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How does a Spiral Cellar work?

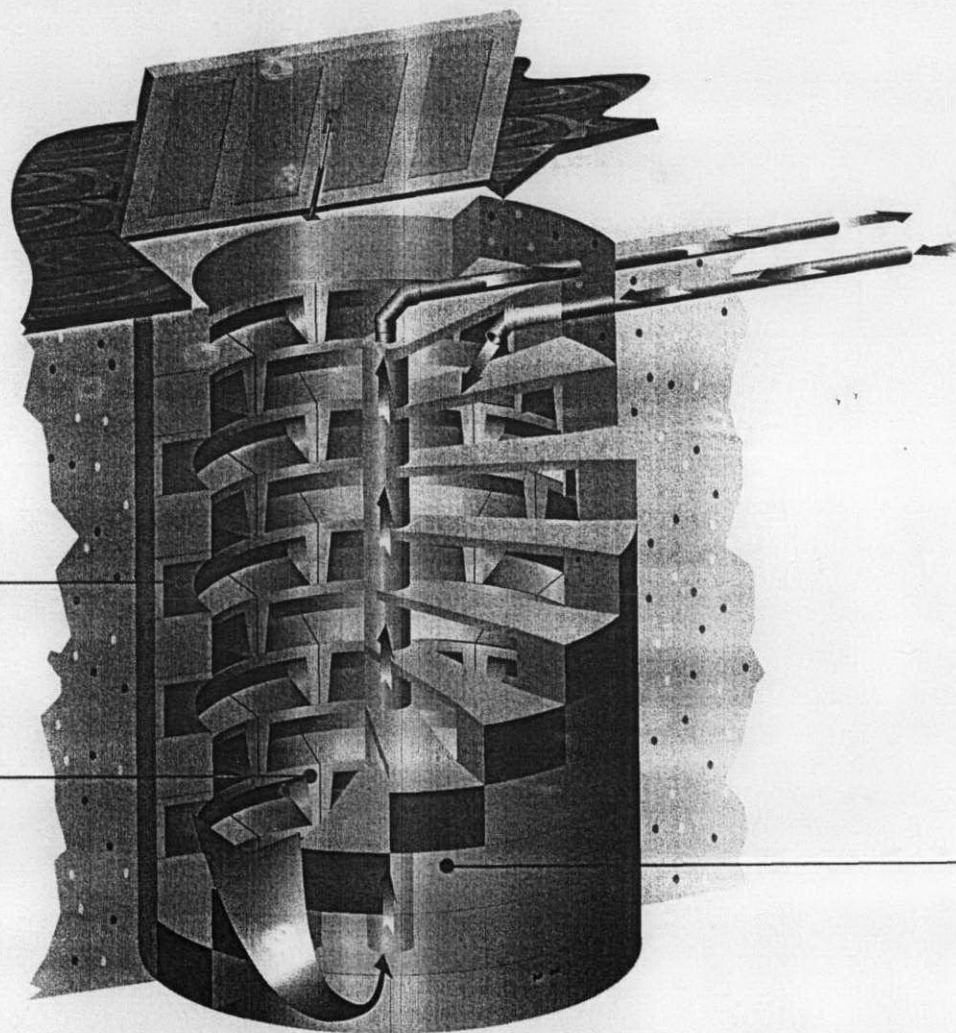
The Spiral cellar system was first developed by a Frenchman, Georges Harnois, in 1978, who recognised that few modern houses had cellars, but people still wanted somewhere to store their wine.

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Over the last two and a half decades, more than 20,000 Spiral Cellars have been built in France and over 2,500 in the UK, where the company has been operating since 1981.

The cellar itself is a solid concrete construction that sits inside a waterproof lining, which means that it is damp-proof, and highly resilient to temperature changes and vibrations.

The wine is stored horizontally inside separate slightly curved 'bins' that line the walls of the cellar. Each bin holds up to two cases of wine.



Cool air comes into the cellar through a pipe at ceiling level, pushing the warm air downwards and out through another pipe situated at the bottom of the central spine. This then feeds up through the centre of the stairs and outside, where the pipe is fed to 1.5m above ground level.

This system helps prevent the air in the cellar from becoming stale, since it is always at the same level as the natural ground temperature and is generally at optimum cellar temperature of between 8-15°C.

As well as being set into the earth, which aids insulation, the cellar maintains a constant temperature through a 'passive ventilation' system, using two pipes.

"It's incredible that something so simple and that requires no real maintenance can work so efficiently."