

# SEE IT LIKE IT STORE IT

booze \*

## the case of the perfect cellar...



Potential should be encouraged. A promising student benefits from the tutelage of a patient educator in realizing his or her promise. A garden needs sun, soil, the right environment and time to blossom. So too do many fine wines need time and the right conditions to fulfill their potential. The cigar box, cedar and blackcurrant notes of your Cabernet Sauvignon won't materialize properly if the bottle spends its time sitting in the kitchen cupboard. Fine wines need a cellar.

Americans are coming to know this, the Europeans certainly know it, and now Marc Russell is one of the people spreading the word to Canadians.

Until just a few years ago, life for Russell was a nomadic one. A geologist by trade, he worked in gold exploration for 12 years, living at no fewer than 39 different addresses in a handful of countries and continents. By 2000, he was ready for change and, oddly enough, found his inspiration in the bottle.

"I turned 40, and someone gave me a nice bottle of port that was supposed to be laid down and aged for 30 years before you can drink it," he says. "I did a little bit of research and realized I might as well give it away or throw it out, because it's going to be garbage sitting in

my condo. And I thought it would be nice if I could bring it somewhere. Ding! That's what the idea was."

In August 2003, following two years of research, and \$400,000 invested in construction, The Fine Wine Reserve began. Discreetly situated in a basement near the intersection of King Street and Spadina Avenue in downtown Toronto, the facility provides ideal wine storage conditions. Temperature, humidity and lighting, all vital factors to aging wine, are closely monitored and controlled.

"The whole idea of building perfect cellaring conditions was a science application more than anything," Russell says. "I decided to do this business because it just seemed to fit my personality the best. I'm a science guy."

Russell's client list reads like that of an ultra-exclusive country club. Entrepreneurs, financial industry moguls, hedge fund owners, senior bank executives and actors – even rock stars – use Russell's cellar to house their finest.

While their careers might differ, it's their passion, and the lengths to which they will go to feed it, that unites those who use his service. Russell estimates that his half-full facility already holds roughly \$10 million worth of wine. And if your

instinct leads you to assume that Russell's clients represent "old money," you'd only be half right.

"When you get into that collector mode, it becomes almost an obsession," he says. "Money's not an object with these guys. Everyone is, if not filthy rich or very affluent, doing well money-wise. What wasn't obvious and is now, four years later, is how the interest in wines is now hitting younger markets. I have clients here who are in their late 20s."

But what good is great wine without a place to drink it when you want it? In addition to offering 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to collections, the cellar provides clients with a tasting room. Clients can host a sit-down meeting of up to 24, or drop down for a private drink at 4 a.m. The exclusivity and adaptability of the space are major features. And with six layers of security utilizing technology such as biometric fingerprint recognition between product and would-be pillagers, clients can feel at ease no matter what the cost of their collection.

Fine Wine Reserve prices run from \$38 per month for an eight-case locker to \$1,400 per month for a 600-case walk-in unit. [www.finewinereserve.com](http://www.finewinereserve.com) PJ