



Wine Storage for Small Spaces

Design Considerations for Integrating Underbench Wine Cabinets in New Builds & Renovations

VINTEC





INTRODUCTION

In Australia's hot climate, wine needs to be shielded from varying temperatures, fluctuating humidity levels, and harsh sunlight. With more and more Australians stepping into the world of wine collecting, a wine storage solution is quickly becoming a must-have component of every new building or renovation.

When thinking about long-term wine storage, the first things that come to mind are usually large, cavernous wine cellars that are excessively expensive to excavate, insulate and build. However, there is a growing number of space-saving options to choose from, many of which combine functionality and aesthetics into compact yet compelling wine preservation solutions.

The best option for safeguarding a wine collection without taking up too much space in the home is to specify an underbench wine cabinet. Underbench solutions have many benefits, including a smaller spatial footprint than a tall wine fridge and the sleek and organised look that is popular in contemporary kitchen designs. They can even become a feature or focal point of your design if you pick the right style, finishes and materials.

But not all underbench storage solutions are the same. Below we look at the key design considerations for integrating an underbench wine cabinet in your next kitchen build.

Modern technology makes it possible to store wine properly almost anywhere in the home, regardless of space restrictions, so design can take centre stage.

A GROWING DESIGN TREND

In Australia, wine collecting is an increasingly popular pastime. The local wine industry is on the rise with 2,156 wineries and approximately 6,000 grape growers employing 163,790 full and part-time employees across 65 winegrowing regions across the country. In total, the industry contributes \$45 billion annually to the Australian economy.¹ At the same time, Australians' tastes are changing, and consumers are spending more on average when buying wine to add to their home collection.² The more money that is spent on wine, the greater the need for premium storage to protect the investment.

Unlike conventional fridges, specialty wine cabinets are designed specifically for the preservation and maturation

of wines. Traditional refrigerators produce extremely cold air and eliminate ambient humidity. As they are not purpose-built for wine storage, they can denature wines and dry out corks, potentially ruining a hard-earned wine collection.

Wine cabinets are climate controlled, meaning they can maintain a constant temperature. The best units in this category also have adjustable lighting, vibration-free heating and cooling, and utilise a thermal pump for maintaining the ideal humidity level. All these features combine to create the perfect environment for wine cellaring, which is why a wine cabinet is a must-have for serious wine collectors.

SOLUTIONS FOR SMALLER SPACES

Underbench wine cabinets, which are designed to be installed discretely under a benchtop or cabinet or add a feature to a living or dining room, have emerged as the preferred solution for modern builds. This is due to the evolving lifestyle preferences of consumers, and shrinking size of today's homes and apartments.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australians are building houses on smaller blocks: the average site area of new house approvals decreased considerably over the last 10 calendar years, by 64 square metres.³ At the same time, more Australians are choosing to live in apartments,

which have also shrunk in size from 131 square metres in 2003-2004 to 108 square metres in 2017-2018.⁴

Despite restrictions on the size of their homes, wine lovers still want to present their collections in an elegant and tasteful manner. As a result, compact wine storage solutions, such as underbench cabinets, are becoming more and more in demand. Modern technology makes it possible to store wine properly almost anywhere in the home, regardless of space restrictions, so design can take centre stage.



CHOOSING AN UNDERBENCH WINE CABINET

Five pillars of wine storage

Without the right features and functionality, many underbench wine cabinets are little more than upscale beverage refrigerators. The starting point when choosing an underbench wine cabinet is the five pillars of wine storage. So, what are the five pillars?

- **Stable temperature.** Maintaining flavours and aromas requires a constant temperature so you can enjoy your wines as the winemaker intended. Another important factor in allowing fine wines to age steadily and develop their full depth of flavor is temperature stability. Does the wine cabinet provide a climate-controlled system that maintains a stable temperature?
- **High humidity.** Humidity levels above 50% are important to maintain the integrity of corks and prevent oxidation of your wine. Low humidity causes corks to dry out and shrink. This allows damaging air into the wine, which in turn creates oxidation and off-odours, and causes wines to lose their fresh and fruity flavours. It also allows evaporation to occur, and as the bottle fill level drops, oxidation increases. Wines gradually become lighter (with alcohol evaporation) and more vinegary, until they spoil completely, with a tell-tale taste of sour grapes. Does the wine cabinet provide a self-regulating humidity feature to maintain high hygrometry levels?
- **Dark storage area.** Long-term exposure to sunlight and intense light should be prevented at all costs. UV light is particularly harmful since it alters the tannins and colour of your wine and produces hydrogen sulphide molecules. Light radiation also causes a slight temperature increase, which alters the wine's normal development processes and harms the wine's balance and aromas. Does the wine cabinet include features to prevent UV light from affecting the wine?
- **No vibrations.** Imperceptible vibrations accelerate ageing and chemical reactions that prematurely degrade wine. The wine is "shaken up," and the sediments are disturbed. The wine becomes tarnished as a result of the increased reactions between the various components of the wine, which promote the production of unwanted chemicals. Does the wine cabinet provide a vibration-proof environment?
- **Quality airflow.** Wine cellars can get musty and stale from a lack of proper ventilation. Natural corks do an excellent job of keeping wine in the bottle, but they do not hermetically seal it. Air can enter the bottle via the cork's edges thus affecting the odour and taste of the wine. Does the wine cabinet provide an efficient air circulation and filtration system?

