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WINE STORAGE

The best solutions are designed to keep your bottles at optimum temperature and make a stylish display of your beverage collection. Find your perfect fit with our lowdown on what's out there – from all-out cellars to clever integrated ideas

Words: Amelia Thorpe

Whether you like to enjoy the occasional glass with friends or are a passionately interested connoisseur, storing bottles in the right surroundings is key to enjoying wine at its best. With the move towards kitchen-living-diners that double as entertaining spaces comes a growing demand for storage units that keep our favourite tipples in top condition.

While it's fine to quickly chill down a bottle in a standard fridge, sommeliers do not advise it for longer-term storage. "The lack of moisture may dry out the cork, which will result in air coming into the bottle and, ultimately, damaging your wine," explains Luke Shipway, product manager at Caple. You may also find the drink becomes too cold for full enjoyment, which is why conditioning units have become increasingly popular. They keep wine in a stable environment, avoiding the temperature extremes that may occur in a standard fridge. These appliances also ensure minimal vibration and consistent humidity to prevent corks drying out, with UV-protect glass on cabinet doors to stop your tipples maturing too early.

Wine conditioning units come in a variety of sizes, typically between 15cm and 60cm wide. Freestanding models can be installed and moved anywhere, while integrated formats are built into kitchen cabinets. Ideally, the unit encasing it is best positioned close to where you plan to enjoy your wine, such as near barstools at an island, by the dining area, or as part of a dedicated bar set-up. Try to avoid placing the wine storage unit in direct sunlight and remember that it will, of course, need to be close to a power supply.

Many of the latest appliances have two or three zones to allow you to keep red, white, and sparkling white at their ideal temperatures. "Recommendations for optimum climates vary according to individual preference, but I suggest 8-10°C for fresh, aromatic white wines and Champagne and 10-13°C for richer and oaked whites," advises Adam Russell, director of specialist wine importer Avalon Wine. "Lighter red wines, such as a Beaujolais, are best at 12-14°C, while full-bodied reds, such as a Bordeaux, should be kept at 18-19°C." Why is it so important to get it right? "Storing your bottles too cold tends to dull aromas in white wines and accentuate tannins in reds," Adam explains. "Temperatures above the ideal can make whites lose their vivacity and accentuate heady, alcoholic aromas and jammy character in reds."

Traditionally, bottles are stored horizontally to keep their corks from drying out – but this is less important for wines you are planning to drink in the near future, as well as for screw-top designs. Slide-out shelves allow easy access, while adjustable ones are useful if you have magnums and extra-large bottles.

If your collection is extensive, you might want to consider a dedicated cellar, room, or wall – not only for display purposes, but also so you can store the bottles in the best possible conditions to protect your investment in the long term. "You can turn any area of the house into a wine cellar, as long as you insulate the room properly and choose the right conditioning equipment," explains Irwen Martin, director of wine storage solution specialist Wine Corner. "Consult an expert who can advise on which type of cooling, heating, and ventilation installation will suit your location." In the case of a wine room or cellar, you may also want to include a table with seating for tastings, together with fitted cabinetry for storing glassware and any extra equipment you may need. Read on for advice on the options available... >

below Storing wine in the dining area frees up kitchen space, locating drinks close to the table. **This integrated unit from Sub-Zero is within a bespoke copper-front cabinet with aged brass frame shows by Ledbury Studio. Kitchens by Ledbury Studio start from £50,000**

