



## AXA Art Insurance Collection Management Series:

# Caring for Wine Collections

Wine is a liquid symphony. It is defined by a complex orchestration of grape variety, region, color, aromatic bouquet and alcoholic content. This natural libation was honored by the ancient Greeks, who created a deity in its honor. While Bacchus may conjure visions of revelry, connoisseurs in modern times have elevated the enjoyment of wine to a cultivated art with equal attention paid to production, preservation and consumption.

Wine can also represent a significant liquid asset. Auction prices have reached new highs: in 2010, three bottles of Château Lafite-Rothschild 1869 vintage sold for \$230,000 a bottle, setting a record for the most expensive bottle of wine ever sold at auction. Similarly, two bottles of champagne recently salvaged from a 170-year-old shipwreck on the bottom of the Baltic Sea sold together at auction for \$78,400 in 2011. These two bottles, a Veuve and a Juglar, were still drinkable as they had been well preserved from laying flat and under pressure on the cool sea floor.

Wine differs from other collectibles in that its eventual purpose is to be consumed. Proper wine storage and care will ensure a wine's future drinkability and value as well as the maintenance of its corks and seals.

### Storage

- Wine should be stored in a cool dark place and on its side so that the cork stays moist and does not dry out. This will prevent air from permeating the bottle, which can lead to spoilage and evaporation.
- An environment at a constant 55 degree temperature and 75 percent humidity is recommended.
- Custom-built walls in storage cellars should be insulated with fiberglass to help protect against mold and wine label damage, and to help regulate temperature. Mahogany or redwood storage racks are ideal as these woods will not rot in humidity.
- An alarm system that indicates a change in temperature can save a wine collection. Fluctuations in temperature, even for just half a day, can damage wine.
- Protect your wine from light. Some owners display their collection behind smoke-glass doors which reduce exposure to harmful ultraviolet light.
- The environmental control system must not cause vibrations, which can stir up the tannins that fall as sediment to the bottom of bottles.
- Having a back-up generator for your wine-storage unit is an excellent investment to ensure the safety of your collection.

### Handling & Shipping

- Avoid unnecessary bottle or case handling, which can disrupt the proper aging process.
- When shipped, each bottle of wine should be carefully taken from its rack or case and individually secured in a two-piece molded expanded polystyrene foam mailer. The mailer should be placed in a double-wall corrugated shipping container with

a minimum bursting strength of 275 pounds per square inch.

- Temperature must be regulated throughout the transportation process.
- Take care when removing bottles from the packaging to avoid damaging the labels.
- Check with your state regulations as some states restrict the transport of large quantities of wine without a permit.

### Value & Insurance

- Have your wine re-appraised on a regular basis to establish replacement values and ensure that your insurance policy reflects your new values.
- Keep thorough documentation on your wine collection beginning with purchase invoices and a full description of every bottle in your collection. In some cases, you may have auction and/or provenance details for certain bottles. This information is invaluable and should be kept in a safe location.

For more information on insuring your collection, please contact 888-873-6931.

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