

A Place for Wine



I dropped by the [San Francisco Wine Center](#) the other day—happened to be in the neighborhood, around the block from the great wine shop [K&L](#), near the Giants' stadium. I parked by a desperate and destitute crowd outside the St. Vincent de Paul Society—madmen, loners, abused orphans, all crazy in that alternate America—and then I jogged across a wide and sunbaked street and walked up a block of narrow sidewalks and fast traffic and odd little quasi-industrial businesses. Not a boutique shopping strip, by any means; just the hardscrabble backside of San Francisco's downtown, a place for mechanics and porn shops and printing presses, except that our world is changing and even this real estate is still priceless and so it's all in flux,

all growing, evolving, hemmed in by new live-work lofts and speculative dreams of the still-more-glamorous San Francisco to come.

Nothing fancy on the outside: just a sign, a loading dock, an office. But inside, the San Francisco Wine Center



is somebody's dream made real, a testament to the power of capital, and to our changing economy. It's a friendly, low-key self-storage facility for wine—but with wine pick-up-and-delivery service, so you don't have to drive down there all the time, and a line of wines for sale, and a schedule of food-and-wine events. This place has been built to encourage community and social life, with a couple of nice lounges you can rent.

The hope, apparently, is that you'll get yourself a little (or big) locker, to ensure that your collection doesn't spoil in the warmth of your closet back home, and then you'll drop by so regularly in pursuit of your bottles that you'll meet other collectors in the corridors, and perhaps pop a few corks and share memories and discuss vintages and varietals and the like. In other words, you'll make friends through a shared interest in wine. It's nicely done, all of it, and if I lived nearby and didn't have a cool basement, I would very seriously consider joining up; perhaps I'd find someone to share a locker with, to bring down the price.



But it's also provocative, because of the courage it took to build: two entrepreneurs ([Brian McGonigle](#), [Paolo Mancini](#)), with a long background in wine, looking around at the explosion of wine-storage facilities and wine-inventory software, and deciding there's another way these businesses can work, another need nobody has filled. A trend, you might say, that isn't yet trendy. And so they bet the farm, and they work hard in the way of young men building a life, and they make it a reality, and then they wait to see what happens. Takes guts.

Posted by [Daniel Duane](#) | Monday, May 12, 2008 at 3:49pm

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