

# wine storage

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There's never been a better time to keep reds under the bed or in a cellar, writes Peter Bourne.

Ever wanted your own wine cellar? I don't mean ripping up the kitchen floor. A wine cellar can mean a few cases of red kept under the bed for a couple of years. In that time it will begin to undergo the magical evolution from youthful awkwardness to mellow maturity. Sharing a mature bottle of wine is one of life's greatest pleasures. So start a cellar now.

Australia has a glut of wine - particularly premium reds and especially cabernet sauvignon. This coincides with a shake-out among big producers such as Southcorp, Orlando Wyndham and Hardy, and increased competition at retail level between Coles Myer and Woolworths.

Even wholesale wine distribution has felt the impact, with historic names like Tuckers disappearing as new mega-relationships are forged. International sales of Australian wine continue to grow, but almost exclusively at the lower end - leaving lots of premium grapes unpicked.

If you are confident in the wines you like, read the local wine press or get on the internet and check the specials. Look for Penfolds, Wynns, Hardy, Houghton, Saltram and Yalumba. Smaller labels such as Peter Lehmann, St Hallett, Tahbilk, Knappstein and d'Arenberg also have plenty to offer. Newer players are also trying to move up.

If you are perplexed by the array of labels on retail shelves, find a good independent retailer and seek advice. Independents might not always be the cheapest but their recommendations may save you from cellaring a bunch of duds. Five Way Cellars, the Ultimo Wine Centre and CBD Cellars all have helpful staff and offer regular free tastings.

Find a small storeroom or a spot at the back of the garage - the cooler the better. Alternatively, rent space at a commercial storage centre such as Wine Vault, **Wine Ark** or Kennards. The highly lauded 2002 vintages and the more-than-credible 2003 vintages are the ones to start with. Then you just have to wait patiently. The majority of reds are made for the short to medium term (two to five years), while the bigger, bolder reds from top vintages will be at their best after six to eight years - although some may comfortably last twice that time.

South Australia remains the heartland of traditional full-bodied reds made from shiraz and cabernet sauvignon grapes. The Barossa Valley is best known for labels such as Grant Burge, Barossa Valley Estate and Peter Lehmann, but newer labels such as Glaetzer, Thorn Clarke and Two Hands offer exceptional value for money. McLaren Vale producers such as Woodstock, Wirra Wirra, Maglieri, Geoff Merrill and Tatachilla are all worth keeping an eye on - along with newcomers Mr Riggs, Dowie Doole and Kangarilla Road.

Clare Valley names such as Mitchell, Pikes, Sevenhill, Tim Adams and Kilikanoon all offer honest, earthy reds at bargain prices. Coonawarra is another - with emerging producers Majella, Penley Estate and Balnaves joining well-established players such as Bowen, Leconfield, Hollick and Rymill.

The best-cellarling shiraz in Victoria is from the Heathcote region. Check out Jasper Hill, Heathcote Winery and Hanging Rock, plus newcomers Shelmerdine, Heathcote Estate

and Shadowfax.

Reds from the Grampians are always a safe bet. Seppelt reds are all up to the mark, along with Mount Langi Ghiran and Best's of Great Western. Also recommended are cabernets from Nagambie Lakes (Tahbilk and Mitchelton) and shiraz and cabernet from the Pyrenees (Taltarni, Warrenmang and Dalwhinnie).

Further west, the internationally acclaimed cabernet blends from Margaret River rarely disappoint - especially the likes of Cape Mentelle, Cullen and Moss Wood. Closer to home the reds of Mudgee are ideal for cellaring. Poet's Corner reds are absolute bargains, especially the Montrose Black Shiraz and Henry Lawson Cabernet Sauvignon. Also recommended are the 2001 Special Reserve Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon from Huntington Estate.

2003 Wirra Wirra Church Block - McLaren Vale, SA, \$23.95 (seen for \$16.99)

An astounding wine showing a concentration and depth rarely found in reds twice the price. The carefully sculptured backbone of tannin is shrouded with juicy yet savoury fruit flavours. Generous enough to enjoy now; even better in two to four years.

2003 Seppelt Victoria Shiraz - Victoria, \$18.50 (seen for \$13.99)

The Seppelt label has undergone a state of origin shift - from the Barossa to Victoria. Only the most committed will cellar this one - it's delicious now, with soft cinnamon and licorice adding to the plump plum-flavoured shiraz. A year or three will see it develop another layer of character and complexity.

2003 Saltram Mamre Brook Cabernet Sauvignon - Barossa Valley, SA, \$26.50 (seen for \$16.99)

This lush cabernet's bouquet of ripe blueberries and blackcurrants leaps from the glass, the palate is full fruited and generous with lashings of rich, dark chocolate flavours and a touch of sweet vanillin oak. It will improve over the next three to five years.

2001 Wynns Coonawarra Estate Cabernet Sauvignon - Coonawarra, SA, \$31.95 (seen for \$19.90)

With more than 50 vintages to its credit, this is arguably one of Australia's most consistent cabernets. The underrated 2001 vintage is still a vinous babe. Drink it now with rare beef and horseradish or cellar for five to 10 years to reveal its full grace and charm.

2003 Peter Lehmann Shiraz - Barossa Valley, SA, \$20.95 (seen for \$13.99)

As honest and open as its maker, this wine is crammed with rich, ripe and juicy dark plum and blackberry flavours, plus a little oak that allows the regional characters of licorice, dark chocolate and cedary spices to add a further layer. Three to five years should see it at its peak.