



To protect the mainly French and California red wines, above, Michael Lean installed a hydrometer to monitor temperature and humidity. "We keep the room around 55 degrees," he says, "but I'm not really that much of a wine fanatic when it comes to maintaining the exact temperature for wine."

A stellar cellar

Setting mood for at-home getaway

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Special to The Plain Dealer

On vacation, sipping reds in a cozy Napa Valley winery, Michael and Pascale Lean returned to a recent theme: how to renovate their Bay Village ranch-style home. Most discussions had centered on a kitchen build-out, but tearing up the kitchen with a 3-year-old in the house didn't seem wise.

Perhaps it was the setting that made the Leans think, instead, of a wine cellar in their basement.

"We had the idea of using PVC piping to hold the wine," says Michael, who saw the design concept in Shelter Magazine, "and we thought it would be fun to do something off-the-wall. We thought we could possibly turn our basement into a sort of wine cellar and lounge."

The couple had bought paintings from Christopher Schramm, who owns Interior Art Design in Cleveland. They discovered Schramm through their visits to

Devout Home, a Rocky River store that specializes in custom home furnishings and interior design. The Leans liked the trendy, rich look of Schramm's artwork, and the Bauhaus feel of some of the furniture they saw at Devout Home, and decided to work with him on their home renovation project.

Schramm, who was busy developing design concepts for Lola, the soon-to-open restaurant in the East Fourth Street entertainment district downtown while also working on the new Bier Markt on West 25th Street, admits that he bristled at the idea of using cheap plastic piping for an upscale home interior. "I didn't want to do something that looked like I went to Home Depot and slapped it together," Schramm says, "but once I saw the basement room, I realized that this job was about using a lot of color and a minimalist approach to remodel an existing space without having to do a full-scale build-out."



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For Michael and Pascale Lean, the wine cellar in the basement of their Bay Village home is a place to relax. "It's a little bit romantic, we set the mood with music from the iPod," says Michael, pointing out the eight speakers that blend into the room. "It's a good place to sit, talk and get away from everything."

Despite his schedule, Schramm took on the challenge.

He first tackled problems that afflict the typical basement: an overexposed ceiling, cinder-block walls and concrete floor. Instead of installing a drop-ceiling to cover the rafters, pipes and electric lines that sullied the ceiling, Schramm opted to mask the tangled mess with color. "I sprayed out the ceiling with a deep, dark black-brown paint," he says. "The color encloses the room, makes it more intimate and erases everything that's up there."

Schramm also used the existing utility lighting outlets in the ceiling, replacing the dull 75-watt bulbs with halogen lights. "The dark backdrop of the ceiling makes the lighting look more dramatic," he says.

The standard concrete floor was a concern, as carpeting would be expensive and wouldn't help achieve the minimalist look Schramm and the Leans wanted. "I colored the floor with a custom

russet stain, and the result is a rust color with hints of yellow," Schramm says. The floor and ceiling colors found a middle ground on the walls, which Schramm painted fire-engine red. He looked to the far end of the room to add softness. "I put a custom texture on the far wall that I call 'tree bark,'" says Schramm, explaining that the texture gives the wall more life, and the brown wash combined with the texture completes the room.

Taking into consideration the size of the Leans' wine collection (about 40 bottles and growing), as well as the potential for flooding in the basement, Schramm built boxes to be placed at about waist height on the walls. Inside the boxes, he fitted the PVC piping; each short length of pipe would serve as a sleeve to fit one bottle of wine. On the far wall, he built a more elaborate set of boxes, creating a master cabinet that could hold 64 bottles. To finish off the sleek look, Schramm

installed custom lighting to provide a focus for the boxes.

"In between the wine boxes, I installed light boxes featuring an antique light bulb," says Schramm, pointing out the bulbs that have an "early Edison" look to them. He simply exploited the existing baseboard electrical outlets in the basement — one about every five feet — to install the lights. "I painted the back panels of the wine lights with a light cream color to give the room a better glow."

Once Schramm's work was finished, the Leans turned to Devout Home for furniture. "We're into a very sparse look," Michael says. They chose two Barcelona chairs, a matching ottoman in leather and chrome, and a custom-made chrome-and-glass coffee table. They also bought a Brazilian steer-hide rug that serves as a grounding point for the simple arrangement, creating an island from which to sit and gaze at the colors, symmetry, lighting and bottles.

Schramm considers the space with amazement. He says the materials for the room were just under \$2,000, a sum he considers low for the level of the design.

"Even I was a little impressed when I saw the results," Schramm says. "Typically, I like to do a full, blown-out custom rebuild, but the end result here looks very well thought out. And I achieved that by applying simple methods instead of doing construction."

The Leans — Michael is the director of international sourcing at Henkel Consumer Adhesives in Avon, and Pascale is a homemaker — enjoy their remodeled room. "We've had friends over and popped a few bottles of wine here to celebrate," says Michael, "but mostly, it's a nice room to sit in and relax."

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