

best cellar list



crush



Starting a wine collection? Do what the experts do: Taste lots of wine. | by Teri Citterman

There are a thousand ways to skin a grape, and whether you're a serious wine collector or a fledgling enthusiast, there are a few things to consider when starting your own wine collection. Let's face it, unless you can live in your cellar, it's wise to set up a budget to determine what kinds of bottles to buy.

If you don't plan to drink the wine as fast as you can collect it, Arnie Millan, sommelier and educator at Esquin Wine Merchants, suggests buying a mix of ready-to-drink wine and bottles that will age. "You should have the 'hard day, weather's rotten, treat yourself tonight' bottles for \$10 to \$25, the 'having guests over or bringing a gift' wines for \$30 to \$50; and the 'celebratory special occasion' wines for \$50 and up," he says. To decide how much of each to include in your collection, answer a few questions: What kind of entertaining do I do? What's my weekly consumption? Do I want the bottles in my cellar to be drinkable now, later, or both? Am I collecting as an investment? (If you answer yes to the

last question, that means you'll probably never drink the wine you collect. A common misunderstanding is that wine will become more valuable over time, but only a handful of wines in the world will increase in value and, to profit, you have to sell.)

Once you've decided on your approach, start your research and development. In other words, taste lots of wine. The key is to trust your palate. Esquin holds free wine tastings, and Seattle has an abundance of classes, tastings, and wine dinners year-round. Wine clubs provide an easy way to try a variety of wines, and magazines are excellent resources for advice and education. *Wine Spectator*, for example, lists "Value Wines," a good source for buying wines from around the world. Knowing that as you taste, your palate will evolve, be mindful of overbuying. "People make the mistake of buying everything they like by the case," says Ryan Allison, a collector and owner of online retailer AWineStore.com. Allison made that error and is now sitting on several cases of '97 California Cab that isn't holding up as well as expected.

If you're looking for wines that do age, buy wines that have a track record. Wine critics, including *The Wine Advocate's* Robert Parker Jr. and Steve Tanzer of *International Wine Cellar* try to predict when a wine will peak based on tasting and assessing its characteristics. "It comes down to a judgment call," says Millan. "Unfortunately, the critics rarely agree, so the

SIP AND SHOP

WASHINGTON WINE MONTH

Mar 31–Apr 7

www.washingtonwine.org

TASTE WASHINGTON

Apr 14–15

www.tastewashington.org

AUCTION OF WASHINGTON WINES

Aug 16–18

www.auctionofwashingtonwines.org

AZURA

Contemporary Asian Bistro and Sushi Bar
1216 Pine . Seattle 206 264.0133

MONDAY

HALF PRICED ENTREES

From the Land & From the Sea

TUESDAY

2 FOR 1 HOUSE ROLLS & NIGIRI SUSHI ALL DAY

2 FOR 1 WELL DRINKS 4-9pm

WEDNESDAY

WINE DAY WEDNESDAY

All Bottles of wine 1/2 price

THURSDAY

LADIES NIGHT

All women 1/2 priced drinks, house rolls, & nigiri sushi from 4-8pm

FRIDAY

BOYS NIGHT OUT

All boys 1/2 priced drinks, house rolls, & nigiri sushi
from 4-8pm

SATURDAY

DRAFT BEER \$2.50

\$1.50 KOBE SLIDERS

NIGIRI SUSHI 2-6pm

SUNDAY

BLOODY MARY SUNDAY 2-6PM

\$2 Bloody Mary with \$2 Spicy Tuna Roll



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implication is that you need multiple bottles of each wine to open over time." Allison takes no chances. He buys three bottles and a magnum (1.5 liters) of a single wine and follows it through its lifetime. If a wine is expected to age over 10 years, Allison might open a bottle at three years, then five, then seven. As the wine reaches its peak, he can enjoy the magnum as the culminating celebration. Because of the size, magnums will hold for an extra year or so.

Once you've started to acquire wines, you'll want to keep track of them. There are countless cellar-management software programs, but two of the best are free. CellarTracker.com, founded by Seattleite Eric LeVine, automates your inventory and compiles tasting notes from other people. Or, use a simple Excel spreadsheet, listing the producer, wine designation, vintage, region, number of bottles, and ageability.

Storage is equally important. A cellar should be kept at 55 degrees Fahrenheit with about 70 percent humidity. And if your home isn't suited for a wine cellar, keep your collection in a storage locker. Some stores like Esquin rent wine lockers that provide the conditions for proper wine storage. Allison has plans to open a 3,000-square-foot retail space on Mercer Island in February: His Cellar 46 will house a wine shop, personal wine-storage lockers, and a wine bar. He hopes to create a Starbucks-style "extended living room" for wine, where customers can pull a bottle from their locker, pay a small corkage fee (\$10-\$15), and share it with friends in the wine bar.

Like the idea of a wine collection, but have no space, time, or inclination? For \$600, Cellar 46 will set you up with two cases of wine, prepackaged as an "instant cellar." *

STORE YOUR WINE

CELLAR 46

7650 SE 27th St, Mercer Island. Opens in February.

ELLIOTT AVENUE WINE STORAGE

1405 Elliott Ave W, Seattle. 206-217-0383;
elliottavenuewinestorage.com.

ESQUIN WINE MERCHANTS

2700 Fourth Ave S, Seattle. 206-682-7374;
www.esquin.com.

SEATTLE WINE STORAGE INC.

122 Terry Ave N, Seattle. 206-628-4802;
www.seattlewinestorage.biz.