

**Decatur Package Store**  
1220 Clairmont Road Decatur, GA 404-633-5250  
[DecaturWine@aol.com](mailto:DecaturWine@aol.com)    [www.DecaturPackageStore.com](http://www.DecaturPackageStore.com)

## How to Start a Wine Cellar on a Reasonable Budget

### Introduction

- 87% of all wine is consumed within 24 hours of purchase
- Hopefully after my talk today, you'll help break this trend.

### Ideal Storage Conditions

- **Temperature**
  - Temperature between 50°-65°, avoid areas over 70°
  - Gradual temperature change between seasons is acceptable
  - Large temperature swings are bad (espec. from store to your trunk to your cellar)
  - Biggest problem is Georgia summers
- **Humidity**
  - 50-70% humidity, although no definite target is recommended
  - Too dry, corks can shrink and let air into the bottle oxidizing the wine
  - Too wet, mold/mildew occurs which is simply a cosmetic issue
- **Light**
  - Long term exposure to sunlight or incandescent light causes oxidation in wine
- **Vibration**
  - Movement disturbs the aging process

### Types of Cellars

- **Passive Cellar**
  - Your basement or a closet
  - Pros
    - Everyone has one
  - Cons
    - Greater temperature and humidity changes
    - Faster aging of wines
    - Best for longer aging wines (i.e. fuller-bodied, red wines)
- **Active Cellar**
  - Insulated room or refrigerated, stand-alone unit
  - Pros
    - Constant temperature
    - Slower, even, aging process (i.e. better long term results)
    - Better for lighter-bodied wines (whites and Pinot Noir)
  - Cons
    - Expense of unit
    - Time required to build insulated room

**Decatur Package Store**  
**1220 Clairmont Road Decatur, GA 404-633-5250**  
[DecaturWine@aol.com](mailto:DecaturWine@aol.com)    [www.DecaturPackageStore.com](http://www.DecaturPackageStore.com)

### **As you start your wine cellar...**

- **Practice, Practice, Practice**
  - The more you taste the more you'll know
  - Helps develop what you like and don't like
  - Try before you buy
  - Go to tastings at local restaurants, go to Wine Festivals, have tasting parties
- **Keep a wine journal with tasting notes**
  - Helps you know what you like and dislike
  - Helps develop your own adjective system (my cherry might not be your cherry)
- **Develop a relationship with a local retailer**
  - Retailers want a long-term customer, so they'll recommend good wine
  - They'll let you know about special buys or limited release items
- **Develop a budget and buying strategy**
  - Set a budget
  - Match size of cellar to consumption habits
  - Length of time you want to hold your wines
  - Determine allocation of everyday wines and special occasion wines
- **Buy from better vintages**
  - Not as important for West Coast wines
  - Especially true for European wines – lower priced wines are better in good vintages
  - Download a current vintage chart – available online from Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast or Wine Advocate
- **Buy more than one bottle**
  - Ideally 3-6 bottles
  - Have a backup if one is corked
  - Can track the evolution of the wine (better to drink too early than too late)
- **Develop verticals of your favorite wines**
  - Taste the same wine from different vintages
- **Remember you're buying today for your future palate**
  - Your palate and tastes will be much different/advanced in 5 years
  - Don't buy too much of a particular variety or region
  - Experiment – set aside a small portion of your cellar for experimental wines – Napa Chardonnay, vintage Champagne, Zinfandel
- **Track your cellar**
  - Can use a simple spreadsheet
  - Helps avoid drinking wines that are over-the-hill
- **Use a decanter and/or Vinturi aerator**
  - Decanting helps to leave sediment in the bottle instead of your glass
  - Cellared wines need to aerate to bring out their best flavor