

Welcome to My Wine Cellar...

Dwight Graybill

Dwight is one of those guys who always has a home-remodeling project in progress. His latest endeavor is a wine cellar.

BY SUE LONG | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRK ZUTELL

DWIGHT HAS ALWAYS BEEN a beer aficionado. In fact, he's working with a client who wants to build a beer kitchen in the basement of his home. But, as a result of guests bringing wine to the food fests he hosts in his expansive outdoor kitchen, Dwight developed an interest in that libation. And, when Dwight takes an interest in something, he goes all out. For example, he loves to cook and his outdoor kitchen is equipped with an array of appliances, grills and a smoker. Friends know

that whenever they travel, their assignment is to bring back a bottle of hot sauce to add to Dwight's collection.

Dwight's collection of wine was growing, as well, which inspired the idea for a wine cellar. He couldn't help but notice a corner of his basement that held a rarely used Ping-Pong table. He thought the space would be perfect for his wine cellar. "My vision was an old, dungeon-like cellar," he says. The cellar in his home, circa 1880, provided the perfect blueprint for his design ideas.

As with any of Dwight's projects, reusing, recycling and repurposing would be the hallmarks of the design. "I said to [electrician] Tyler Fichthorn that I was looking for some old lighting fixtures and he said he had the perfect ones," Dwight recalls. To Dwight's delight, the fixtures, which were once powered by oil,

came from the original post office in Denver.

Dwight also kept his eyes open for wood that would deliver an aged look. He found the perfect specimen – mushroom wood – in Berks County. The wood now lines the ceiling of the wine cellar, plus trims doorways and stair treads. The concrete floor was replaced with blue flagstone. He also had three slabs of walnut in his stash of finds that were used to create the top of the large tasting table that sits in the middle of the room. Dwight and his son, Ben – who has joined his father in the family business, Cocalico Builders – built the table that also includes bottle storage under it. Reuben Newswanger of Newswanger Wood Specialties built the wall racks.

Stone lines the walls in the room, the wall along the staircase that leads to the first floor and the hallway that provides access to the mechanicals room. "I used stone in a client's wine cellar and that put the idea in my head for my own," he recalls.

In building his wine cellar, Dwight had to take the terrain into consideration. Springs crisscross the area, hence the house is equipped with three sump pumps. To ensure against a disaster in the wine cellar, everything was built with an eight-inch clearance of the floor. He also installed a refrigeration system. "Normally, it's about 61 degrees down here, but I wanted a constant temperature of 55 degrees and a 70% humidity level," Dwight explains. To help ensure the temperature and humidity levels remain consistent, he insulated the walls and ceiling.



LEFT: Dwight Graybill transformed an under-used portion of his basement into a wine cellar. Reuse is very much in evidence and includes the entry door, the lighting fixture, the mushroom wood that lines the ceiling, the walnut slabs that top the tasting table and the stone that covers the floor.

ABOVE: As a kid, Dwight's favorite character on *The Flintstones* was Schleprock and "Schleppy" became his nickname. Now, it's the name of his tasting room.



Dwight's wine cellar has a 2,500-bottle capacity. The cheese selection - from Weaver Markets in Denver/Adamstown - includes Brie, Grand Cru (Alpine-style), Van Gogh Vintage, Swiss, Bellavitano Raspberry, Smoky Cheddar and Butterkäse. The Surryano Ham is from Virginia (more about that in Bill of Fare). Linens are from La Cigale in Mt. Gretna and Queen Street Linens in Lancaster.



ABOVE: Dwight's interest in wine extends to collecting wine-related accessories and interesting wine labels from which he creates artwork. **RIGHT:** Ben Graybill, who is a student at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, helped his father build the wine cellar.

THE CELLAR'S BOTTLE CAPACITY is 2,500. "I have a ways to go," Dwight observes. The wine in stock is indicative of the world's most prolific wine-producing regions. The United States is represented by labels that are as close as Manheim (Waltz Vineyards), and as far away as the Napa and Sonoma valleys in California, as well as Washington and Oregon. Europe is represented by wines from France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Wines from Chile and Argentina add South America to the map. Australia is also represented, as is South Africa.

Much of the wine in Dwight's cellar was procured through Wine Liquidators, which is based in High Point, North Carolina. Owner Ryan Chaland has created a lucrative business through which he travels up and down the East Coast (and beyond) buying the contents of wine cellars. "A lot of the cellars he purchases are owned by people who are downsizing and are moving to Florida or into retirement communities," Dwight notes. In many cases, the cellars represent retirement plans for their owners. "Wine is an investment," Dwight theorizes. "It's a tangible asset."

WHILE DWIGHT VIEWS wine as an investment, he has quickly come to embrace it as an entertaining hobby. *Wine Spectator* magazine has become his bible, the Internet his tour guide. "I like to just come down here and putter around," he says of the cellar's



man-cave implications. "I try to turn every bottle each month."

He's also become artsy-craftsy and has created collages of wine labels, which he frames with leftover mushroom wood. And, he plans to transform an old chest into a humidor. He's also gotten into collecting wine-related accessories such as glassware, carafes and a wine press that dates to the early 20th century. The wine press has a local connection: Dwight bought it from a man in Virginia who is related – as is Dwight – to the Baers and Herrs of Lancaster County.

As for his next project, Dwight says it's going to be a new kitchen. "If I don't, I'll be building myself a dog house," he says.

CREDITS:

Design/Build: Dwight & Ben Graybill/Cocalico Builders, Denver (Cocalicobuilders.org)

Electrical Contractor: Tyler Fichthorn Electric, Stevens

Custom Cabinetry: Newswanger Wood Specialties, New Holland

Stone: Lancaster Stone Company, Leola