

# Becoming a collector

*It usually starts with a few bottles, and before you know it, you have a wine fridge or two and are buying wine to lay down*

■ By ADAM MONTEFIORE

If you buy a few bottles of wine, it does not make you a collector. So, when do you become a collector of wine? The answer is when you find yourself buying wine to drink next year, instead of tonight!

However, few people decide to become wine collectors. Usually it is something that evolves gradually. It starts with a few bottles you have stored in some cupboard. You can't remember what you have, but there are normally one or two bottles of wine, often alongside an open kiddush wine and some dusty bottle of liqueur you once received as a present, but have never opened.

The next stage is when the wine buyer has gathered a few more bottles and decides to use a wine cardboard box on its side to store them. There is nothing wrong with this as an impromptu wine rack and it will give room for six or 12 bottles. After this you may graduate to a small wooden wine rack, which you buy in a local hardware store. After a while you decide to splash out and purchase a small wine fridge. Then before you know it, you need a larger fridge. Finally you may decide you need a proper wine cellar or temperature-controlled wine room. One can slip from stage to stage barely noticing. One day you are buying wine to drink now, the next you are buying wine to drink later. You are already a collector.

Many of the best wines may only be produced in small quantities. If there is something you like, you may have to purchase a few more bottles than you would do nor-

mally, because the wine is only available while the limited stocks last. Some collectors buy wine for investment and others for enjoyment.

Whatever the motivation, the principles of storage are the same. It does not matter how expensive a wine is, if it is not kept correctly it will deteriorate. The hot months of July and August have the potential to destroy any wine, with no respect for its price or quality.

So, wherever you store your wine, it is wise to follow a few guidelines.

Wines should be kept horizontally, ideally with the label facing upwards for ease of identification, and it helps if you need to check the sediment before decanting. This is so the cork remains moist, and does not dry out. If it does, the wine will oxidize and deteriorate, like any foodstuff not kept correctly. It is also acceptable to leave the wines upside down in their original carton.

Stack red wines above whites, as hot air rises and red wines will cope better with hotter temperatures. If you have a screw-top bottle, and there is nothing inferior with a wine enclosed in this way, the wine does not have to lie horizontally, but it causes no damage if it does. So I would suggest for convenience that screw-top bottles are also celled horizontally.

The great enemies of wine are temperature, light and vibration.

It is important that the temperature is cool and constant. Warm temperatures and fluctuations in temperature prematurely age a wine. The cupboard where you store the wine should therefore not be near a cooker or any heat source. If you have a wine fridge or a closet you can turn into a serious wine room, then the temperature should be set at about 13°, but anything between 11° and 15° is acceptable.

Storing wine in a domestic fridge is a

## Wines for collectors

The most collectible wines are those which will last. As far as Israel and the kosher wine world are concerned, the best wines to lay down are as follows:

### ISRAELI WINES

**Bordeaux-style blends**  
Carmel Limited Edition, Castel Grand Vin, Dalton Matatia, Margalit Enigma, Recanati Special Reserve, Yarden Katzrin, Yatir Forest

**Cabernet Sauvignon**  
Flam Reserve, Kayoumi Vineyard, Margalit, Yarden El Rom, Yatir

**Syrah/Shiraz**  
Clos de Gat Sycra, Kay-

oumi Vineyard, Yarden Tel Phares, Yatir

**Merlot**  
Clos de Gat Sycra, Flam Reserve, Margalit

**Mediterranean blends**  
Carmel Mediterranean, Chateau Golan Geshem, Vitkin Shorashim

**Syrah and Bordeaux varieties blends**  
Ella Valley E, Galil Mountain Meron, Yarden Rom

**Dessert and fortified wines**  
Sha'al Vineyard Gewurztraminer, Yarden Heights, Carmel Vintage

### AMERICAN KOSHER WINES

Covenant, Hagafen Prix Reserve, Herzog Generation 8, Herzog Special Edition, Herzog Reserves

### FRENCH KOSHER WINES

Château Leoville – Poyferre, Château Pontet Canet, Château Smith Haut Lafite, Château Valandraud

### ITALIAN KOSHER WINES

Falesco Marciliano

### SPANISH KOSHER WINES

Capcanes Flor de Primavera Peraj Habib

short term solution only, and certainly preferable to being left out and open to the heat and humidity of Israel's climate. However it is best not to leave bottles there for too long.

Any sort of light, and particularly direct sunlight, is damaging to a wine. You need to find a dark place to store your bottles. This is why many inexpensive wines, which are meant to be drunk relatively quickly, are in clear bottles, but more expensive wines tend to be in colored bottles, which provide protection.

Vibration is also not good for wine. Wines kept in a domestic fridge or under the stairs may suffer from vibrations, which over a period of time do not do your wine any good.

In a proper wine room, there should be a humidifier to ensure the corks don't dry out. Many wines are now closed with screw caps or synthetic corks, but the main

collectable wines still use natural cork. The humidifier should be set at between 50% and 80%; 70% is ideal.

Wine racks and wine fridges don't have to be purely functional. They may be decorative and become a feature. Also a wine room usually becomes more than a place just to store wine, as hosts will usually be eager to show off their wine collection to unsuspecting guests.

A cellar should be divided into two, with those wines required for early and day to day drinking being more accessible at eye level. The wines needing bottle age may be kept separately, because they will age gracefully in the bottle for a longer time. If you don't have a fancy wine room, then there are certain wine shops that provide storage facilities for privately owned fine wines.

Serious wine collectors will buy in wine shops where they receive reliable advice, look for good deals on futures (wines

marketed before they are released) or buy direct from wineries. Buying in auctions is also a possibility, but even if the deal is good, you never truly know how the wine was stored.

A final tip for the wine collector. Wines with bottle age gain a softer, slightly oxidized, more mellow character. If older wines are not to your taste, then don't keep them that long. Furthermore if you don't like a wine when it is young, it is a fair bet you still won't like it after it has aged. The best wines for collectors in Israel, are red wines or dessert wines. ■

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