

Ultimate Access

The Wine Cellar

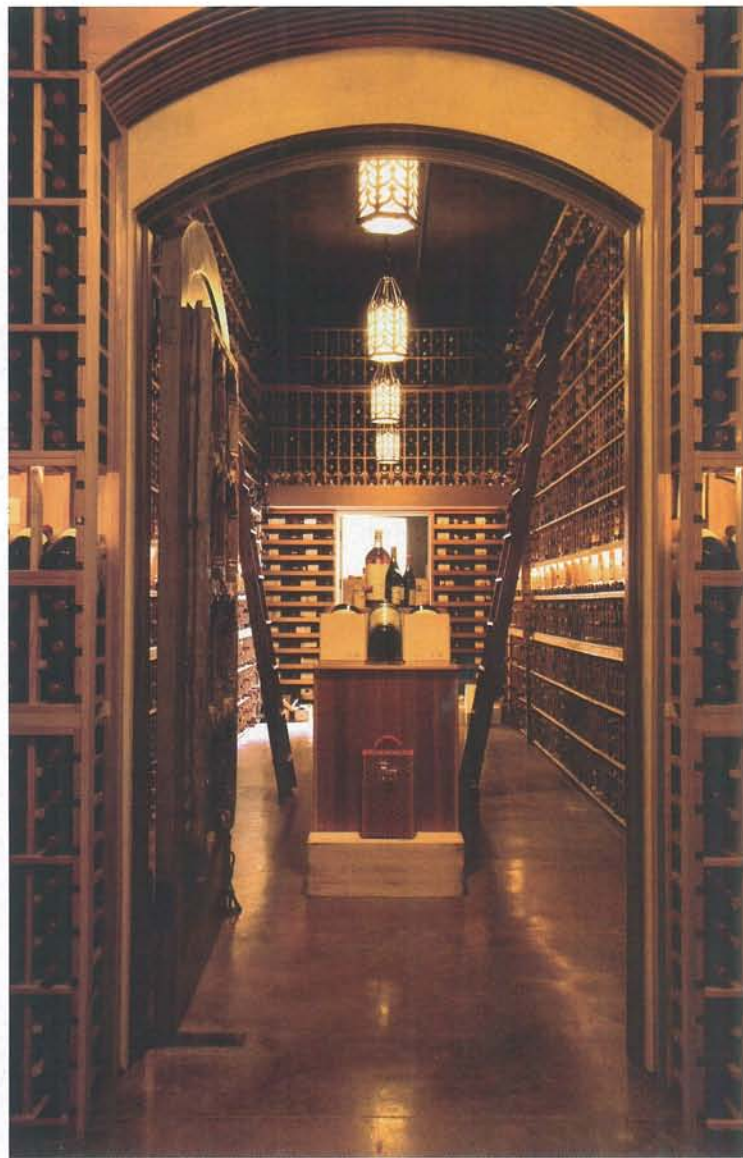
Were any serious wine collector to conjure up the ideal cellar space, it might be the one owned by Napa Valley winemaker Ann Barry Colgin.

By Amy Weaver Dorning



Colgin sits with her beloved dog, Corton Charlemagne, in her residence at the winery, defined by an exuberant wine-themed mural.

Photographs by *Maura McEvoy*



“I think it’s great that more women are collecting wine,”

says American winemaker Ann Barry Colgin as she points to the adjoining wine cellars that house her own handcrafted reds as well as the 13,500-bottle collection she shares with her husband and business partner, Joe Wender, an investment banker with Goldman Sachs. “Back when I was a wine auctioneer at Sotheby’s,” says Colgin, “men dominated in the bidding and the buying, but that’s changing.” Still, she admits there’s a difference in how the sexes approach buying wine, as in most things. “Women are more practical about it, thinking, ‘How much wine am I actually going to drink?’ while men are just so competitive,” Colgin says with a teasing nod toward Wender, who describes himself as an “obsessive wine

