

WINSTON ART GROUP

July 2016 - A Wine Tale - Proper Storage

Winston Art Group Senior Specialist of Fine and Rare Wines, Brian Ward,
Shares a Story in Lessons Learned from Improper Wine Storage

Winston Art Group was recently approached by clients who had inherited a wine collection, which, unfortunately, had not been properly stored. They were kind enough to allow us to share their story, which is one that illustrates the importance of informed and attentive wine collection care.

This particular collection had been meticulously put together over 30 years. The collector researched, tasted, found and invested in great wines. Each wine was purchased directly from the Château or from a trustworthy retailer and placed in his cellar. However, his cellar was not climate-controlled nor was it appropriately managed and regulated.

After the collector passed away, his children inherited the wine and decided to sell it. By providing a listing of the wines in the collection to potential buyers, they received an offer for purchase in the six figures. However, when the buyer arrived to pick up the wine, they found bottles with tattered labels and low fill levels. Bottles stored on racks in the cellar were covered in dust, partially empty, or actively leaking. Some wine was stored in wooden cases, which could have added a layer of protection, but after tasting, that wine was found to be undrinkable as well. Unfortunately, the buyer had to rescind his offer because the collection was simply undrinkable and unsaleable.



Tattered labels on Château Mouton Rothschild and Château Lafleur Pomerol wines improperly stored in a home cellar without climate control.



Storing wine in uncontrolled environments causes damage to the seal, which can lead to oxidation of the wine, decreasing quality and value.

Better Planning for Next Time

What should wine collectors do to ensure that the wine is properly stored so as to maintain quality and (hopefully) increase in value over time?

- 1) Determine where you will store your wine before you collect. Wine does best in a cellar that maintains a temperature of 55 degrees Fahrenheit and 65 percent humidity. The humidity keeps the cork moist to prevent early exposure to oxygen, and the 55 degrees Fahrenheit has proved to be the ideal temperature for properly aging wine. Many ambient cellars do not have climate control, but unless the cellar is 20 feet underground in a French Château, this is not a good storage option. There is simply too much potential for fluctuations in temperature and humidity that can age wine too quickly, allow oxygen in the bottle, or damage the wine with excessive heat or cold. If you plan to sell your collection, be aware that many buyers will not purchase or will decrease the amount of the purchase offer if wine was not stored in a climate-controlled cellar.
- 2) Purchase wine from known and reputable sources that can confirm how the wine has been stored from when it was bottled until it arrived at its present location.
- 3) Ideally, wine should be stored in a professional wine storage facility that specializes in climate control. At \$1.25 to \$2.00 per case per month depending on the type of facility, the cost is reasonable. This is the best way to guarantee proper care and clear provenance, should you decide to sell the wine.
- 4) If you do choose to store at home, make sure you have a proper climate control system in place, as well as proper insulation in your cellar. The collector referenced above had a small air conditioning unit installed that likely did not run consistently, and certainly did not properly regulate temperature and humidity over the 30 years the wine was stored at the residence. There are professionals that specialize in cellar installation, and while the upfront cost may seem high, a collection in the six figures more than warrants it over time.

By following these simple steps, the collector would have avoided the above condition disaster, the collection would have merited the six figure purchase offer, and his children would have benefited from their father's thoughtful collecting.



Brian Ward, Senior Specialist of Fine and Rare Wines

For more information about wine collection management, wine appraisals, or advisory on buying and selling wine, please contact Brian Ward at ward@winstonartgroup.com or 203.664.1395