

***Pampered
vintages
stay cool,
collected***

T A T T L E R





M. Cloutier/Robbie Bedell



Kelly S. Harris, president of Imperial Wine Storage in West Palm Beach, says Imperial's temperature- and humidity-controlled lockers are like 'having a safe-deposit box for your wine.'

Palm Beach oenophiles — nectar argot for wine lovers and wine aficionados — know one thing: Florida isn't exactly the greatest place to store wine.

Basements are a rarity in the state, power failures and temperature fluctuations are common in private residences — many of them owned by part-time residents who pop in and out — and collectors tend to outgrow whatever storage facilities they manage to carve out at home.

Enter Imperial Wine Storage in West Palm Beach, a facility launched in January and dedicated to wine storage alone — not general-purpose storage where wine can be stashed on shelves in dubious conditions.

"My husband and I have been wine collectors for many years," says Imperial's president, Kelly S. Harris. "We actually used a professional wine-storage facility in New York for some time and this gave us the idea to start a similar facility in South Florida."

Imperial's private-collector and commercial clients hail from Palm Beach, Broward and Martin counties, including some heavy hitters such as The Breakers. The Imperial Wine Storage facility and vaults, on Australian Avenue north of downtown West Palm Beach, includes several lockers refrigerated between 55 and 58 degrees Fahrenheit with a relative humidity of 60 percent to 70 percent — optimal conditions for storing and aging wine.

An on-site cellar manager monitors the temperature, humidity and alarm systems, including a triple-perimeter security system with video-surveillance gate access to the grounds, a digital entry system, and alarmed doors protecting the wine-storage vaults. There's also an industrial-strength back-up generator. Also on site is a large, airy and tastefully appointed wine-tasting room.

"Keeping wine in our facility is like having a safe-deposit box for your wine," says Harris. "Our clients have collections ranging from 10 cases to several hundred cases."

Prices start at \$45 a month for Imperial's smallest locker, which holds up to 18 cases. The company can pick up and deliver wine at any time and place that's convenient for clients — even right after hurricanes, as Harris can attest since some electricity-deprived clients called in a panic after Frances and Jeanne — and collections can be inventoried online. And, adds Harris, "As part of our service, we partner with a sommelier to properly arrange the part of the collection that is stored at the client's home."

At the risk of sounding humiliatingly campy, it sounds like wine-wine situation.

