

Feast: Blue Sky on York Beach

Wine Cellars

The Canvas with Alex Katz

# Maine HOME+ DESIGN

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## Kennebunk Beach

Cottage Tradition Meets Technology

An Arts District Pied à Terre  
Portland Loft

+  
Everything Is Illuminated  
Lighting For Every Decor



# Best Cellars

*“Wine is the most civilized thing in the world.”*

Ernest Hemingway

## SPACES

by Joshua Bodwell

Photography François Gagné

There is little that symbolizes our sense of romance more perfectly than a bottle of wine. Wine is a harbinger of celebration and merriment. With wine, we make our heartfelt toasts, clink our glasses, and cry “cheers!” “salut!” or “l’chaim!”

First cultivated in the Fertile Crescent around 3000 B.C., wine is as old as Western civilization itself. Yet it was not until the late 1600s that wine began to be packaged as we know it today. The English perfected a stronger glass bottle that was then married to cork stoppers, which a Benedictine monk named Dom Perignon had discovered (or rather rediscovered, since the Romans had used cork) were ideal for preserving his sparkling wine. Today, more homeowners are discovering the pleasures of storing wine in their homes. Wine cellars, once considered an indulgence, have become more accessible, convenient, and practical.

While the long-term storage of wine in the home might seem as complex to the mind as a Brunello di Montalcino Biondi Santi Riserva 1955 is to the palate, there are just a handful of things that homeowners should keep in mind. They are easily remembered as the Four Ds: Degrees, Damp, Dark, and Dirt-free.

### DEGREES

Temperature is probably the most important factor when storing wine. The ideal environment for wine storage is 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. While a few degrees in either direction won’t matter too much, consistency is essential—dramatic fluctuations in temperature can cause wine to age too quickly.

Another degree to remember is the *degree*, or angle, at which your wine bottles are stored. While it may be tempting to display a few of your finest wines standing at attention with their

handsome labels on full display, this urge should be avoided. Wine is stored horizontally to keep the cork moist from direct contact with the wine. This small detail is critical.

### DAMP

Just as one side of the cork is kept in contact with the wine, a damp room ensures that the other side also remains moist. This is crucial to keep the cork from drying out, loosing its shape, and allowing air to attack the wine and turn it to vinegar. A relative humidity of 70 percent is considered perfect. Luckily, since few of us live in stone castles with damp cellars, today’s climate-control options make the adjustment and regulation of humidity in a room quite simple.

### DARK

Though the Italian astronomer Galileo once quipped, “Wine is sunlight held together by water,” light is unquestionably the enemy of wine. It comes in dark bottles for a reason! For the most part, wine should be stored in darkness. When your wine cellar must be lit, even for the time it takes to select a bottle, keep the following in mind: ultraviolet light is the worst for wine, followed by fluorescent, while incandescent or sodium-vapor lights are the optimal choice.

### DIRT-FREE

Lastly, cleanliness and ventilation will reduce the chance that corks, and therefore the wine itself, will be compromised. Besides the obvious damage insects or debris can cause, even strong odors can seep through the porous crevices in a cork and taint the wine. A successful wine cellar will likely require that space be given over exclusively to your precious *vino*.



SPACES



*Boothbay Home Builders,  
Pemaquid Residence*

With room for roughly 1,000 bottles, not only is this wine cellar climate controlled but so too is the attached "tasting room," where the homeowners and their guests can sit and sample the collection's finest vintages. The wine racks were built of Redwood heartwood—lightweight and resistant to decay, redwood is ideal for wine cellars as it does not swell like other woods in humid conditions and resists warping or splitting. The cellar's massive doors feature ironwork by Peter Brown of Edgcomb's Iron and Silk.



## SPACES

### *Rainbow Construction, Cape Elizabeth Residence*

Shrewdly tucked right beneath the dining room—for easy access as the imbibing occurs—the red cedar and birch racks in this wine cellar cover every nook and cranny to hold 700 bottles of liquid grapes. With tongue-and-groove beaded fir walls and ceilings and a natural stone floor, this cellar is accessed via an oak, rock-lined staircase—“It feels like you’re descending into an old grotto,” says the builder, Craig Cooper of Rainbow Construction.





## SPACES



*Trademark Inc.,  
Cape Elizabeth Residence*

This impressive wine cellar with redwood and birch racks boasts space for upwards of 3,500 bottles. While the room is fully climate controlled, the poured and stained concrete floor also helps keep things cool. Slate-topped counters and a vaulted plaster ceiling, with a faux-finish executed by the cellar's builder, Ben Trout of Trademark, give the room some Old World charm. Rainbow Construction's Craig Cooper crafted the racks from redwood and birch.





### *Monaghan Woodworks, Portland Residence*

In a former life, this 800-bottle wine cellar—with its deep, arched brick entryway—was part of a basement laundry facility. When designer Mark Spiker oversaw the room's transformation from dirty clothes to fine wine, he had the existing windows coated with a double layer of 3M Window Film from Maine Sun Solutions—the film blocks out 99 percent of the ultraviolet rays that can harm wine. Spiker also designed the custom-built mahogany doors and coated the redwood racks with a water-based finish that would inhibit mold. "This is a real, self-regulating wine cellar," says Spiker. "The temperature stays level because of the thick brick walls and lack of sunlight." **MH+D**

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