

we noticed that innovation in some areas seems to have slowed. Rather than seeing new products or revolutionary updates, you might find that manufacturers simply offer a variety of capacities, finishes and aesthetic "oohs and ahs" to make an appliance appear to be more like a status symbol. For instance, instead of reinventing the popcorn maker, appliance makers simply redesigned it, adding sleek lines and splashes of bright red.

Convenience Cornerstone. The foundation of your entertainment room might be your wine chiller or mini fridge. Premium-priced wine chillers now include digital controls, which provide precise

temperature climates, often within 1 degree of the setting. Certain types of wines benefit from specific temperature settings, which help keep their taste intact and keep them from aging prematurely. Shelves that hold bottles securely "roll" out instead of slide out. By incorporating roller/ball bearing mechanisms instead of grooved hinges, shelves slide more smoothly. This helps avoid the vibration that interferes with the aging of your wine by stirring up sediment, which can cause the wine to deteriorate. Along those lines, we found that wooden racks are more common these days. They tend to be more stable than wire racks, leading to less wobbling. Plus,

they also can be stained to match cabinets and better blend with your décor.

Not content with storing only sealed bottles, one manufacturer wants you to store an open bottle, too. The Pek VinoVault, starting at \$300, stores up to 14 bottles and preserves one open bottle by replacing oxygen with 100 percent argon gas via a built-in nozzle inside the cabinet before you reseal it. The technology, according to the company, is 80 percent more effective than regular recorking and will preserve wine for up to 2 weeks. The price on the VinoVault is reasonable compared with other similar-sized chillers.

No statistical data exist that detail the



Best Buys in Mini Fridges and Wine Chillers

Best Buy Categories:

[P]=Premium selection;
[M]=Midrange selection;
[E]=Economy selection.
See page 72.

Best Buys in mini fridges and wine chillers are based on capacity, ease of use, features and warranty. All built-in mini fridge Best Buys can act as freestanding units. All wine chiller Best Buys can act as freestanding or built-in models. All Best Buys except our Premium built-in mini fridge come with reversible door hinges, and all Best Buys except our Economy mini fridge and countertop wine chiller selections have auto defrost. Prices on built-in models do not include installation.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price available at press time and is subject to change.

Mini Fridges, Freestanding

[P] Kenmore Can Beverage Center 99100

List: \$599; Best Price: \$429

This small refrigeration model will store up to 126 12-ounce cans and display them with a stand-out blue interior light. The unit has three glass shelves and a removable wine storage rack. This model does not allow frost to form, while

most others must be defrosted automatically or manually.

Features:

- * Capacity: 3.9-cu.-ft.
- * Color: Black
- * Dimensions: 33-1/16 in. (h) x 19-7/16 in. (w) x 24-1/8 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor

[M] Sanyo SR-4912M

List: \$250; Best Price: \$199

This unit is Energy Star-rated, a rarity for mini fridges at any price. It packs a feature-rich punch, too, including a door that holds two, 1-gallon milk jugs, a can dispenser and a crisper drawer for veggies. Two glass shelves help contain spills. Two adjustable legs also make sure content is level.

Features:

- * Capacity: 4.9-cu.-ft.
- * Color: Black and platinum
- * Dimensions: 33-3/4 in. (h) x 21-3/8 in. (w) x 22-3/4 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor, 5-yr. compressor parts

[E] Kenmore 9467

List: \$179; Best Price: \$149

The freezer on this model is wider than that on most others and is able to hold an ice cube tray. Two-liter containers fit on the door, which includes a can dispenser. It has three full glass shelves, while others at a similar price are made of metal grates. Two of the shelves

slide out and are adjustable in height.

