



A casual basement wine room fosters conversation

The basement wine cellar is undergoing a renaissance, with more wine lovers eschewing the traditional cave-like vault and embracing a more approachable — and comfortable — version of the wine room. So says Norm Lecuyer, president of Just Basements, who reports that he's increasingly being asked to design more casual "wine rooms" where clients can relax, entertain friends, and enjoy their collections. Indeed, this particular wine room, which Lecuyer completed in 2014, features a compact wine fridge that holds just 30 bottles, with space for 150 more in the X-cube wine storage in the bar area and in the decorative wine wall. "My clients are wine appreciators rather than serious collectors, so they're not concerned about storing their collection in a strictly climate-controlled environment. It's there to drink."



Top and above: Located in the basement, the "wine wall" is designed to create an intimate conversation area, with a subtle curve that envelops the seating

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN VAN LEEUWEN

Great Taste

Right: The wine fridge holds up to 30 bottles. The bar area and the decorative wine wall offer space for an additional 150 bottles. Lecuyer notes that his clients are wine appreciators rather than serious collectors so were not concerned about storing their collection in a strict climate-controlled environment



Here, the wine wall sets the tone, its subtle curve creating an intimate conversation area. Lecuyer admits that the elegant arc was serendipity rather than planning. A series of pipes made it tricky to build a flat wall, so the artful solution became a curved wall that seems to envelop the comfortable seating, inviting heart-to-heart exchanges over a much-loved bottle of wine. Ten identical niches showcase prize bottles to full advantage, lit with LED lights to ensure that the wine doesn't overheat.

When the owners originally began planning the room, they had imagined having a fireplace on the wine wall. That idea was quickly dropped because of concerns about overheating their collection. Instead, Lecuyer upped the warmth factor with a candle-filled nook that glows invitingly (without giving off too much heat). The grey palette, in concert with wood-grained tile in the niches, reminds the owners of the colours and textures of Tuscany. That motif is carried through to the adjacent bar area, where the tile is repeated and the stained oak cabinetry complements the deep grey of the main-room feature wall. And while the X-cube wine storage in the bar area may not be as dramatic as the wine niches in the main room, Lecuyer notes that the design offers huge storage potential.

A year after the cellar was completed, the owners couldn't be happier. "They knew they would use it a lot," says Lecuyer, "but they can't believe how much time they spend in the space." When your basement reminds you of Tuscany, it's little wonder you make a return visit every chance you get. ■



Above: Ten identical niches are lit with LED lights so as not to overheat the wine. The grey palette, in concert with the wood-grained tile in the niches, reminds the owners of Tuscany

Left: The owner chose the chandelier even before the room was built, knowing it would set the tone. Behind it, the sleek sliding door conceals the furnace room

