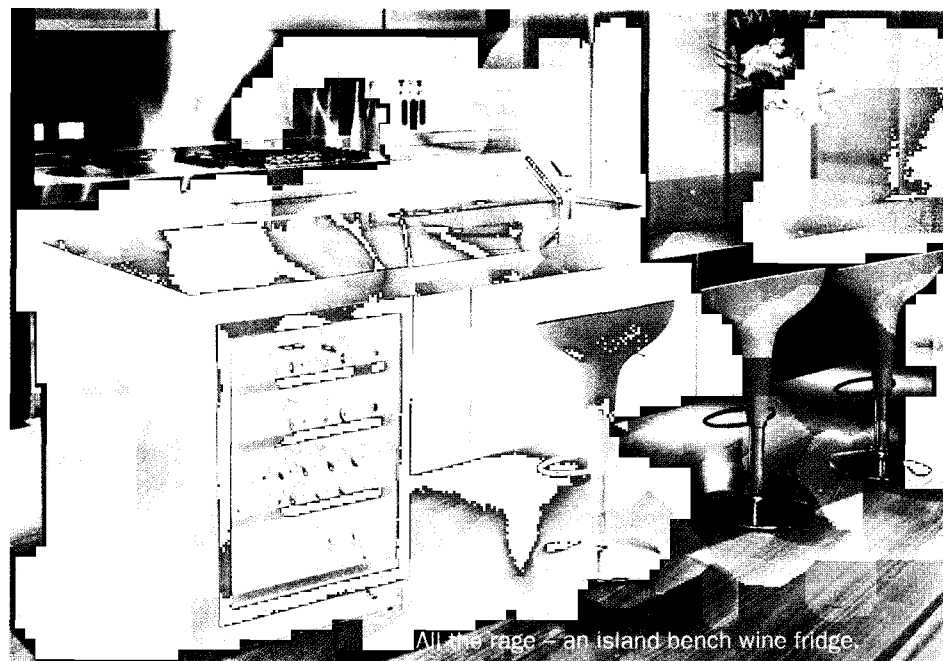
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humidity is necessary to keep the end of the cork that is in contact with the room environment expanded. One without the other could lead to the dreaded oxidation and leakage of wine.

Storing wine on a budget

There are several ways to store your wine without going to great expense. Befriending the local green grocer and collecting their broccoli boxes is a great start. Polystyrene has good insulating properties that will limit temperature fluctuations. They come in manageable sizes that can store up to 18 bottles, are easy to move from place to place, can be stacked on top of each other and with the lid kept on tight, are a dark environment for your wine.

Another storing option that is light on the pocket is an old fridge. (It doesn't have to work or be plugged in.) An old fridge already has shelving inside to stack



All the rage – an island bench wine fridge.

the wine, the insulating properties are great and will buffer more severe fluctuations in temperature. What's more,

Wine fridges have become very popular in recent times. The benefits of the wine fridge are numerous; accessibility, controlled environment and split temperatures for drink-now, drink-later bottles are just a few. Installing a small wine fridge under the island bench or kitchen bar is perfect for people with small cellaring quantities or storage for everyday drinking. ■

with the door shut no light will adversely affect the wine. If you put a dish of water inside and top up periodically there will be enough humidity to keep the corks happy.

High end cellaring options

For those with limited space, cellaring your wine off site is a worthwhile option. Not only are you ensured optimal conditions and room to expand as your collection grows, you'll also avoid the temptation of raiding the collection late one night after a few too many!

If house renovations are on the cards, consider adding some built-in racking or shelving to store your wine, (but not above or next to fridges and ovens). Not only can the look and feel of the cellar blend in with the existing design of the house, the configuration of the storage can cater for single bottles, magnums, 6-packs and dozen quantities.

WINE STORAGE CONTACTS:

Off-site Storage:

- Wine-ark www.wine-ark.com.au
- Kennards Self Storage www.kss.com.au

Custom Made Cellars (Cellar racking):

- Wine Cellar Designs www.cellardesigns.com.au
- Cellar Creations www.cellar-creations.com.au
- Cellar Wine www.cellarrack.com.au

Wine Fridges (free-standing/underbench):

- Transtherm (Vintec) www.transtherm.com.au
- Liebherr www.andico.com.au/liebherr