

Up

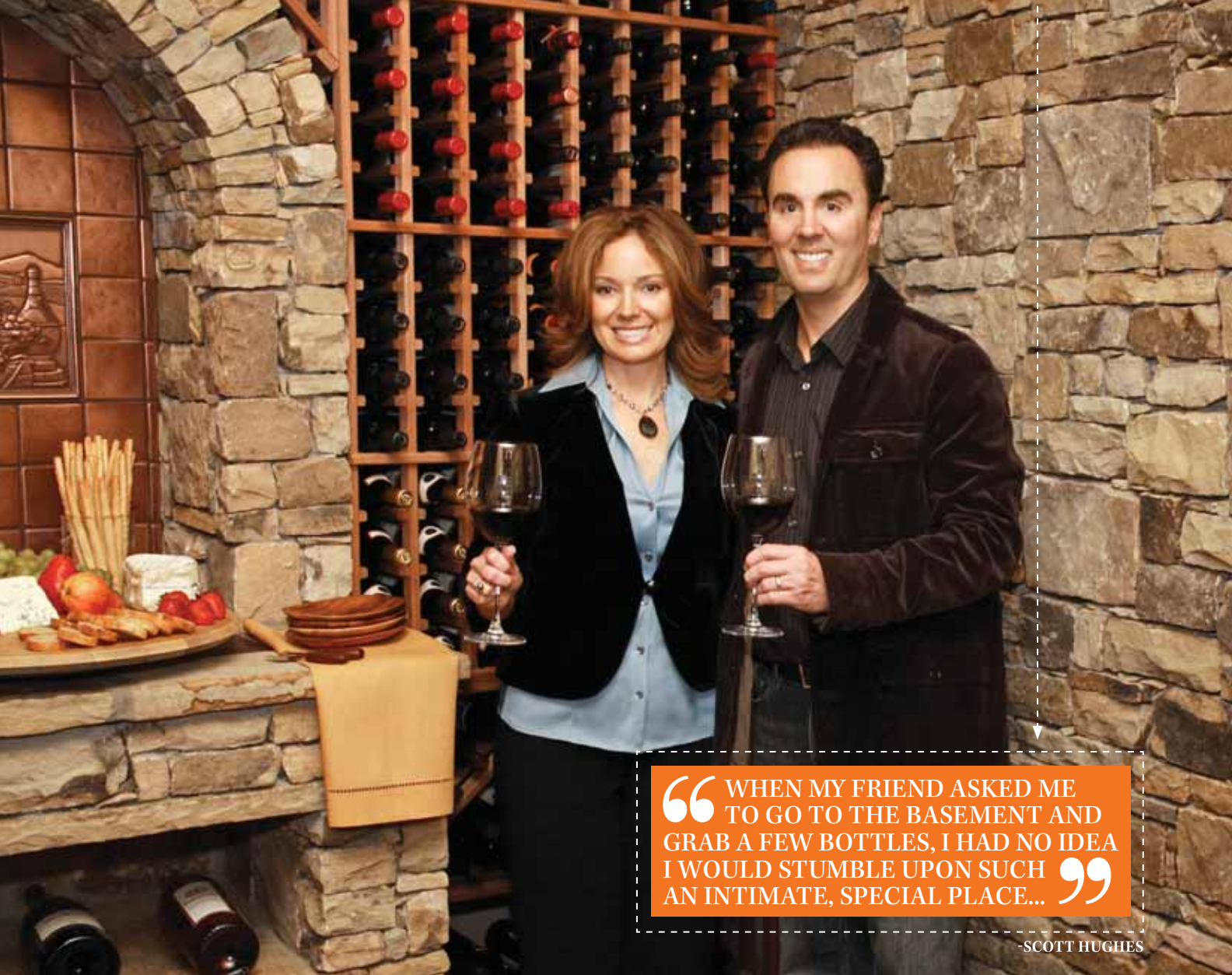
FROM THE GROUND

ONE
COUPLE'S
WINE
CELLAR
SPAWNS
A NEW
BUSINESS

WHEN SCOTT HUGHES TRAMPLED DOWNSTAIRS AT A FRIEND'S HOME IN BELGIUM IN SEARCH OF A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF WINE, HE FOUND HIMSELF STARING AT HIS FUTURE. >>

BY KATHLEEN NALLEY
PHOTOS COURTESY OF
CELLARMAKER





“ WHEN MY FRIEND ASKED ME TO GO TO THE BASEMENT AND GRAB A FEW BOTTLES, I HAD NO IDEA I WOULD STUMBLE UPON SUCH AN INTIMATE, SPECIAL PLACE... ”

—SCOTT HUGHES

It wasn't the rows and rows of Cabernet and Merlot that inspired Hughes ... it was the surprise cellar itself – its little wooden entrance gate and white-washed brick enveloping a roomful of carefully stored racks of wine.

