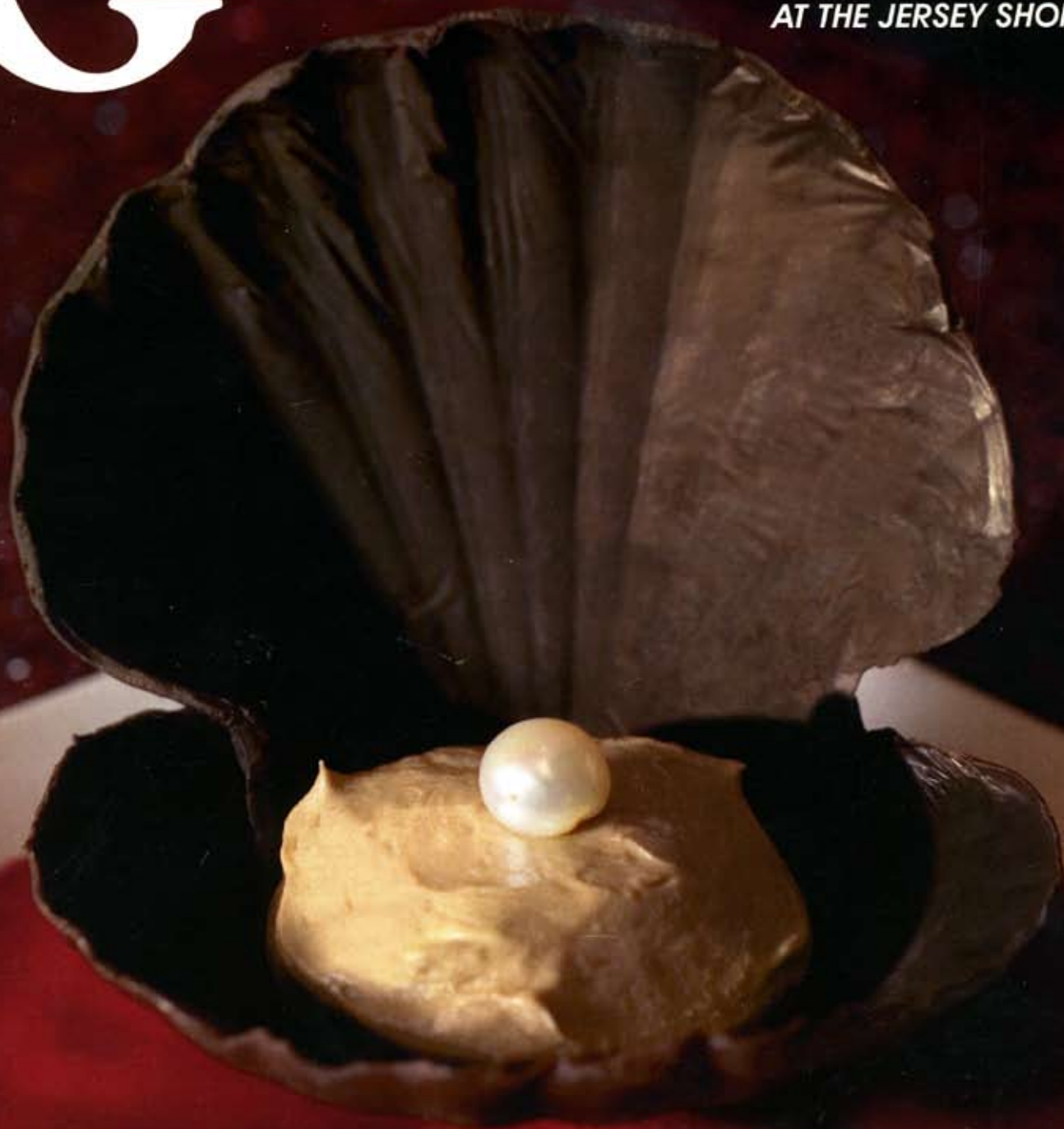


WINTER 2004

The Good Life

AT THE JERSEY SHORE



HOLIDAY DELICACIES

Elegant Pearls, Timeless Watches, Festive Treats

**PLUS: A Villa for the Season | Stellar Wine Cellars
Reel Cool Home Theaters**

Tom Schafer's wine collection
includes Chateaufneuf du
Pape from France.



