

Pick of the Bunch

Mat Ryan on where to store your wine as the weather worsens outside.

Check out CrownWineCellars.com and you will see how our well-heeled neighbours down in Hong Kong store their wines. This world-class facility provides perfect conditions for wines to age to their optimum, and also provides a clubhouse for members to enjoy their big reds once they reach maturity.

But we're hardly going to travel down to HK to visit our bottled pride and joys, so how can we store our wines here in Shanghai? At the moment, there is no facility such as the Crown Wine Cellars – though if rumours are true, that may soon change. In the meantime, the ideal situation is a dedicated wine fridge or wine cave.

This is basically a bar fridge with a glass door. It runs a little warmer than a standard bar fridge, from 5 to 22 degrees Celsius. The optimal temperature for storing wine varies depending on who you ask, but the general consensus is that between 12 and 18 degrees is about right. Just as important – actually probably more important – is a constant temperature. Wine does not like temperature fluctuations, especially big ones of 8 to 10 degrees.

You can pick up a locally made wine storage unit of this kind for a surprisingly small price. Try the three big boys around the wine game: ASC (www.asc-wines.com), Torres (www.torreschina.com.cn) and Summergate (Tel: 6329 4433). The fridge looks a treat sitting in the lounge room as well. I even have some friends who use it to store their fancy Russian vodkas.

If you have neither the space nor the need to get a full wine fridge, don't rush home and drink everything now before it goes off. Follow some of these guidelines and you should be okay to store wines for some time.

As I already mentioned, temperature

consistency is extremely important. In Shanghai, as you read this with your beanie, scarf and jacket on, dreaming of the summer when you'll be knocking about in shorts and thongs (of the feet variety), you're obviously well aware of the extreme temperatures we get in this city. Wine doesn't like that. It makes me wonder



how my collection back home in Melbourne is coping with the "four seasons in one day" that is a regular occurrence there.

So how do you determine where to store your wine at home? If you only have a few whites, then I suggest you keep them in a normal fridge. The temperature is constant, and they're always ready to drink – which, of course, is a bonus. Otherwise, all wines need to be as far away as possible from direct warmth, especially air conditioning and heaters.

Also, keep them out of rooms that have large and sudden heat fluctuations. In winter, what are the two rooms that heat up and cool down over the course of a day? Bedroom and lounge room. Avoid these rooms. The same applies to the kitchen – at least for me: as I turn my steak into a lump of charcoal, I am also changing the temperature of the room, which returns to normal after cooking.

My suggestions are a spare bedroom (unless your partner is continually banishing you to the doghouse) or even a hallway. Inside a cupboard is ideal, as wine doesn't really like the light either. Under the bed? Fine, no problems. A desk drawer is probably not wise, as wine also dislikes movement. And make sure that wines are always stored lying down. Otherwise the cork may dry out causing leakage and/or oxidization.

Yes, it's a fickle thing, but that's what makes each bottle so unique. So keep your stash of wines out of the heat and light, and you'll be enjoying them with friends without any problems.



TV TIME

Couch Potato in the Year of the Pig

The Year of the Pig is upon us at last and all across China people greet the new lunar year with all the time-honoured traditions – visiting family, eating lots of dumplings and (most important of all) turning on the TV for the grinding 5-hour television behemoth that is the CCTV gala.



with (even if it does suck a bit). To be fair, CCTV have been trying to improve the gala and make it more "contemporary". Doing so has included bringing in a raft of celebrities including Andy Lau and Jackie Chan to jazz things up, as well as introducing younger presenters, such as Li Yong – that guy who dresses like a 19th century vampire – TWINS, Jay Chou, Taiwanese singer Sally Xu and Jasmine Liang.

In addition to the usual ethnic minority-related song and dance frolics, this year's gala menu includes a number of Olympic-

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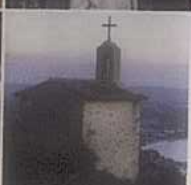
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