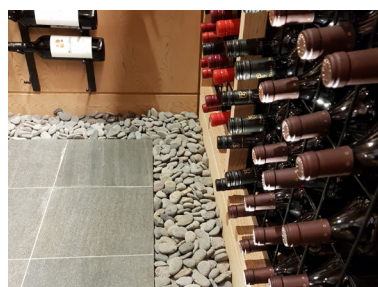


LOCATION A FORMER STUDY, ADJOINING THE TV ROOM WITH A GLASS DOOR **SIZE** 3.5M X 3M, TOTAL 10.5 SQUARE METRES
BOTTLE CAPACITY 930 **CHALLENGES** MINIMAL, BUT IT DID INVOLVE A UNIQUE DESIGN SO ITS ELEMENTS WERE ALL CUSTOM MADE
THE BRIEF TO CREATE A WINE ROOM AND CELLAR THAT WOULD ACT AS A SHOWROOM AND BECOME A PART OF THE HOUSE

THE WINE ROOM

PHOTOGRAPHY **MICHAEL AMENDOLIA**



PAUL'S TIP

"Spend the time getting very clear on what you want and making sure the builder is in sync."

IT WAS A TRIP to New Zealand that did it. To Cloudy Bay, to be precise. The famed Marlborough winery has a private house on its property, complete with a secret cellar, and as soon as Paul and his wife Judi discovered it several years ago, they were inspired to create their own. "The Cloudy Bay cellar is hidden behind a wall, which you lean on and it opens," Paul says. "It took us two days to find it!" The resulting wine room in the couple's Sydney home may not be so secret – it's behind a glass door next to the TV room – but the couple did borrow a number of design ideas from their New Zealand inspiration. These include grey slate floor tiles and pebbles around the edges of the room, which all combines to create an impressive space that showcases much of the couple's wine collection.

The wine room was part of a total house renovation that Judi ran over a nine-month period, requiring all building works to align. "I'm absolutely thrilled with the results," Paul says. "We have a cellar under the house that can hold the same amount of bottles, and we built that when we moved in about 17 years ago, but that's a very basic storage space and hard to get to, so the intention was never to make it a place where we took guests." Paul knew from the outset he didn't want diamond-shaped racks, so to ensure the space became more of a showroom than storage area, the custom-made racks combine solid cedar, cedar veneer and powder-coated steel. "I didn't want timber between every bottle," Paul says. "Firstly, it takes up too much room, but it also means you see the timber rather than the wine." The use of timber throughout, however, helps to warm the space, including cedar veneer wall panelling. The display shelves are fitted with LED lighting, which is also used around the room, chosen for its low heat emissions.

The wine room, created by Signature Cellars, has proven so reliable that Paul doesn't need to tinker with settings. A concealed refrigeration system controls the temperature and humidity, incorporating a continuous running fan. This circulates the air to maintain a constant temperature, ensuring consistency from floor level to the ceiling.

In addition, the walls and ceiling were lined with extruded polystyrene coolroom panels to create an insulated 'box'. The room also includes a wine cabinet to keep a selection of whites and rosés at drinking temperature.

Paul says about 85 per cent of their wines are red, and while the collection was once mostly Australian, around half now consists of French and Italian wines. Judi's preference for shiraz has also switched to pinot noir over time. "That's why I get a bottle of shiraz out as often as I can!" Paul says. They tend to drink most of their wines at around eight to 10 years old, which Paul manages with a colour-coded sticker system. Red indicates a wine needs to be opened "sooner rather than later", green indicates a wine is ready, yellow shows it's almost ready, and if a bottle doesn't have a sticker, the rule is to leave it alone. Most of their wines cost between \$40 and \$75, as that's where Paul says he finds the most value. "While I can tell the difference between a \$15, \$25 and \$35 bottle of wine, once it gets past \$100, in my view you really have to be an expert to appreciate the difference in quality and value, so I don't buy high-end wines very often."

And with just one minor thing Paul would change about the room – he wishes he'd made better use of one wall with display shelving – the couple is extremely happy. "We had a very good interior designer and architect on the project, but I was very clear on what I wanted, so that's always worth talking through." ●

"I DIDN'T WANT TIMBER BETWEEN EVERY BOTTLE. FIRSTLY, IT TAKES UP TOO MUCH ROOM, BUT IT ALSO MEANS YOU SEE THE TIMBER RATHER THAN THE WINE."