Buyers & Cellars

Story by ELEANOR O'SULLIVAN
Photography by JAMES J. CONNOLLY

Wine enthusiasts are passionate about collecting and storing vintages

BENEATH A BLUE SKY UNBROKEN BY EVEN A SINGLE CLOUD, TOM SCHAFER SWIRLS A PETER MICHAEL WINERY MON PLAISIR CHARDONNAY IN AN OVERSIZE GLASS AS HE TAKES IN HIS NEW HOME'S VIEW OF THE SHREWSBURY RIVER AND SURROUNDING SOFT GREEN ISLETS. ♦ "SERIOUS WINE COLLECTORS CAN'T STOP BUYING WINE," SCHAFER SAYS WITH A SMILE. "WHAT HAPPENS IS, WINE COLLECTING STARTS OUT AS A HOBBY, BECOMES A PASSION, AND THEN, IT'S AN OBSESSION." ♦ AND SERIOUS WINE COLLECTORS NEED A PLACE TO STORE THEIR VOLUMINOUS, OFTEN PRECIOUS COMMODITY.

In his wine "cellar" — it's actually tucked away on the house's main floor — Schafer, 51, stands in the middle of more than 3,000 bottles of mostly French wines, about half from the Bordeaux region.

In the cellar, there is an ascending wooden column of wines, designed by wine cellar contractor Jay Rosen of Washington Valley Cellars, Martinsville in Somerset County. The column sits in the middle of the 54-degree cellar, surrounded by racks of wine on the walls with tags reading "Schafer's Wine" and many bottles still stored in their original shipping crates.

"The boxes are attractive, and it's cheaper than having more racks built," says Schafer, a chemical engineer whose office is in Paramus.

Cheaper is a relative concept here; a wine cellar like the Schafers' can cost anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000, according to Rosen. And that's without the wine.

It has a granite-top table for making notes and resting wine glasses, plus coffered beam ceilings, recessed lighting, white oak floor and decorative touches such as molded coverings for the air conditioner.

On the other end of the price spectrum, you can buy a refrigerator that stores up to 200 bottles of wine, and has snap-on panels and assembly-required racking, at \$1.50 to \$2 per bottle, and have a wine cellar for less than \$1,000.

"You can do down and dirty with plywood on the walls, basement cement floor and stacked cases of wine, or, you can go all-mahogany with limestone on the floor and barrel-rounded ceilings," Rosen says. "Functionally, they all work the same; it's aesthetics that separate the two."

The Schafer cellar, a rectangle, measures 11 feet by 16 feet. This is the couple's third wine cellar, all built by Rosen, whom they met through wine tastings about 20 years ago.

The Schafers — his wife, Mary Anne, 46, is a telecom-

munications consultant — moved into their coastal Monmouth County home this year.

Each Schafer cellar winds up housing an ever-growing collection; the current cellar was built to accommodate 5,000 bottles.

"You need space because wines need time to age; you don't just buy a good wine then drink it immediately. It is customary to

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From left: Peter Engle and Amy Kresloff of Two River Wine Growers, Rumson, in Middletown with their son, Jonas, 3.



Custom-made mahogany wine racks hold nearly 3,000 bottles in a Holmdel wine cellar.

cellar wines for 10, 15, even 20 years before consuming them it," Schafer says.

Building home wine cellars to house fabulous wines took off when the economy did in the 1990s, but with the downturn in the American economy in the last three years and the rise of the euro, wine prices have inched up, Rosen says.

Still, that hasn't stopped some of his clients with cellars to spend \$6,000 on a case of wine or \$500 for a bottle of white Burgundy "because they like the wine, they want it and money isn't a problem," he says.

About four miles away, in Rumson, husband and wife Peter Engle and Amy Kresloff, both 41, bring visitors to their wine cellar through a side door to the Victorian house they are restoring. Joining them is their 3-year-old son, Jonas.

Their cellar is the flip side of the wine-collecting culture, a "workaday" cellar, as Engle describes it.

The cellar — irregularly shaped and about 10 feet by 8 feet — has no carved moldings or oak floors. A sink, an old cask for a table and cement flooring give it a rustic feel.

Engle and Kresloff run Two River Wine Growers, a wine-making business.

"We dug this out of the existing crawl space," Engle says, as he places three empty, oversize wine glasses on top of the modest table. Engle offers crackers, cheese and fruit to accompany the wine.

