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MAY 2014 | \$3.95
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DO YOUR
KIDS GET
TOO MUCH
SALT?

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CONNOISSEUR'S CELLAR

SITUATED IN A BASEMENT, A BERGEN DESIGNER'S WINE CELLAR IS HIDDEN FROM VIEW—BUT A SIGHT TO BEHOLD.

Soon after Anthony Passanante and his family moved into their Bergen County home, Passanante, an interior designer and the owner of Anthony Albert Studios in Waldwick (201.857.2368, anthonyalbertstudios.com) turned the unfinished basement into a "cave-like" tasting area and entertaining haven...that also happens to store 800 bottles.

Come in and take a seat at the bistro table. It's made of a used barrel from a Napa Valley winery and features a thick glass top attached via a hole drilled in the center. The glass has a barked edge, giving the piece a cool organic feel.

As you spy the mostly custom-made shelving systems along the walls, you'll notice there's no refrigeration here. Instead, a single cooling unit keeps the bottles chilled at 58 degrees—including the whites, as Passanante likes to drink

those a little warmer than some do. The vertical racks house standard-format bottles, while the triangular bins store larger bottles and the occasional port or champagne. At the server station, the requisite tools—decanter, wine opener, glasses—stand at the ready as a scene of Venice beckons you to sip slowly. The wooden crate and wicker basket below hold new wines until they're ready to be shelved. Candelabra bulbs are encased in antique seeded glass and finished in dark bronze to add Old World charm.

The colors, too, lend unmistakable appeal. The curved stools are stained in mahogany to match the racks, while the walls and ceiling are painted the same color to give the small room some lift. Under foot, the porcelain tile in burnt sienna is no maintenance and wine spills clean right up.