collector.” As for the 600-square-foot cellar space in their residence at the Colgin winery, in St. Helena, California, Colgin says: “We wanted to create a timeless, old-world feeling while maximizing the space. We’re very proud of it, and we often show it off to guests.” To create the two contiguous cellars, Colgin and Wender worked with the Los Angeles-based interior-design firm Hendrix Allardyce (310-659-8721; hendrixallardyce.com) and the Sausalito-based wine-cellar designer Thomas E. Warner (see “The Master Builder,” page 112). “Wine is a huge part of our lives, and we love to share it with friends and family,” says Colgin. Having so many bottles gives them the spontaneity they crave. “We never know what we’re going to want to drink,” she says. “We may want to pour a Colgin, or we might decide it’s a perfect evening for a good northern Rhône.”

ON THE SHELVES

Total number of bottles in the two cellars:

15,000 (13,500 in the personal cellar, 1,500 in the all-Colgin cellar); total combined capacity is 16,500

Oldest bottle:

1889 Bouchard Père & Fils, Nuits-Saint-Georges

Most valuable bottle:

Magnum from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (1950s or ‘60s; estimated at \$30,000)

Most obscure wine region represented: Israel

Number of countries represented: Fourteen

Number of U.S. states represented: Four

Percentage of whites versus reds: 75 percent red, 25 percent white/Champagne/sparkling

Total gallons of wine: 3,000

1

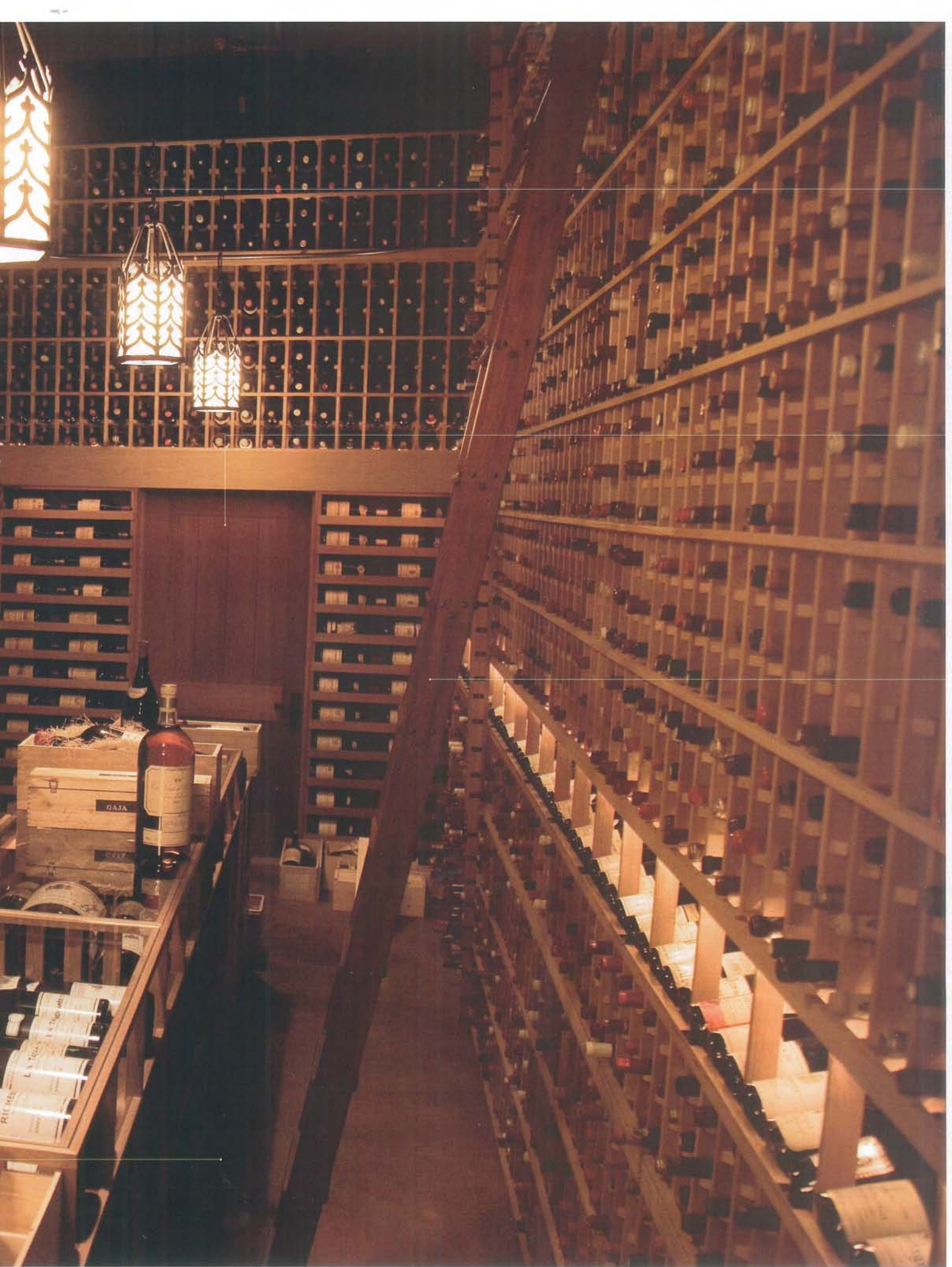
Warner had these racks handcrafted from salvaged old-growth redwood, a soft wood that works well in wine cellars. “Not only is it an environmentally sound idea,” he points out, “but the wood takes on a wonderfully musty wine smell, and its color darkens beautifully over time. The wood breathes, just as wine breathes.”