He made the wines himself from grapes grown on a total of three acres at two sites on Navesink River Road, down the street from the home of rocker Jon Bon Jovi. The land is owned by Middletown residents. Engle hopes to expand his grape growing eventually to 10 to 12 acres and open his own local winery.

On a rack holding perhaps 100 bottles against a southern wall sits the sum total of the Engles' wine collection. Most of the wines are either their own or friends' home-grown wine. There is no air cooling in this cellar; it is deep enough to retain its cool, even temperature,



A name tag from Tom Schafer's wine cellar identifies one of the many wines he owns.

wife, Amy Kresloff, who operate Two River Wine Growers in Middletown, has the first wine he ever made, from the 1980s. It has been sitting in a wine rack that holds about 100 bottles in his Rumson home.

If you're a novice and don't know what you like yet, remember that wine is considered a good investment over the long run, despite rising prices for European labels. Thank the American dollar's dip and the euro's rise for that.

Remember, too, if you are faced with deciding whether to buy a great wine, that they are made in limited supply, and when they are drunk, they are gone, forever.

And, don't forget if you buy wine at a restaurant, you are paying up to 2.5 times the wholesale price, if the wine is priced between \$11 and \$20, according to Jim Beley of The American Club resort in Kohler, Wis. If you bring your own, you can sip what

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which is a must so that the flavor of fragile wines is not disrupted.

Temperature is also a consideration for a couple at a new and spacious contemporary home built on a hillside in Holmdel.

He is a Wall Street broker; she is a former events planner. Married two years ago in September, they made a sentimental return recently to the wine country in California, a second anniversary trip, she says. The couple asked not to be identified.

She stands at a wooden tasting table with wrought iron legs set in the middle of her wine cellar, a rectangular room that measures 16 feet by 17 feet, with a 9-foot ceiling.

"It's too cold to have tastings here; if you come in here to inventory, you need a parka!" she says.

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Jay Rosen, Washington Valley Cellars, Marlinsville, in a Holmdel wine cellar he built.

Like the Schafer cellar, the Holmdel couple's cellar is cooled to about 55 degrees. After an hour in the cellar, admiring its woodwork, tiled floors and magnums of Champagne, one's fingers do get stiff. It was built for about \$35,000, according to Rosen, who designed this cellar too.

The Holmdel cellar is not strictly in a cellar but is on the house's lower level, around the corner from an area with exercise equipment in one corner and lounge chairs in another. The cellar is entered through a door with a large pane of glass. The effect is both exhilarating and calming, seeing many bottles of good wines tucked neatly in double rows with the pretty table squarely in the middle of the room.

"This space was the biggest selling point because the room was already framed out," she says.

The racks for the bottles, set in double rows, are made of mahogany; a wrought iron stand holds books on wine by various authors and various sizes of glasses. One set was a wedding gift from the owner's brother.

The couple moved to the house from a condominium, so until they had their wine cellar built, they had to store the wine collection elsewhere.

Like Schafer, their collection already has grown to more than 3,000 bottles. About 95 percent of the wine is red, much of it from California.

On the table in the middle of the room is a wine box filled with corks.


"We save corks. I guess it's silly. Somewhere in here is the cork from the bottle that we opened when we got engaged," she says.

That engagement dinner was in April 2001; they were married in September 2002. And, like a true wine collector, she remembers that they toasted their engagement with a Tignanello, an Italian red.



Tom Schafer enjoys wine poured from a bottle stored in his Monmouth County wine cellar.

Tom Schafer's wine collection includes wines from California, Portugal and France.

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- optimum flavor.
 - Store wine so the liquid rests against the cork.
 - If possible, buy and store by the case. It's cheaper than having racks built. Also, the box tells you the contents, year, region, etc.
 - A wine cellar can store everything from red Bordeaux to Italian whites to champagne.
 - Wine country tours are vacations and educations. Schafer says he has visited most of the places his wine hails from.
 - Experiment: "Buy wines that are unproven. Right now, Alsatian wines are 'the best kept secret,'" Schafer says.
 - Buy your wine from a good wine seller. Ask people who have wine cellars for suggestions.
 - Join a wine-tasting group.
 - Racks come in wood and iron.
 - Flooring can be tiled, concrete or wood.
 - When designing shelving or racking, consider different bottle sizes — a magnum is twice the size of a standard wine bottle — and that your collection may increase.
 - The standard height between racks is 5 inches with the depth standard at 10½ inches. Keep in mind that longer bottles need extended shelving.