Features:

- * Capacity: 4.6-cu.-ft.
- * Colors: Black, black and stainless steel
- * Dimensions: 32 in. (h) x 20-1/2 in. (w) x 22 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor

Mini Fridges, Built-In

[P] KitchenAid Architect Series II Beverage Center KBCS24RS (right opening)

List: \$1,199; Best Price: \$1,049

This model stores up to 22 bottles of wine. Three temperature zones are controlled with a panel on the bottom of the unit, with an LED

(light-emitting diode) display showing exact temperatures in all three zones. The display's location means you don't have to open the door to adjust the controls, which causes the temperature to fluctuate, as with other models. Two glass shelves provide storage for virtually anything. It comes in either right opening or left opening (**KBCS24LS**). Model

KBCS24RSSS (\$699), all stainless steel, is also a Best Buy.

Features:

- * Capacity: 5.1-cu.-ft.
- * Color: Black and stainless steel
- * Dimensions: 34-1/2 in. (h) x 23-7/8 in. (w) x 26-5/8 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor, 5-yr. refrigeration system

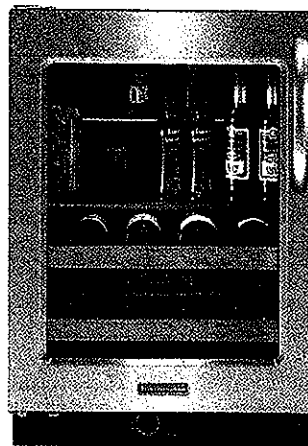
[M] Avanti BCA5102SS

List: \$599; Best Price: \$376

This model is one of few built-in priced under \$1,000. This all-refrigerator unit comes with four removable slide-out chrome shelves. It has a security lock on the front lower grill. Model **BCA5105SG** (\$699) with a glass door is also a Best Buy.

Features:

- * Capacity: 5.3-cu.-ft.
- * Color: Black and stainless steel
- * Dimensions: 33-1/2 in. (h) x 23-3/8 in. (w) x 23 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor, 5-yr. parts refrigeration system



KitchenAid Architect Series II Beverage Center KBCS24LS

efficiency of such preservation systems. Former San Francisco Chronicle wine editor Linda Murphy, who tested similar preservation methods in different products, says this wine chiller's preservation system "certainly won't hurt the wine and could possibly help it." But she advises not to spend any extra just for preservation abilities, telling us it's just as effective to pour wine into smaller bottles before resealing to reduce oxygen content.

For those who are looking to chill a bottle or two of wine before dinner, you can do so without owning a larger unit. Introduced to the marketplace in the past year, tabletop units fit on your dinner

table and are available in single- or double-bottle units that can chill wine in less than 10 minutes. Models range from about \$50 to \$100. High-end models are programmable to chill to a specific temperature for specific wines. They even feature warming options that can bring a red up in temperature. Some come equipped with A/C adapters, making them suitable for RVs and at picnic grounds.

Countertop wine chillers, which hold six to 14 bottles and range in price from \$180 to \$300, are another newer option for the wine fan. Many of the models use thermoelectric cooling technology, which eliminates noise and vibrations.

Some have up to eight temperature presets to accommodate a variety of reds and whites. Most are also lightweight and have adjustable leveling legs. Both Peter Goldman of NPD and A.J. Riedel at Riedel Marketing Group, another market research firm, believe the countertop and tabletop segment will continue to expand, with manufacturers adding more models and new innovations. This expansion will eventually drive down prices.

If beer or soda is more your thing than wine, you'll be happy to learn manufacturers are also adding features to mini fridges. These appliances now come with interior lighting and digital

Countertop Wine Chillers

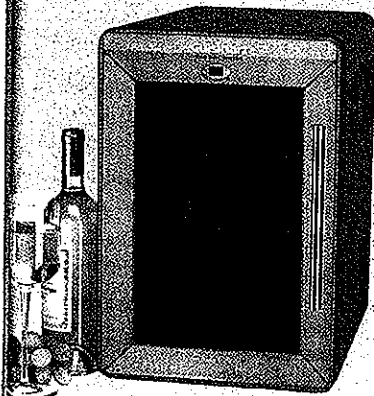
[E] Cuisinart Private Reserve Wine Cellar CWC-600

List: \$179; Best Price: \$149

This model chills up to six bottles of wine. It uses thermoelectric technology, which eliminates the noise and vibration of a refrigeration compressor. The unit has eight temperature presets for both red and white wines in addition to a manual setting, and it has an electronic thermostat with an LED display. Three removable racks can hold 1.5-liter bottles. An interior light is permanently on to showcase your collection through the appliance's glass door.

