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January 9, 2009 Issue # 10

Dear Jeffrey,

Last month we covered bourbon. This month we cover wine cellars. The lessons you will learn from everyday topics on building science are fascinating. Plus we get to talk about our favorite things... (hint: it is not whiskers on kittens or crisp apple strudel) while proving how much we know our target audience. Bon Appetit!

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Happy reading!



Jeff Melvin  
Editor, buildingscience.com e-news

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**Featured Article** by Joe Lstiburek, Ph.D., P.Eng., Fellow ASHRAE

## Wine Cellars

Building Science Insight No. 10

I love wine. People think that I must know something about the stuff because I drink a lot of it. I don't really know that much, but I do know what I like: red, and French and with a cork. Most of the questions I get, I have no clue about, and so I make up stuff-I am a consultant after all. Mostly, I know the answers to questions about how to store the stuff. That is, I know whom to ask about storing the stuff.

If you want to know something about wine just ask the French. Here is the magic information you need to know about storing wine: 55 degrees F at 70 percent relative humidity. Where does that come from? Old French guys. That is not the temperature you should drink it at, but the temperature and relative humidity you should store it at. And we are talking bottles here, not barrels. Drinking temperatures are more difficult to pin down. I like 65 degrees F for Bordeaux-but there is no consensus, it varies by type of wine and by nationality and most folks are lunatics about the drinking temperature part.

It is clear that the colder you store wine (and most other things) the longer it will last. The Arrhenius equation tells us why. So why not colder? Ah, we actually want it to "age" and that means we want some chemical reactions to continue to happen in the bottle for a long time. If it is too cold these reactions don't happen. There is a difference between "preserving" wine and "aging" wine.

It really is a "Goldilocks" thing, not too hot, not too cold, but just right. How did the French pick 55 degrees? Tradition mostly. Wine was stored in cellars-that is why we call them "wine cellars." Who knew? If you have a big old-fashioned French Chateau handy (**Photograph 1**) you will find that the temperature in the cellar is about 55 degrees...



**Photograph 1: French Chateau**-A nice place to store wine is in its cellar.

To read the entire feature article and find a downloadable pdf version, click [here](#) to visit our web page.

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