

A WELL-DESIGNED WINE CELLAR COULD ENHANCE A TASTEFUL DES RES. KATIE EBBEN TALKS TO THE EXPERTS TO FIND OUT MORE

# Corking assets

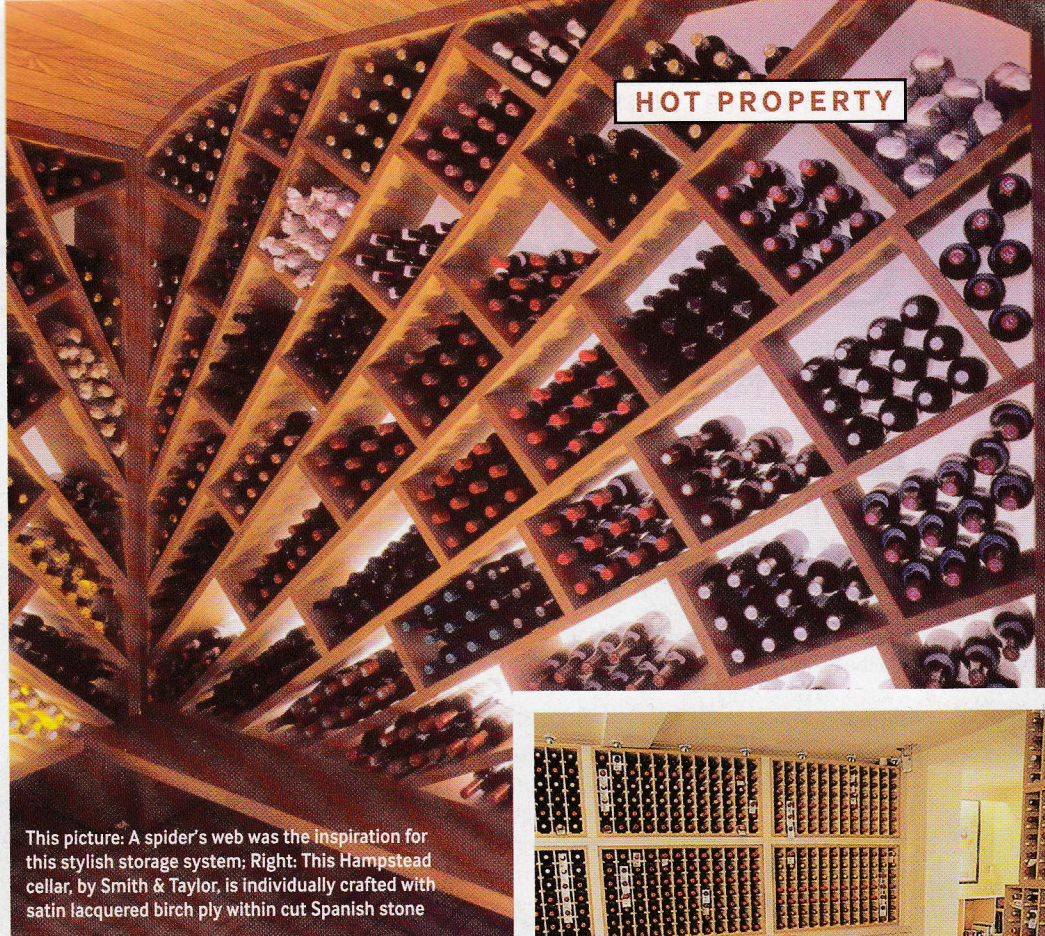
**THE CAPITAL'S EXPLOSION IN FINE DINING** has sparked a growing interest in fine wines. If you like to imbibe on a regular basis or are considering buying for the future, what you really need is a bespoke wine cellar.

Cellars come in a range of styles and sizes, from the practical if not very attractive fridge-style units to larger walk-in Eurocaves (from £1,500) and spiral staircase cellars, which are dug in to the ground and start at £8,000 for a model holding 1,000 bottles. At the luxury end of the market are bespoke cellars designed to enhance your interior as well as provide the perfect environment for storing your wine.

Sebastian Riley-Smith, managing director of wine storage and management specialist Smith & Taylor, has noticed an enormous growth in the popularity of wine cellars over the past few years. 'They are no longer seen as just a practical solution to storing wine, but also a lifestyle statement,' he says. 'An example of this is that we are seeing many more wine cellars as an extension to a dining room or kitchen.'