2

Hendrix Allardyce colored the walls and concrete floors in honey and amber tones, with veins of terra-cotta running through the walls as an extension of the colors in the rest of the property. “We wanted to create the flavor of something being very ancient,” says Tom Allardyce, of the interior-design firm. Tip: to achieve this effect, go two shades darker in the same color family to foster the sense of being deep underground.

Colgin in the larger cellar.





3

These Gothic-style light fixtures were created by Hendrix Allardyce out of iron and panes of amber milk glass, which suffuse the space with a mellow glow.

4

The 18th-century Indonesian door is four inches thick and lends the entrance an element of drama. "We loved that it was studded," says Allardyce.

5

Warner installed rolling library ladders for both practical and aesthetic reasons. They work well in tall, narrow spaces such as the Colgin cellar (ceilings are fourteen feet eight inches) and recall an actual library, a resource of information. "Wine is history, after all," he says.

Bidding for Wines

Buying from reputable auction houses and charity events is a good way to ensure that a wine's provenance is authentic. Most auctions allow online bid submissions as well as live phone bidding.

● **Hart Davis Hart Wine Co.** October 31, November 1, December 6 and January 31, 2009, Chicago (at Tru restaurant). 312-482-9996; hdhwine.com.

● **Zachys Wine Auction** November 6, 7 and 8 and December 4 and 5, New York City (at Daniel restaurant). 914-448-3026; zachys.com.

● **Acker Merrall & Condit** November 8 and December 6, New York (at Cru restaurant). 877-225-3747; ackerwines.com.

● **Sotheby's Late** November and early December, New York. For dates, 212-606-7050; sothebys.com.

● **Naples Winter Wine Festival** February 7, 2009, Naples, Florida (at Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort). napleswinefestival.com.

● **Auction Napa Valley** June 4-8, 2009, St. Helena, California. 707-963-3388; napa.vintners.com.

"WE WANTED TO CREATE A TIMELESS, OLD-WORLD FEELING WHILE MAXIMIZING THE SPACE."



Naming Favorites

The five bottles Colgin and Wender treasure most:

A six-liter 1985 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti La Tâche

A magnum 1945 Château Mouton Rothschild

A jeroboam 1961 Château Latour

A 750-milliliter 1935 Simi Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley

