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## Ontario Cheese

Continued from page 19

according to OCS chair and budding Prince Edward County cheese maker Petra Cooper. "Dairy farmers actually have a glut of fluid milk and are losing money. They see small cheese makers as potential customers." Milk producers are politically powerful, and Cooper believes their lobbying will lead to regulations appropriate to support operations of various sizes. Cooper sees no point directing energy against the big cheese plants. "Everyone has a role to play. The artisans certainly don't want to make pizza cheese! We should all be able to do what we do best."

As the artist-entrepreneurs behind Ontario's craft cheeses look toward a brighter future, we can do much to sustain their efforts. Instead of asking the cheese monger for a fresh goat cheese from France, do as your French counterpart would and insist on the chevre made closest to home. Understand that Slow Food is not a way-cool Italian thing, but a perspective that enriches you right where you live, shop and eat. And with your glass of Trius Cab choose Back Forty's Dalhousie, Ewenity's Eweda Cru, or a world-class wedge of Thunder Oak Extra-Old Gouda. Give Epoisses a reason to run!

### Find It

The best places to find Ontario craft cheeses are farmer's markets, including the St. Lawrence North Market on Saturdays. Retail spots include Alex Farms (most locations), All The Best Fine Foods (1099 Yonge St., 416-928-3330), Whole Foods Market (87 Avenue Rd., 416-944-0500) and The Big Carrot (348 Danforth Ave., 416-466-2129). To find a specific cheese, contact the cheese maker directly.

**Ewenity Dairy Sheep Co-op**  
www.ewenity.com

**C'est Bon Cheese**  
nctaylor@aol.com

**Monforte Dairy**  
www.monfortedairy.com

**Mornington Dairy Co-op**  
www.morningtondairy.com

**Milky Way Farm**  
www.sheepmilk.com

**Back Forty Artisan Cheese**  
www.icelandicsheep.ca

**Thunder Oak**  
www.cheesefarm.ca

**Ontario Cheese Society**  
www.ontariocheese.org

## U-Store, U-Drink

Professional wine-storage facilities make real sense when it's time to get serious

By Alan McGinty

Here's a nice problem to have: What to do with your age-worthy wines — the really, really good ones — once your cellar is full? Or if you only have room in your condo for one small wine fridge? Well, a few Toronto companies have sprung up over the past several years to help you deal. Kind of like the Brinks service of wine, with a little Fort Knox thrown in.

There are many reasons to consider a professional wine-storage facility, apart from lack of personal space. For the really good stuff — say, some of the built-to-last wines upwards of \$50 a bottle — to mature properly, a few crucial conditions must be maintained. A consistent climate is key: about 13 degrees at 70 per cent humidity. Darkness is also a good idea. And vibrations are really bad. So, your closet is out. Under the stairs is out. The average open-concept basement might be okay, if you keep the lights out and watch the climate and keep away from the furnace.

Here's how the pros do it. At the very impressive Fine Wine Reserve downtown, which opened in 2004, the custom-built facility's security would make George Bush blush. After waving your card and hearing the beep, you place your index finger on a reader for biometric validation. Then there's an "airlock" separating the warehouse from the front door and the tasting rooms.

President Marc Russell offers both managed service — where he pick-ups and stores your wine — and private lockers with 24/7 access. The super security means you needn't fear sticky-fingered fellow clients. There's also a terrific tasting room.

The fee at the Fine Wine Reserve is \$2.75 a month per case for managed storage. Lockers start at \$33 a month (\$4/case). The premium covers the 24/7/365 access. "You could bring friends over after the bars have closed," said Russell. Not a bad idea, given the convenient downtown location.

For Scarborough, talk to Paul Wolfe of The Wine Vault, located within a climate-controlled fur storage warehouse. "Ninety-five per cent of my clients have their own cellars, some quite substantial," said Wolfe, who charges \$2.50 per month per case. His clients want long-term storage in absolutely perfect conditions.

In the west end Iron Gate Cellarage, also within a fur warehouse. Iron Gate charges around \$3 a case per month. Another downtown facility, Urban Cellars last year launched a unique online "virtual cellar" service so you can track your wares.

Toronto has only a few wine storage facilities thanks to our restrictive laws. "I can't store wine for sale by wine agents," said Marc Russell. "They must store with the LCBO. That cuts out 95 per cent of the market." And raises individual storage costs because there are no volume savings generated by retailers' bigger stockpiles.

Will this ever change? Doubtful. But with the Vintages wine auctions, we now have a legal resale market (such auctions were outlawed until a couple years ago). In New York, shrewd collectors manage to "drink for free" according to David Wainwright of the Christie's auction house. They buy four cases and sell three for the same price a few years later. Proof of proper storage is essential at this level. But even if you just drink it yourself, you'll still win. The wine will be the best it can be.

### Wine Storage

**Iron Gate Cellarage** 1680 Bloor St. W. 416-234-9500, irongatewine.com

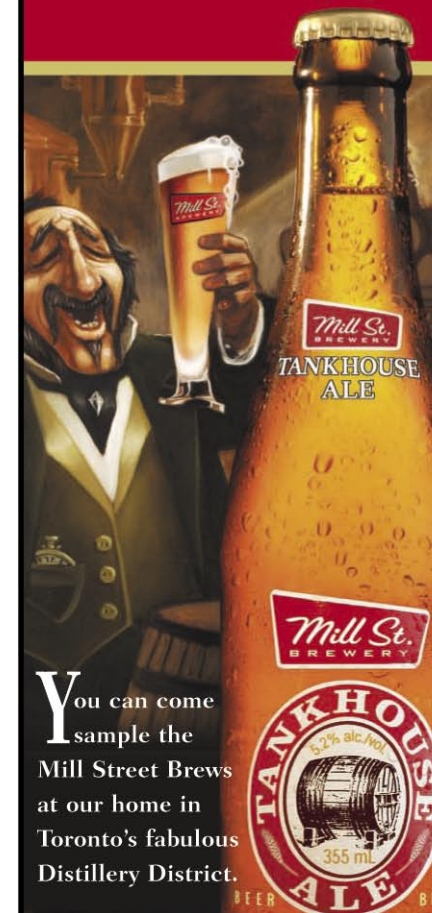
**The Fine Wine Reserve** King West (at Spadina) 416-593-9463, finewinereserve.com

**Urban Cellars** Spadina and Queen West 416-858-6770, urbancellars.ca

**The Wine Vault** 290 Nantucket Blvd., 416-738-3545

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