Design and installation considerations

Unlike other types of wine storage, underbench wine cabinets offer significant design flexibility. Below we look at various options and design factors that will help you maximise the functionality and aesthetic appeal of your selected solution.

- **Integration.** The key advantage of underbench wine storage is that it can be seamlessly integrated into a kitchen design. The size of the unit allows it to be positioned in unique locations such as underneath a benchtop or within kitchen cabinetry. In addition, you may conceal the wine cabinet with external doors that match other design elements in the space. Wine enthusiasts may want to show off their collection, so you may opt for stylish glass doors that would not look out of place in any contemporary home.
- **Pairing.** Wine cabinets pair well with other appliances. For example, it is possible to pair a wine cabinet with a beverage centre for maximum functionality and convenience. When it comes to aesthetics, choosing premium brands such as Vintec and AEG can help create a consistent look and feel across a kitchen space due to similar colour options and design language.
- **Positioning.** Underbench wine cabinets are often located in the kitchen. Due to their size and versatility, they can also be installed in living rooms, dining rooms and even studies if space permits. Note that wine cabinets should not be placed in direct line of the sun, and away from major appliances. Ventilation should also be considered, but underbench solutions require less space than traditional refrigerators in this respect.
- **Sizing and capacity.** There is a misperception that you need a large, dedicated space to store wine. Underbench units require a significantly smaller footprint than taller cabinets. However, you will need to plan for the owner's collection to grow, as most collections will do so over time. A good rule of thumb is providing enough storage space to accommodate a collection double the size of what you think you currently need.
- **Aesthetics.** Most premium wine cabinets feature a sleek, modern design. Wine cabinets are often made with high-quality materials such as stainless steel, glass and wood. Different finishes are available so that the unit can become a designed element in the space.
- **App management.** Leading brands offer virtual wine management applications which can be integrated with smart devices. This capability enables wine enthusiasts to manage their collection remotely.



Cellaring vs. serving

While all wines should be cellared at 12°C, all wine varietals and styles have different ideal serving temperatures to be enjoyed at their best. Red wines, for instance, should always be served warmer than white wines because they have more tannins. At cooler temperatures, tannins can be quite harsh and bitter, but at warmer temperatures, tannins react with oxygen more quickly, allowing wines to open up.

Underbench wine cabinets are usually available in single zone or dual zone models to meet different wine cellaring and serving needs. Single temperature wine storage is ideal for long-term wine cellaring and provides a constant even temperature throughout the unit. Dual temperature cabinets provide two temperature zones, which can be set independently to the required temperature (e.g. one compartment for white wine, the other for red wine, each at their optimum serving temperature).

Something to consider

Underbench wine cabinets are designed for prolonging and maximising the life of wines. Considering all the resources that go into crafting and producing wines, from the vineyard to the winemaking process itself, and the distribution of wines globally, the ability to preserve wine at home is essential in ensuring these efforts do not go to waste.

Leading manufacturers have undertaken measures in order to limit their carbon footprint and to preserve the environment. This includes incorporating energy efficient and sustainable technologies within their solutions, such as LED cabinet lighting and R600a refrigerant gas with zero ODP (Ozone Depletion Potential), and focusing on quality and durability. Transparency in supply chains and facilitating safe end-of-life disposal or reuse are other important considerations.

DESIGNED TO SUIT THE MODERN LIFESTYLE

Underbench wine cabinets by Vintec

Vintec is recognised across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region as the benchmark for wine preservation solutions. The brand offers precision tools for cellaring and serving that are coveted by enthusiastic collectors, sophisticated entertainers and industry professionals alike.

Vintec underbench wine cabinets balance convenience with style, providing the same technical precision of their larger cousins in a more compact size. With their versatile product range, you can have your best wines on hand at perfect serving temperatures ready to be enjoyed or cellar a small collection with confidence.

Beautifully designed and available in different colours and finishes, Vintec's range of underbench wine cabinets have capacities up to 50 bottles (based on the 750mL Bordeaux bottle shape). Each unit strictly follows the 5 Pillars of Wine Storage: precise and stable temperature; high humidity to retain moisture in wine corks; UV-light protection; vibration-proof environment; and optimised airflow to keep the air clean and fresh.

Key features and benefits

- Climate-controlled system
- Air flow and filtration
- Adjustable/repositionable shelves
- Triple-glazed doors with anti-UV glass
- Humidity recycling system
- Reversible doors
- LED digital display panel

Rounding out their comprehensive offering, Vintec's virtual cellar management app OENO, powered by Vivino, allows wine collectors to manage their collection even while away from home. The OENO App by Vintec keeps track of price points, vintages and varietals and has a sort function which enables a holistic view of the user's wine collection.

All Vintec wine cabinet owners are welcomed into the Vintec Club, which offer exclusive benefits, wine experiences and expertise by Vintec and its partners.

All Vintec wine cabinets have been tested to ensure they function in Australian and New Zealand climates. Covered by a two-year warranty, Vintec products bear unique identification numbers that allow their origin and authenticity to be traced. They are also backed by dedicated phone support teams in Sydney and Auckland, as well as a national network of service specialists.

The key advantage of underbench wine storage is that it can be seamlessly integrated into a kitchen design. The size of the unit allows it to be positioned in unique locations such as underneath a benchtop or within kitchen cabinetry.



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