



BUY'ER AND CELLAR

Wine writer Emma Jenkins demystifies the art of cellaring wine. With her advice it needn't be expensive nor a lesson in patience

When people discuss cellaring wine, it's often on the basis that one needs to buy expensive wine and store it in a precise fashion until some certain point in time. It all seems very serious, not to mention time-consuming and costly. But I have always thought of a cellar as simply a collection of wine.

Yes, there will (hopefully) be serious and perhaps pricey bottles intended for long-term care but mostly, cellars function as a selection from which you can draw no matter what the occasion demands. That may be a bottle of Friday night champagne with the fish-and-chips, an inviting white for the lazy afternoons when friends drop by unexpectedly, or good stocks of a bargain red.

Of course, it also allows you to squirrel away wines that are intended to reach their peak many years from now; these wines can provide a wonderful opportunity to discover how fine wine evolves, plus they give you a great excuse to design a fabulous dinner party around aged treasures.

But mostly, it's about the pleasure and discovery that wine, of any age, can bring.

If you do intend assembling and caring for a collection of wine, it doesn't hurt to set things up properly. The sky's the limit if your budget allows for a custom-made cellar, but so long as you chose somewhere relatively cool (12 to 15 degrees Celsius is ideal) but more importantly without significant fluctuation (a few degrees across the seasons is fine but preferably not across the days or weeks). It should also be relatively out of the way as this minimises both vibration disturbances and the inevitable ill-advised drunken raids.

A system for recording what you store is also crucial as it saves forgotten wines languishing

well beyond their peak, and there are now some great apps available for this task. When you can afford it, buy at least six bottles of those wines you particularly enjoy as this allows a bottle or so a year to be opened, letting you take pleasure in their evolution and ensuring they are more likely to be drunk at their peak.

I keep my chosen few in their original boxes and write on the outside the anticipated drinking window. Do err on the side of caution here. It's better too early than too late and also beware marketing departments' overly optimistic cellaring times.

You may be surprised at the number of whites listed here but New Zealand's climate, cuisine and winemaking prowess all demand a fair share of any cellar be devoted to white wine; it's also good to have earlier drinking examples of whites and reds on hand for your regular tipples, allowing the more special numbers to grow old happily.

I'd be content to see my cellar stocked with any – and preferably all – of the below, and indeed many are alumni of my own modest collection, but feel free to add and subtract as your tastes and needs suit. For that is the very best thing about a cellar – it's your own, personally tailored wine shop, right here at home.

1. Deutz Marlborough Cuvée, \$30 One should always have a few good bottles of fizz to hand, and it's hard to go past the appealing combination of aromatic richness and fruit on offer with Deutz.
2. Champagne Lenoble Blanc de Blanc Grand Cru, \$70 A glittering wine with champagne's hallmark precision and rapier-like

structure, there's also vivacious fruit and lingering complexity here. For when only the real deal will do.

3. 2012 Mahi Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, \$29 There's savignion for quaffing and savignion for savouring and Mahi is firmly in the latter camp. Minerally, crisp and even better with a year or so under its belt.

4. 2011 Gladstone Vineyard Reserve Sophie's Choice Sauvignon Blanc, \$35 A rich, harmonious wine with lovely subtle use of oak, adding complexity and depth. Expand your savignion horizons.

5. 2012 Spy Valley Envoy Gewurztraminer, \$29 Lush but finely tuned with plenty of the heady exoticism that makes gewurztraminer so appealing, plus crisp acidity and lovely fruit weight. Will convert non-believers and further enchant the converted.

6. 2011 Auburn Lowburn Riesling, \$30 The striking delectable wines of this Central Otago specialist riesling producer will have you swooning with pleasure. The Lowburn is fragrant and luscious while its precise backbone of steely acidity ensures it finishes clean, leaving you wanting more.

7. 2011 Framingham Select Marlborough Riesling, \$35 Pack away a case (or preferably more) of this perennial favourite, drink a few bottles each year and prepare to be dazzled as racy minerality gives way to a lush kaleidoscope of aroma and flavour.

8. 2011 TOSO Pinot Gris, \$24 A smart new Central Otago label making a perfectly poised, fresh wine redolent of white flowers and stone fruit, and a smart pinot noir also. A lovely Sunday-afternoon-with-good-friends wine.





9. 2010 Greywacke Marlborough Chardonnay, \$35. Fine chardonnay rewards patience beautifully and deserves a place in anyone's wine collection. A winning combination of opulence, elegance and character plus impressive length.

10. 2011 Clearview Reserve Chardonnay, \$40. This Hawke's Bay stunner is exactly what people have in mind when they think of top quality, full-bodied chardonnay. A classic.

11. 2010 Maude Mt Maude Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$50. A very refined pinot noir from Wanaka, made in a long, lean style with subtle yet expressive fruit – this is a keeper. Given time to open up, it's sleek, elegant and lengthy.

12. 2011 Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Syrah, \$35. Bright fruit (lots of blueberries and plums), peppery spice, firm and ripe tannins plus an

appealing silkiness, this is a balanced and graceful wine to tuck away in the medium term.

13. 2010 Mills Reef Elspeth Syrah, \$45. Silken, rich and very complete, this glossy syrah ticks all the boxes. Ripe fruit has been carefully melded to spicy oak, giving lifted floral aromas against a backdrop of savoury, concentrated fruit. No great rush with this one.

14. Church Road McDonald Series Hawke's Bay Merlot 2010, \$33. Still very youthful and taut, with a core of dense fruit just waiting to unfurl. A spicy plummy wine, mouth-filling and lively; one to savour with roast beef or lamb.

15. 2012 Brancott Estate Special Reserve Sauvignon Gris, \$29. It's always fun to pull out something a little different and this sauvignon gris blends crisp fruit with mouth-filling richness; lovely chilled or try it with barbecue prawns.

16. 2010 Alpha Domus The Aviator, \$72. This wine built for the long haul but surprisingly approachable in its youth. Ripe, taut and seamless with layers of flavour and plenty of subtle depths. A smart buy.

17. 2006 Reserva de Caliboro Erasmo, \$30. A cabernet-based Chilean wine that packs some punch but does so with such charm you have to come back for more. Inky, velvety and sweet-fruited – and pleasingly, just a touch feral too.

18. 2010 Legado Munoz Garnacha, \$15. Because it's good to have a change from the ubiquitous Aussie quaffer, this simple, plummy Spanish red with a firm backbone of savoury tannin will soon become a barbecue favourite.

19. 2011 Osawa Late Harvest Gewurztraminer, \$28 (375ml). Aromatic, lusciously sweet and altogether rather decadent, you'll be pleased to have a few bottles of dessert wine tucked away when they're as smart as this. Very well balanced with a lively citrus lift on the finish.

20. 2007 Grahams Late Bottled Vintage Port, \$58. Every serious cellar should have some port for those long, cold winter nights; an LBV offers a toned-down version with the additional bonus of not requiring decades of cellaring – or hundreds of dollars to purchase. ●



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