A magnum 1947 Vieux Château Certan

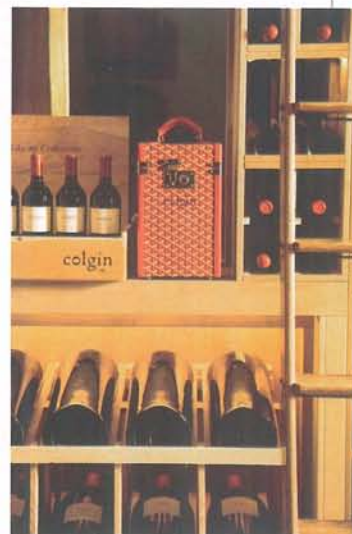
VOLUMES OF WINE

The cellar holding Colgin wines is a library of all Colgin wines produced so far. (A vertical is a set with one bottle for each year; a magnum is a 1.5-liter bottle; a jeroboam is three liters.) To date, the most valuable Colgin wines include:

A ten-magnum vertical (1992-2001) of Colgin Herb Lamb Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, sold for \$53,775 at auction.

A five-jeroboam vertical (2000-2004) of Colgin Tychson Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, sold for \$47,800 at auction.

A bottle of the 2002 Colgin Tychson Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, currently selling for \$1,249.





HOW TO POUR ON THE HOSPITALITY

Although Colgin and Wender (far left) do not use their cellars for entertaining, they love to throw dinner parties and have their guests choose the wines for the meal. Later, guests sign the empty bottles, which are then artfully displayed on a sideboard in the dining room.

"We'll do a Spain theme one night, with Spanish food and wine, and maybe even have a dancer," says Colgin. "If we have a group that's knowledgeable about wine, we might do a blind tasting and then discuss the wine afterward."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Colgin's favorite corkscrew is the Château Laguiole Passier (\$229; laguiole-knife-corkscrew.com). For an elegant dinner, she sets the table with William Yeoward Crystal (williamyeowardcrystal.com). For wine tastings, she likes to use Riedel Vinum Extreme glassware (riedel.com); for tasting young wines, Eisch glassware (eisch.com). Her favorite reference books include *The New Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia* (DK Publishing), by Tom Stevenson, and *The Wine Bible* (Workman), by Karen MacNeil.

The Master Builder

Thomas E. Warner, who owns the Wine Cellar Company, in Sausalito, California (415-331-3577; thomaswarnerwinecellars.com), worked with Colgin and Wender to create the couple's two linked rooms. "We build the picture frame for an artwork that is made up of wine bottles," he says. Basic construction costs for a 1,000-bottle wine cellar range from \$20,000 to \$50,000, including climate-control systems. Here, Warner shares his tips for storing your own collection, whether it's 100 bottles or 10,000.

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS. Not quite ready for a full cellar? EuroCave (eurocave.co.uk) and Sub-Zero (subzero.com) make wine refrigerators that hold up to 200 bottles. Also, a "cellar" can be made out of a mere closet, if need be.

USE YOUR IMAGINATION. Art collectors with space to spare might consider creating a "wine gallery," a tasting area that displays fine art for dramatic effect.

TAP INTO THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY. From Web-based programs that

monitor temperatures and maintain the proper fifty-five-degree/70 percent-relative-humidity conditions to security features and bar coding, wine-management software like CellarTracker (see below) can help organize and preserve your collection.

CONSIDER HIRING A "COLLECTION MANAGER." Marc Lazar, for instance, of Cellar Advisors, in St. Louis (see below), can assess your needs and walk you through the process of conceptualizing a personal cellar.

A COLLECTOR'S RESOURCE LIST

Apex Wine Cellars and Saunas

A top designer of custom wine cellars, with showrooms and specialists all over the U.S. 425-644-1178; apexwinecellars.com.

Carte du Vin

Guides clients through all phases, from designing the cellar to filling it with a custom collection. 310-246-0005; carteduvin.com.

Cellar Advisors

Assists clients with every aspect of collecting, including conceptualizing a cellar. 314-667-5328; cellaradvisors.com.

CellarTracker

This Web-based software is used by almost 60,000 collectors to manage their inventories. cellartracker.com.

David Spon, Wine Cellar Concepts

Renowned designer Spon can plan traditional cellars or create wine "closets" in high-rises. 202-251-1999; davidspon.com.

Vinfolio

This management company catalogues cellar collections on its premises and in clients' homes. 800-969-1961; vinfolio.com.