“When my friend asked me to go to the basement and grab a few bottles, I had no idea I would stumble upon such an

intimate, special place,” says Scott. “It really sparked my interest in wine.”

Indeed, it was this surprise cellar that would eventually lead Scott and wife, Terri, headlong into new careers in cellar design and construction. The couple's new company, simply named “CellarMaker,” offers homeowners an opportunity to create a “haven in their home” with wine cellars.

When the Hughes met, Terri

was living in the San Francisco Bay area, just outside of Napa Valley, the national mecca for wine lovers. Through numerous visits to local wineries and vineyards, the couple solidified their love of all things vino. After marrying and moving to Atlanta, they remembered the quaint wine cellar from Belgium and began the planning process for their own.

“We took seven years to plan

this cellar,” says Terri. “We took a really long time deciding upon every detail and putting away money so that we could build exactly what we wanted.”

“Surely, it doesn't normally take that long! But we wanted to make sure we ended up with exactly the ambiance we wanted,” she continues. “Plus, it was really hard to find someone who specialized in building wine cellars.”

The couple began collecting wine at the beginning of their marriage, with a 10-bottle rack that stored everyday wines. They expanded into a built-in unit in the kitchen, modifying existing cabinets into larger storage compartments with wine racks. “Of course, the kitchen is the absolute worst place to keep wine because of the varying temperatures and humidity factors,” claims Scott.

In planning their own cellar, the couple continuously researched and read up on things like vapor barriers, which are vital to a well-constructed cellar. With Scott's family background in the construction industry, his passion for architecture and the couple's laborious research, in the process of building their cellar, they became experts.

“Building a wine cellar is not like building any other structure,” admits Scott. “There are so many different variables to control, such as vapor barriers, humidity and maintaining a constant temperature.”

The Hughes decided to construct the cellar with two entrances; one opens into the basement foyer, right off the staircase; the other goes into the couple's media room, making entertaining easy and traffic flow natural. In designing the look of their wine cellar, Scott and Terri opted for an Old-World style, using stone as the encasing for the wine racks and arched double-paned glass and iron doors and as chair-rail half-way up the walls. The rest of the walls employ a faux plaster look, with pieces seemingly chipping

off to add to the rustic flair.

The focal point of the room is the recessed stone mantel, which gives the couple an area exclusively for opening wines and serving cheese, crackers and other appetizers to guests. In the center is a large copper

“dining” area opposite the wine wall. Dim lights, including a wrought-iron chandelier, help to create a warm, inviting ambiance similar to a European tavern. Slate floors provide the perfect touch and help to keep the room cool.



tile with a wine and grape motif, surrounded by a backsplash of smaller copper tiles.

To accompany guests, a wooden table sits in its own

Wooden racks soaring to the ceiling store 450 bottles of wine and are organized by those needing long-, medium- and short-term storage. White wines

NOTE

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are kept in a refrigerated unit right outside of the cellar.

“We decided to wire the room for our stereo. That way, we can enjoy music while sipping a glass of wine and talking about our day,” says Scott. “This is the place I look forward to coming at 5 o'clock.”

Family and friends frequent the cellar, and all helped propel the Hughes' decision to venture into cellar building for others. “Everyone who enters this cellar thinks it's beautiful and wonderful. Our friends convinced us that others would want this same sort of space in their homes,” says Terri.

And their friends must have been right. Without any marketing at all, the Hughes already have orders for designing and constructing cellars.

Their company CellarMaker touts a turnkey experience from concept to completion — designing, planning, constructing and decorating wine cellars. They can retrofit an existing space such as a basement area, closet or other room, or they can build one with any new construction. Many home plans now offer spaces designated just for the purpose.

“Wine is the best harvest the earth has to offer,” says Scott. “Why not bring a little of this bounty into your own home? We did, and it changed our lives.”

CONSIDERING A WINE CELLAR?

IF you like the idea of creating a wine cellar in your own home, consider the following things:

If you do not have a basement, consider other areas of your home that could be retrofitted for a wine cellar, such as a spare bedroom, bathroom or office.
 If you're short on budget but big on dreams, consider turning a closet into

a mini-cellar.
 Think about designing your cellar around the architecture of your home. In a modern home, a glass-encased cellar may fit the bill, while in an Old-World-styled home, a stone and iron cellar may complement the look.

Think about your needs and space in light of your budget. Some cellars can be created on a shoestring while others can cost a significant amount of money.
 Consider how much you will entertain in your cellar.

Scott and Terri's has become the place for the couple to relax daily as well as the spot for many special dinners.
 “Build your second cellar first,” advises Scott. Do it right the first time, and you may never need for more.