

Current mortgage rates, 15- and 30-year fixed, conforming

D.C. **2.88 3.45** Md. **2.91 3.43** Va. **2.92 3.46**

SOURCE: BANKRATE.COM

Cellars market: Home wine storage makes its move

By Susan Wittman
Special to The Washington Examiner

Home wine storage is moving out of the cellar and into the closet — or any other small niche open on a home's main level.

While large basement cellars remain popular, smaller versions are debuting on higher floors as stunning furniture. Some installations also can be found tucked into closets, lofts and dining room nooks, and even under stairs.

"You can absolutely put a cellar anywhere you want," said Lisa Weiss, whose McLean-based Wine Cellar Co. has seen a surge in requests for wine cabinets, dining room-niche cellars and "closet" cellars from 3-by-5 feet to 5-by-6 feet.

"It's a great use of small space, gives you a decent bottle count and looks beautiful," she said. "But the smaller and quirkier the space, the higher the cost per bottle."

The costs can add up pretty quickly considering all the elements in a construction project: demolition, framing, insulation, climate and

Resources

- » **The Wine Cellar Co.**
winecellarcompany.com
- » **Caves a Vin**
cavesavin-winecellars.com
- » **Vinotheque**
vinotheque.com

humidity control, electric, plumbing and racking.

"To climatize a room, you're talking five figures just to cool it," said Gene Clouse, owner of Caves a Vin in Northern Virginia. Adapting a smaller space for wine storage may not be as cost-effective, he said, because the cooling system cannibalizes the space. A small space can hold 200 to 300 bottles, at best.

But neither cost nor design challenges have quenched wine lovers' thirst for innovative cellar design and inventive space solutions.

"It's a matter of building the space creatively and using the right cooling unit," Weiss said. Smaller cellars are more expensive but offer several



COURTESY VINOTHEQUE

Vinotheque is a company that creates cost-effective and mobile wine cabinets.

advantages, including adding value to a house. "You can also start small and grow your cellar," she added.

Though Weiss specializes in cellars, she also sells wine cabinets by California manufacturer Vinotheque. Most are appliances that plug into a standard wall outlet. A

cabinet is cost-effective and mobile, Weiss said, but doesn't increase a home's value like closet cellars.

Large cellars offer more lifestyle advantages, such as generous bottle storage and space for entertaining. "Wine culture is part of collectors' daily lives, the way they socialize,

entertain, party and meet new clients," Weiss said. "So wine drinkers and collectors must find the scenario that works best for them."

No matter what size the cellar, Clouse recommended planning it concurrently with other remodeling projects and getting the architect engaged early to simplify design and construction phases.

An all-the-bells-and-whistles cellar that stores 1,000 to 3,000 bottles may exceed \$100,000. An average-size cellar from 6-by-6 feet to 8-by-8 feet stores 1,000 bottles and costs \$30,000 to \$60,000.

A closet cellar, so-called for its size, holds 300 to 700 bottles and costs \$15,000 to more than \$100,000, depending on options. Wine cabinets hold 200 to 400 bottles and cost \$3,000 to \$20,000-plus. Stairwell storage holds 250 bottles and starts at \$10,000.

At the early stages of a collector's odyssey, with a cache of 100 to 200 bottles, "a wine refrigerator or attractive hardwood wine cabinet is the way to go," Clouse said. "When you reach 1,000 bottles, then you're ready to build a whole room."

Trends: Use books to enhance your home's decor

By Susan Wittman
Special to The Washington Examiner

Here's a novel idea: Books are not just good reads, they are good-looking reads whose shades and textures can be used to enhance decor.

At Books by the Foot in Frederick, decorative book orders started trickling into parent company Wonder Book about 10 years ago, and the trend has blossomed in the last five years, said owner Chuck Roberts.

His book props appear on Broadway and TV, in Fifth Avenue retail displays and in homes with trendy colors, such as a block of sea foam-green volumes for a summer beach retreat.

"The trend's win-win," he said. "It preserves books from pulping and is a creative resource for designers and artists."

Chevy Chase designer Sue Burgess brings the same eye for order, rhythm, color and composition for books as she does for walls, upholstery or furnishings. "I don't buy books for their colors, but I group and organize them by color," she said. She also alternates horizontal and vertical stacks, and punctuates the visual rhythm with antique bookends or sculptures in metal,



PHOTO BY ERIC SMITH

California book sculptor Jim Rosenau turns discarded books into furniture.

stone or glass.

Burgess loves old books with illustrated vellum pages, or cognac leather bindings and gilt titles stacked between antique bookends. "Part of the appeal is their aged patina," she said.

For an exquisite tablescape, AbeBooks offers rare, antique and collectible books with exquisite covers in leather and gilt. Leather inlays create mosaic patterns or stylish illustrations. Also worthy of star treatment on a coffee table or desk are illuminated manuscripts

Resources

- » **Books by the Foot**
booksbythefoot.com
301-694-0350 x206
- » **Annie Elliott**
bossycolor.com
202-265-0443
- » **AbeBooks**
abebooks.com
- » **Sue Burgess**
301-652-6217



and limited editions with stunning illustrations.

While Burgess enjoys making old volumes a focal point, she also intersperses books with casual, personal items, such as family photo albums. "I don't want shelves to look like display cases in stores. I want people to see the books and grab one off the shelf," she said.

Like Burgess, Washington designer Annie Elliott, of Bossy Color, believes books should be read. So neither designer turns books backward to add texture, nor wraps them in glossy paper to echo a room's tints.

"It suggests they're not being

read," Elliott said. "I was in a room where all the books were wrapped, and I nearly broke out in hives."

Elliott uses books as a warm, inviting strategy. "Books invite a visitor into a space to learn more about the host who lives there," she said.

Elliott also makes shelves sparkle by interspersing books with objets d'art and creating rhythm with spine colors. But she eschews grouping colors in a solid swath.

"I think of books as an Oriental carpet. They don't have to be all blue or red; all the colors together form a harmony," she said.

Start with a bookcase and make that space intimate, she advised. Pack it full of books, then step back and rearrange. "Make the overall impression an inviting, multicolored pattern," she said.

For an informal room, let multicolored spines echo a rag rug, Tiffany-style stained-glass lamp and pillows.

Don't leave bookcases out of the equation, Elliott added. When considering shelf design and placement, think outside the rectangle. For a Bethesda family room, Elliott is creating floating, asymmetrical walnut shelves of an intricate design against a sheer, glossy wall.

THE MARKET

'Tis the season to list your home

By Dean Bartoli Smith
Special to The Washington Examiner

The holiday season often leads to a slowdown in real estate activity, but this year might be an exception because of low inventories and strong sales.

While sellers often take homes off the market after Thanksgiving to avoid stale listings, limit days on the market or change real estate agents, this year it may be worthwhile to see if buyers are shopping for more than presents.

October saw the highest sales for that month in three years, driven by low interest rates and strong demand, according to RealEstate Business Intelligence.

"I don't think this year will have the holiday hiatus that we used to see," said Robyn Burdett, an agent with Re/Max Allegiance in Fairfax. "The pent-up demand is still in place, and we are seeing homes selling very quickly and over list price."

She says interest rates have dropped since early November, and with the talk of a bad winter, "if you want to move, you might want to do it before the snow comes."