Philippa Thorp of Thorp Design has created her fair share of wine cellars. For one client, Thorp built a temperature-controlled wine storage area that could be seen through a glass wall from the dining area. She took a modern approach to the design, taking inspiration for the racking from a spider's web. 'The client wanted a less conventional approach so we designed a series of chunky radiating fans that were backlit with spaces for storing wine bottles and crates.'

The big question is will it improve the saleability of your home? Jan Morgan of Grosvenor International believes it will if you target the right people. 'The trend for wine cellars in London is led by the European



This picture: A spider's web was the inspiration for this stylish storage system; Right: This Hampstead cellar, by Smith & Taylor, is individually crafted with satin lacquered birch ply within cut Spanish stone

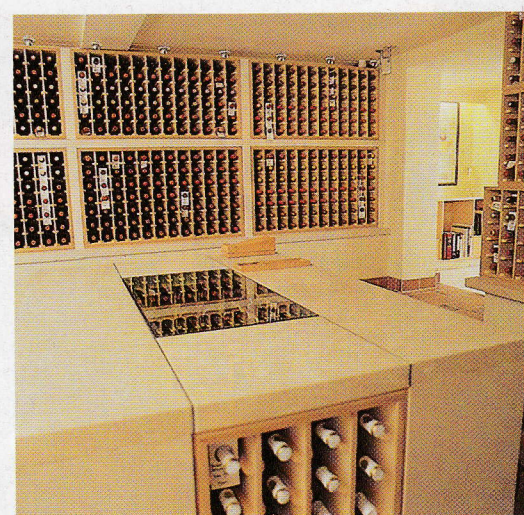
market,' says Morgan. 'We were recently looking for a home for a high court judge. His wife wanted outdoor space; his prerequisite was a wine cellar. Depending on the location, for example in Mayfair or St James's, it can be a make or break feature. It's not in the league of parking space or a laundry room, but it is the top of the B-list of desirables.'

Charlie Willis of Strutt Parker agrees. 'People don't expect it, but to see a wine cellar on viewings brings a wide smile to people's faces,' he says. 'For collectors a cellar will add value. I imagine whatever is spent on it will be recouped.'

The first question when installing a cellar is above ground or underground, says Riley-Smith. 'For underground cellars you are more likely to get the correct ambient temperature, but if there is excessive damp, you must be prepared to tank it [render the walls],' he explains. 'The key issue overground is going to be insulating a room and installing a temperature-controlled system.'

The next consideration is the style and there are definite trends in wine cellars. Thorp favours a natural look. 'It's good to try and incorporate old materials such as cobbles on the floor,' she says. 'There is an expected range of materials - slate, bricks and richly coloured wood - that give a feeling of age and work well juxtaposed with more modern materials such as glass and modern lighting systems.'

Riley-Smith aims for understatement. 'We try to create a frame that doesn't compete with the wine - after all, wine is the statement.' ■



## DREAM TEAM

**Thorp Design, 10 Peterborough Mews, SW6, tel: (020) 7731 6887**

Thorp Design is a one-stop shop for all aspects of interior design and architecture for private clients, including wine cellars.

**Smith & Taylor Ltd, Chelsea Bridge Cellars, 1c Broughton Street, SW8, tel: (020) 7627 5070**

Smith & Taylor offers a wide range of services, including designing and building custom-made wine cellars, and portfolio management.

**Spiral Cellars Ltd, tel: (020) 8834 7371, www.spiralcellars.com**  
Prefabricated concrete wine cellars made and installed by experts.

**Tanglewood Wine Accessories, tel: 01932 348720, www.tanglewood wine.co.uk**

Suppliers of Fondis wine cellar air-conditioning units, which maintain a constant temperature, control humidity, are quiet to run and come with an anti-vibration system.

**Eurocave Importers Ltd, tel: (020) 7935 4679, www.eurocave.co.uk**

Wine merchants who also specialise in providing wine storage solutions.

**Bibendum Wine Ltd, tel: (020) 7722 7354**

Offers a wide range of wines from house style to unique and single vineyard varieties.