

Charlotte

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2019

HOME

DESIGN & DECOR

Arts & ARCHITECTURE

AT HOME WITH
PAM STOWE



PLUS:
ART MEETS FUNCTION

IN THE STUDIO WITH
HOLLY KEOGH

TOUR THE TOWN:
GALLERY CRAWL



UNCORKED

Charlotte wine cellar company combines savvy and sophistication.

Interviewed by Lee Rhodes

Caveman Cellars is led by Jeff Epstein, an entrepreneurial wine connoisseur who turned a passion for wine (and decades of work in office furniture and design, real estate, and construction) into a passion for custom wine spaces. An avid traveler, Epstein has sipped wines at producers around the globe, and he channels his enthusiasm and expertise into creating extraordinary wine spaces for others who share that enthusiasm.

Your tagline is “Creating Extraordinary Cellars with Your Wine in Mind.” What does that mean?

It means that wine is a personal thing – what people drink, when they drink it, where and with whom. My clients’ cellars need to reflect their personal tastes and interests, not someone else’s.

What kinds of people do you find yourself working with?

It really runs the gamut. Some are serious wine collectors. Some have been to California wine country recently or may have joined a few wine clubs



and are now excited about wine. Others are just getting introduced to it. All of them want to continue to grow their knowledge and enjoyment of wine.

What's the first thing you tell clients about building a wine space? When I first meet clients, I try not to tell them much of anything. I'm focused on asking questions – the right questions – and listening to their answers. They tell me about the role wine plays in their lives and what they hope to accomplish with the space.

What questions do you ask? The questions flow from one main question: If we're talking a few years from now, what happened to make you feel happy and excited about the project, to make you know that you got it right? I want them to think hard about this because we want to create a wine space that will thrill them and their guests.

What are some of the things that go into creating a wine space? There's a lot to it. Deciding where to put the

“MY CLIENTS' CELLARS NEED TO REFLECT THEIR PERSONAL TASTES AND INTERESTS, NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S.”

—JEFF EPSTEIN

space. The size. Temperature and humidity control. Materials for the structure enclosing the space. The design of the racking and what size bottles need to be accommodated. The growth of the wine collection. The materials and finishes for the racking. Flooring. Lighting. Decor.

Sounds intimidating. I'd be afraid of making mistakes. It can be intimidating. By the time they contact me, my clients have usually decided they want a wine space, and they've spent time researching what it entails. They know they'll be spending a considerable sum on the project, and the complexity and confusion hurt their confidence in their ability to get it done. The people I'm most useful to are looking for someone to guide them through the process, not just sell them something.

How do you get them to feel confident about the project? The people I'm typically dealing with have had a high level of success in other parts of their lives where they've had to make difficult and complicated decisions. I help them harness these skills



by bringing clarity and simplicity to the entire endeavor. They usually have high standards, which I share.

What trends are you seeing these days? We are building a lot of structures and walls with glass that create a bit of a contemporary feel. Also, people are placing their wine spaces in their main living area, not necessarily in the basement.

You mentioned that you ask new clients about the role wine plays in their lives. What role does wine play in your life? Here is this incredibly complex beverage that people have been drinking for thousands of years. It not only takes on different forms depending on the grapes, their source, and how it's made but can transform itself over time. Decades. I find all of it fascinating, and I've been a serious student of wine for twenty years. I've traveled many places to taste and study it. And still, there's so much more to learn, taste, experience, and enjoy.◆

For more information about **CAVEMAN CELLARS**, contact **JEFF EPSTEIN** at **JEFF@CAVEMANCELLARS.COM** or **704-564-9638**.