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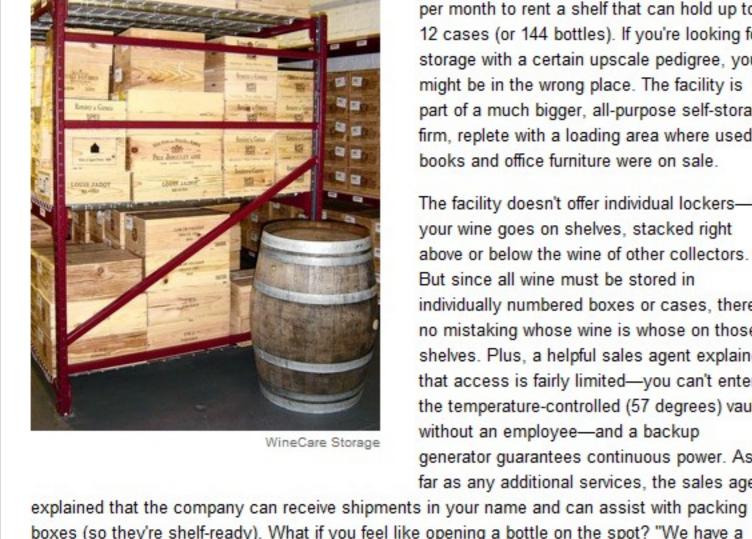
By CHARLES PASSY America is a nation of wine lovers—U.S. sales topped \$30 billion in 2007, according to the Wine Institute—but we're also a nation of wine hoarders, as evidenced by the number of wine-storage

facilities. Enterprising companies offer lovers of the

View Full Image Store Wine Storage

Gardens, Fla., above. Utilitarian facilities at WineCare Storage in New York, below.

Sleek lockers at Store Wine Storage in Palm Beach



corkscrew," the agent said.

There's a reason for all the fuss: Wines not stored at the proper temperature (typically 55 to 58 degrees) or in the proper environment (somewhere dark) can easily go bad. Many storage facilities take service a step further, from helping collectors catalog their bottles to accepting shipments directly from out-of-town wineries or wine sellers. To see if such storage businesses live up to the hype, we visited four facilities of various sizes, styles and prices. International Wine Storage in Miami offered some of the lowest rates—starting at just \$22 per month to rent a shelf that can hold up to 12 cases (or 144 bottles). If you're looking for

storage with a certain upscale pedigree, you

part of a much bigger, all-purpose self-storage

firm, replete with a loading area where used

The facility doesn't offer individual lockers—

your wine goes on shelves, stacked right

books and office furniture were on sale.

might be in the wrong place. The facility is

grape a place to stash those precious wines

in secure, temperature-controlled settings worthy of a four-figure bottle of Bordeaux.

above or below the wine of other collectors. But since all wine must be stored in individually numbered boxes or cases, there's no mistaking whose wine is whose on those shelves. Plus, a helpful sales agent explained that access is fairly limited—you can't enter the temperature-controlled (57 degrees) vault without an employee—and a backup generator guarantees continuous power. As far as any additional services, the sales agent boxes (so they're shelf-ready). What if you feel like opening a bottle on the spot? "We have a

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.

high-tech (you access your locker after a biometric system affirms your identity via fingerprint).

Security features were also abundant, from the expected (a backup generator) to the utterly

At Store Wine Storage, about 80 miles to the north in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., it's all about

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, extracataloging 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.

Esquin Wine Merchants Starts at \$18 Not many, but A tidy space in Staff was per month for a the company will the back of a Seattle accommodating (888) 682-9463 busy wine locker with let you ship your and wine-sawy. store. Since wines directly to But if you like to esquin.com nine-case

International Wine Storage

xtrastoragecompaniesfl.com hold up to 12

Company

Miami

(305) 856-1208

available. Starts at \$22 per month for a will assist in shelf that can

cases. Other

handling fees

for bringing in

per case) and removing it (\$1 per case).

Starts at \$59

locker that

Starts at \$40

per month to

cases; after

per case.

that, it's \$2.35

store up to 17

cases.

wine (\$1.25

requisite

charges

include

spaces

Basic Pricing

capacity; larger the storage facility by mail.

The company

packing your

stored on the

small fee.

shelves-for a

The big draw is

per month for a the tasting room, contemporary

clients to use.

holds 10 to 15 But some extras inviting, even

price-it costs

\$75 per hour of of a larger

come with a

labor for the

company to

catalog your

2- foot by 2-foot which is free for

can be properly

Extra Services

use of one of the store's rolling ladders. Quite dumpy. The company is part of a cases—so they larger selfstorage outfit, affair has a thrift-store

cellar area is

fairly well

Clean,

and

organized.

thoroughly

though the

facility is part

self-storage

The building

space.

the lockers

are stacked

might need to

The Facilities Comments

quite high, you store-based outfit

natured and knowledgeable. A spokesman said the facilities aren't and the whole particularly flashy, but noted its track record of 20-plus quality. But the years of keeping wines safe, including through hurricanes.

We were given an

in-depth tour, and

all our questions

were answered.

who wants to

Staffed by

unfailingly polite

wine geeks who

Targets serious

were willing to

Could be an ideal

place for someone

throw a tasting for

fellow oenophiles.

access your wine at oddball hours, a

may not be the

Staff was good

way to go.

WineCare Storage

(212) 594-9590

winecare.com

New York

Email

Share:

Store Wine Storage

storeselfstorage.com

(561) 627-8444

Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Handling charges to bring wine in or collection runs out are \$2 per case. Order Reprints

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collection. There are plenty of them-and they can add up. warehouses Delivery charges near the start at \$7 per case (with a \$35 The cellars minimum). Indexing your \$1.80 per bottle. rather, they're Valuations cost \$150 per hour of utilitarian,

labor.

sits amid Hudson River. negotiate price. are neither tired looking nor elegant simply much like a Costco store.

wines collectors (and restaurants). But they welcomed someone with a small number of less-valuable wines to store. MORE IN LIFE & STYLE » Article Tools Sponsored by Constant Contac

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