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SPECIAL REPORT

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

CELLARS MARKET



NEW
BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITY



A company that specialises in wine storage is offering builders the opportunity to purchase a kit form of its Spiral Cellar as part of an assisted install. Professional Builder's Lee Jones finds out more.

Ambitions for aspirational home improvements have surged in lockdown, and with social distancing measures in place for the foreseeable it's a trend that is likely to continue. At the same time, many more of us will be entertaining at home, and on both counts Spiral Cellars is helping builders to capitalise.

Predictably enough – given that there's wine involved – the Spiral Cellar concept is actually a French invention, but as the drink of the gods has grown in popularity on these shores so Spiral Cellars has dug ever deeper into the UK market. "When I took over the company 15 years ago, it was the kind of product that was rather utilitarian and hidden away," explains Managing Director, Lucy Hargreaves. "Today, with the different design options we can offer, and with many property owners looking for that wow factor in the improvements they undertake, the units we can provide are now very much on show and at the heart of a home."

Currently, the company undertakes

around 180 installations around the country each year, but by bringing the local jobbing builder to the party that's a number that they hope to increase. Lucy continues: "By supplying the kit form to builders we can offer a Spiral Cellar as an affordable part of an overall project, and in the process widen the appeal of the product to people who might already be planning on a home improvement. If you're building an extension for a client, for example, or are involved in a new build, recommending a Spiral Cellar as an additional option could well represent a commercial advantage over the competition when initially quoting for the job, or at the design stage."

So just how does the assisted install concept work in practice, and how difficult would a tradesman find the fitting? "Most competent general builders would be more than capable of installing our product but wouldn't necessarily be familiar with some of the finer detail that makes a Spiral Cellar such a successful centrepiece in the home. That's why one of our team is in attendance throughout the installation to make sure that the whole job goes smoothly. Some of the waterproofing that's required can be quite delicate, for instance, and might be unfamiliar to builders who are used to tanking out a basement. The entire product range is still available, but with the

additional reassurance of on-site support.”

Spiral Cellars have found a home in both new builds and existing properties, and, since the excavation work can be undertaken when digging the footings, are particularly popular in extensions. It takes around one to three days to dig the necessary hole, depending on whether that’s by hand or using machinery, with the fitting usually completed between three and five days after that, making a total of between five and eight days in total.

The product range encompasses either a 2.2m diameter white or 2m original grey concrete, with both options available in a choice of 2, 2.5 or 3m depths. Access to that treasure trove of wine is through a trap door opened via a gas strut arm and motor. A rectangular recessed door can accommodate floor tiles or timber flooring over the top, whilst there’s also rectangular, half-moon or full pane designs in glass.

Drink in

Nick Barker has already taken advantage of Spiral Cellars’ assisted install and his team are full of praise for the product itself and the service and back-up that came with it. As the founder and Managing Director of NB Construction, Nick is already well-versed in completing substantial excavations, and saw the appeal of the Spiral Cellars proposition as an addition to the orangery and pizzeria he was planning on the side of his own home.

“After an initial site survey with Spiral Cellars, we went for the assisted install just for the experience and know-how the company can bring to the fitting of the concrete segments that form the walls and the waterproofing,” explains the company’s Contracts Manager, Jay Wenn, who was in charge of the project. “Given our own expertise, the excavation itself was a straightforward prospect, and the guys at Spiral Cellars were communicating with us throughout in order to keep appraised of our progress. We then completed the floor finishes in the orangery, leaving their installer to come and assist with the fit the half-moon glass door. Any competent builder should be able to carry out the work and I can see it being a decent sideline for



construction companies.”

Lucy’s business doesn’t just go underground, because the portfolio also includes bespoke walk-in wine rooms, walls and cabinets. With the public now intent on improving their properties in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, interest in the company’s solutions has increased. “We will see more people socialising in smaller groups in their own domestic space,” concludes Lucy, “and our installations are the perfect companion, whilst avoiding the shops by having your own wine store at home is more appealing

than ever. With our assisted kit initiative we can provide builders with a product on which they can make a decent margin, help them gain a march on fellow local tradespeople and hopefully gain a referral from a satisfied customer into the bargain.”



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