

# Wine Storage

Décor and marketing appeal to aficionados

By Ramey Jackson

Aesthetically speaking, self storage has come a long way in the past few years. Whether it's zoning ordinances or savvy owners who realize that sizzle sells, facilities are taking on a deciding more elaborate look and feel.

Certainly the growing trend of adding wine storage to facilities has upped the ante. Owners are earmarking notable amounts of their budget to building upscale wine facilities that will attract renters such as restaurants, wine collectors, and retailers.

While the trend of wine storage is growing at a steady pace, it's still a relatively small percentage of the projects we currently service. From a construction standpoint, adding wine storage is an easy build and can often allow you to utilize small, cumbersome spaces that may be unrentable as storage units. But the real deciding factor is your market. Facilities located in upper income, high density areas are typically most successful in this type of rental.

## Adding the Warmth of Wood

Hoover Self Storage knew what they needed to do to compete in the wine storage arena in their affluent area of Birmingham. "Wine storage is part of the big picture," states owner Jack Nix. "Anybody that builds a 'Class A' storage facility today should designate an area for wine storage, even if it's only a small part of their square footage."



Hoover is a 150,000 square foot facility, and they have designated 578 square feet to wine storage. They knew that their market base could support this type of service, and they set out to build a façade that exudes panache. During the planning phase, they attended a major industry trade show in Las Vegas where they visited door manufacturer displays. Their whole approach changed when they saw the Janus International *French Oak* display, which is a wood laminate over steel. The laminate offers the pricing and flexibility of steel with the upscale look of wood. "We saw the *French Oak* construction in Las Vegas and knew immediately that if we wanted to go first class, that look was a must," says Nix. "Traditional doors were no longer a consideration."

Once the storage door facades were selected, the wood theme became prevalent in the lobby area of Hoover Self Storage. "When laying out the wine storage area, we wanted a showroom window inside the office so customers would know we do wine storage. It was a 'show-and-tell' approach that worked out nicely," Nix explains. Further, their lobby area has almost a wine country appeal, with deep tone wood materials used throughout the entrance to the wine storage area as well as the lobby desk. They even used wood laminate on the lockers in the lobby that can be used for customer package delivery, etc.

It's not surprising that wood or wood-like laminate is the material of choice for wine storage. Not only do the deep tones of wood connote affluence, wine vats themselves are made of wood. However, it's not a must to make your wine storage area attractive. Many other décor objects, such as carpeting, artwork, chandeliers and more can add to the overall flare.

### Meeting a Demand

Wine storage customers tend to be individual collectors, restaurants and even retailers. Tropical Storage, Miramar, FL owner Jim LaBonte states that many of his clients have their own storage for consumption wines. “We are looking for the wine collectors who need a secure, temperature-controlled area to store their investment,” states LaBonte.

Investment indeed. Many collectors invest \$600 or more per bottle, so security and temperature/humidity control are of the utmost importance. Most facilities offer separate access areas for their wine storage, some with 24 hour keypad access allowed or even separate elevators. The desired temperature is around 55 degrees, with humidity at 65-70 percent. In fact, many facilities utilize computer-monitored refrigeration systems and are even investing in back-up systems should one fail for any reason. “It’s important for our customers to feel their investment is well cared for,” states LaBonte. “We have gone the extra mile with construction features, back-up air conditioning units and security systems to ensure their comfort level.”

### Marketing for Success

If you build it, will they come? Not necessarily, so marketing your wine storage is very important in determining its success. In addition to complete disclosure on your website, many facility owners are joining local wine tasting clubs and regularly call on restaurants, country clubs and retailers. Advertising in upscale city publications is another avenue for building awareness, as well as participating in local wine expos.



How much space you allocate for wine storage really depends on your projected market base. Hoover has dedicated around 30 lockers in their facility to wine storage, but they have left room for expansion in the near future. In determining the unit mix, there really are no steadfast guidelines. One evolving issue has been that owners are finding triple stack lockers to be too small. Most owners report that their clients want walk-in space for easier access, so lockers are being converted to walk-ins to accommodate demand. Thirty to fifty lockers seems to be the average in most facilities I’ve seen, but it again fluctuates based on demand. Occasionally we’ve even removed wine storage lockers, but it’s due to lack of market demand, so knowing your demographics is key in the planning stage.

Is wine storage a strong revenue builder? It certainly can be, particularly if wine storage customers rent regular storage units in addition. Most owners are making the wine storage area a major focus of their facility tours to potential renters, as word-of-mouth can be one of your most beneficial promotion tactics. “Our lobby is built to showcase our wine storage area, but the ambience has been well received by regular renters as well,” says Nix.

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