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Just BYOB to These Wine-Storage Facilities

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By CHARLES PASSY

America is a nation of wine lovers—U.S. sales topped \$30 billion in 2007, according to the Wine Institute—but we're also a nation of wine hoarders, as evidenced by the number of wine-storage facilities.



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Store Wine Storage

Sleek lockers at Store Wine Storage in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., above. Utilitarian facilities at WineCare Storage in New York, below.



WineCare Storage

explained that the company can receive shipments in your name and can assist with packing boxes (so they're shelf-ready). What if you feel like opening a bottle on the spot? "We have a corkscrew," the agent said.

At Store Wine Storage, about 80 miles to the north in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., it's all about the extras. The private tasting room—more like a clubby conference room—is available to renters, who pay rates starting at \$59 per month for a 2-foot by 2-foot, temperature-controlled (55 degrees) locker that can hold 10 to 15 cases. Plus, the company offers its own cataloging system and can arrange for messenger-style delivery of wines from the facility to your home. Perhaps most impressive was the space itself—a modern marvel of stone and wood that's so decidedly inviting you hardly noticed it was also part of a larger, traditional self-storage facility. Security features were also abundant, from the expected (a backup generator) to the utterly high-tech (you access your locker after a biometric system affirms your identity via fingerprint). The company also touts that the building can withstand up to a Category 4 hurricane.

New York's WineCare Storage—a high-end outfit that started in 2005—offers shelf-style storage (as opposed to private lockers) at rates that start at \$40 per month for up to 17 cases of wine, kept at 55 degrees, with backup power. But it excels in concierge-style amenities—boasting a service that can deliver that special bottle from its cellars to your door within three hours. It also has a Web-based inventory-control system and a "certification" service that ensures the wine is the appellation and vintage as indicated on the bottle. A lot of these extras cost, well, extra—cataloging alone runs \$1.80 a bottle.

Finally, we headed west to Seattle's Esquin Wine Merchants, a retailer that has a storage facility within its shop. The obvious attraction here is the whole ease of the experience—a customer can go from purchasing one of the 4,000 wines on sale at the store to moving it to a locker (the smallest unit, with a nine-case capacity, runs \$18 a month) in the back in an instant. The storage area wouldn't wow a collector by looks alone—it's basic but clean and tidy; still, the shop promises it's maintained at the right temperature (roughly 55 degrees).

Perhaps the biggest drawback of all: Esquin's storage area has limited hours, since it's accessible only when the shop itself is open. Then again, that could give wine collectors all the excuse they need to buy another bottle.

—Jane Hodges and Nancy Matsumoto contributed to this article.

Company	Basic Pricing	Extra Services	The Facilities	Comments
<b>Esquin Wine Merchants</b> Seattle (888) 682-9463 esquin.com	Starts at \$18 per month for a locker with nine-case capacity; larger spaces available.	Not many, but the company will let you ship your wines directly to the storage facility by mail.	A tidy space in the back of a busy wine store. Since the lockers are stacked quite high, you might need to use one of the store's rolling ladders.	Staff was accommodating and wine-savvy. But if you like to access your wine at oddball hours, a store-based outfit may not be the way to go.
<b>International Wine Storage</b> Miami (305) 856-1208 xtrastoragecompaniesfl.com	Starts at \$22 per month for a shelf that can hold up to 12 cases. Other requisite charges include handling fees for bringing in wine (\$1.25 per case) and removing it (\$1 per case).	The company will assist in packing your cases—so they can be properly stored on the shelves—for a small fee.	Quite dumpy. The company is part of a larger self-storage outfit, and the whole affair has a thrift-store quality. But the cellar area is fairly well organized.	Staff was good natured and knowledgeable. A spokesman said the facilities aren't particularly flashy, but noted its track record of 20-plus years of keeping wines safe, including through hurricanes.
<b>Store Wine Storage</b> Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. (561) 627-8444 storeselfstorage.com	Starts at \$59 per month for a 2-foot by 2-foot locker that holds 10 to 15 cases.	The big draw is the tasting room, which is free for clients to use. But some extras come with a price—it costs \$75 per hour of labor for the company to catalog your collection.	Clean, contemporary and thoroughly inviting, even though the facility is part of a larger self-storage space.	We were given an in-depth tour, and all our questions were answered. Could be an ideal place for someone who wants to throw a tasting for fellow oenophiles.
<b>WineCare Storage</b> New York (212) 594-9590 winecare.com	Starts at \$40 per month to store up to 17 cases; after that, it's \$2.35 per case. Handling charges to bring wine in or out are \$2 per case.	There are plenty of them—and they can add up. Delivery charges start at \$7 per case (with a \$35 minimum). Indexing your collection runs \$1.80 per bottle. Valuations cost \$150 per hour of labor.	The building sits amid warehouses near the Hudson River. The cellars are neither tired looking nor elegant—rather, they're simply utilitarian, much like a Costco store.	Staffed by unfailingly polite wine geeks who were willing to negotiate price. Targets serious wines collectors (and restaurants). But they welcomed someone with a small number of less-valuable wines to store.

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