



How to Choose the Right Wine Fridge

by Tania MacPhee, MacPhee's, everything for the wine enthusiast

www.macphees.com.au

Buying a wine fridge is a relatively large investment, and you need to get it right the first time. I have seen too many people buy poorly, ultimately becoming disappointed and frustrated with their cabinet, something that can easily be avoided.

To selecting the wine fridge that best suits your needs, consider the following 4 key factors:

1. Capacity – from 12 bottles to over 470

Determine how many bottles you need to store now and consider how your wine collection may grow in the future. In my experience, many wine collectors buy more wine once they find a wine storage solution so buy a larger cabinet than you think you initially need.

If your budget is limited, invest in a larger size wine cabinet before opting for all the bells and whistles such as extra sliding shelves and glass door.

2. Location – on display within the home / office or in the garage

If you intend to put your wine fridge in the dining room, living area, or on display, consider customising with a glass door or a choice of colours and finishes (including leather and stainless steel). Another option is to build the wine cabinet into kitchen cabinetry or a furniture piece. In this case, ensure that the cabinet is front ventilated or that there is some room left for air circulation or the wine cabinet will not perform properly. Another factor you need to consider if the cabinet is in the home is the amount of noise it will make.

If the wine cabinet is going in the garage, my guess is that aesthetics may not be as important so you can save money by opting for a solid door. If you have a lot of wine that you want to store longer term, storage shelves allow higher capacity and further savings.

3. Temperature zones

Determine how much of your wine needs to be stored longer term versus how much wine you need 'at call' for short term drinking. ALL wine should be stored at 14 degrees Celsius with a temperature variation of no more than one degree, whilst drinking temperature varies between 6 degrees Celsius (eg. for champagne) and 18 degrees Celsius (eg. for big reds), depending on wine variety.

Single temperature wine cabinets are best suited to storing wine longer term, whilst 2, 3 and multi temperature units are ideal for restaurants or those who entertain quite regularly and therefore generally require a large amount of wine 'at call' at ideal drinking temperature.

4. Shelving

When it comes to the day to day use and functionality of your wine cabinet (and, believe me, the amount of enjoyment versus frustration you will experience), an important factor is the type of shelving.

Firstly, unless the shelves are roller mounted, you will probably struggle to open a fully stacked shelf. Secondly, the style of shelving (ie. either sliding or storage) needed is based on how much of the same wine you buy as well as how long your wine needs to be aged. If you typically buy wine in dozens or half dozens and want to store longer term, you may consider storage shelves which allow greater capacity in your wine cabinet as bottles are stacked on top of each other. Sliding shelves are ideal for wines you want to drink shorter term as they allow easy access to each bottle. Last but by no means least, consider buying shelves that are specifically made for different wine varieties such as champagne and Bordeaux.

Taking all of this into consideration, here is a list of questions you should ask the organisation you are buying your wine cabinet from:

Questions to ask when researching a wine fridge

1. Where was the wine fridge manufactured and how long has the manufacturer been making wine cabinets?
2. Can I see the wine fridge fully stacked with wine so I can understand capacity as well as functionality for different bottle shapes?
3. How does the wine cabinet's shelving cater for different bottle shapes and sizes (eg. champagne)?
4. Can I slide a shelf that is fully stacked so I can see how easy it is to use?
5. Can I hear the wine fridge turned on so I can determine how much noise it makes?
6. How does the light in the wine cabinet impact the wine? Is it a 'cold' light, or does it heat up?
7. Is humidity displayed and monitored and how does it ensure that corks don't dry out?
8. Is there more than one degree variance once the temperature is set at the recommended 14 degrees?
9. Is your organisation responsible for after sales service or will you pass me on to the manufacturer?
10. How precisely does the unit deliver and monitor uniform temperature throughout the unit?
11. How does the wine cabinet address vibration (which is a major enemy of wine long term)?
12. Are the walls stipled aluminium or just plastic?
13. Does the organisation understand storing and ageing wine? Can they add some value?

Case Studies

Mr and Mrs Brown - well travelled and well educated couple who enjoy drinking wine and understand that cellaring wine will reward in the long term. They are well informed and want to buy the right product. They require a high quality wine cabinet with a large capacity for storing wine which is aesthetically pleasing as it will be on display within their home. They require a maintenance free wine cabinet and demand a high standard of after sales service which includes automated annual filter postage and specialist who will answer any questions.

Ideal wine cabinet – EuroCave V283 with glass door, 14 sliding shelves (including champagne shelf), single temperature with temperature and humidity display as well as a list of features and benefits.

Young Professional - is discovering the pleasures of wine, investing in good wines and understands the need to store it properly. He wants the best value for money wine cabinet with optimum capacity for storing wine.

Ideal wine cabinet – EuroCave V180 / V266 with solid door and storage shelves.

Discerning – understand quality and are prepared to pay for the best. They are proud of their beautiful home and enjoy entertaining and sharing wine experiences with friends. They buy prestige appliances that are stylish and of the highest quality. Wine needs to be at ideal serving temperature, ready for drinking as required.

Ideal wine cabinet – EuroCave S059, stainless steel frame / frameless glass door or fully integrated in joinery or within a specially designed furniture piece.

Tips

Tip #1 Buy a wine fridge with a larger capacity than you think you'll need. Once you have found a solution to your wine storage needs, you will find that you enjoy collecting even more and will therefore buy more wine.

Tip #2 Avoid purchasing an under bench wine cabinet for your kitchen, especially if it's your first wine fridge and your main need is to store wine. Kitchen models are ideal if you want many different wine varieties 'at call' at their individual ideal drinking temperature.