Features:

- * Capacity: 6 bottles
- * Color: Stainless steel



Cuisinart Private Reserve Wine Cellar CWC-600

* Dimensions: 16 in. (h) x 11 in. (w) x 20 in. (d)

* Warranty: 3-yr. parts/labor

Wine Chillers

[P] Sub-Zero 424

List: \$3,171; Best Price: \$2,799

Two independent storage compartments and a 2-year warranty set this wine chiller above the rest. Each compartment (with its own evaporator for ideal humidity) can be set from 38 to 65 degrees F. A gasketed UV-protected glass door ensures precise temperature control, the company says. Two top shelves hold 16 bottles, while three middle shelves hold 24 bottles. An additional six bottles fit in a bottom section. Diagnostics alert you to problems in the unit's operation.

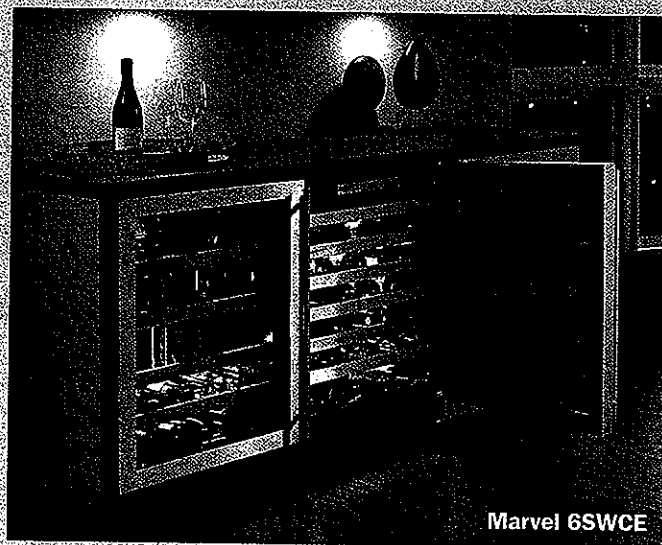
Features:

- * Capacity: 46 bottles
- * Colors: Carbon (gray), platinum, stainless steel
- * Dimensions: 34 in. (h) x 23-7/8 in. (w) x 24 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 2-yr. parts/labor, 5-yr. refrigeration system labor, 12-yr. refrigeration system parts

[M] Marvel 6SWCE

List: \$1,899; Best Price: \$1,699

This unit's self-monitoring system sets off audible and visual alarms if the temperature fluctuates up or down beyond the preset temperature during power failures or when-



Marvel 6SWCE

ever the door is left open. This is a unique system for this price. The unit can be set from 40 to 65 degrees F. Marvel says it has incorporated damping materials in key places of the unit's construction to minimize noise and vibration.

Features:

- * Capacity: 54 bottles
- * Colors: Black, white
- * Dimensions: 34 in. (h) x 23-7/8 in. (w) x 24-1/4 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. labor, 4-yr. parts, 5-yr. refrigeration system

[E] GE Profile Deluxe Wine Center PWR04FANBS

List: \$549; Best Price: \$438

The GE Profile Deluxe Wine Center

includes slide-out, adjustable chrome racks. The bottom rack of the unit is slightly angled to show off your wine selection. The chiller can be set from 40 to 65 degrees F and has a digital display. An interior light shuts off after 60 seconds.

Features:

- * Capacity: 29 bottles
- * Color: Black and stainless steel
- * Dimensions: 33-1/2 in. (h) x 20-1/8 in. (w) x 22-3/4 in. (d)
- * Warranty: 1-yr. parts/labor, 5-yr. compressor

For more information on the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 67.