Aspler Uncorked

TOP 2008 WINE FINDS

THIS IS MY favourite column of the year. I get to recollect in tranquility all the highlights of the past year and relive the places, the taste sensations and the events that have most impressed me. This was the year that the oft-repeated boast that the LCBO is the largest buyer of beverage alcohol in the world was finally put to rest. The largest seller of wine, spirits and beer is actually Tesco, the U.K. retail chain who sells £3 billion worth of booze as opposed to the LCBO's $3.5 billion. But never mind, we can take consolation from the fact that Toronto has the largest liquor store in Canada. **by Tony Aspler**

The Fort Knox of Wine

BEST PLACE TO STORE YOUR WINES OFF-SITE

THE FINE WINE RESERVE

King Street West

If you can't house your wine cellar in your own home — or if you're moving and have to store it safely in the short-term — the best place in town is the Fine Wine Reserve, discreetly located on King Street West. The security is an ode to Fort Knox. Clients have an electronic key and are identified by their fingerprint to gain entry. Call Marc Russell, 416-593-9463.

The perfect power lunch

BEST PLACE TO GO CALIFORNIAN WITHOUT FLYING

FAR NIENTE

187 Bay Street

Bay Street's fine dining retreat carries one of the better New World selections in the city, punctuated with a smaller but decent selection of Old World including some Italian and a few French bottles. But the allure here is the ample selection of big name and well-known California wines to impress – Caymus, Cakebread, Shaffer, Ridge, several top Australian offerings as well.