



ELITE RECOMMENDS

## CUSTOM VINTAGES

Bespoke suits, shirts and shoes all fit you better than mass-produced alternatives. The same is true for wine. The most innovative vintners are encouraging clients to customize wines to personal tastes.

BY LARRY OLMSTED



## CRUSHPAD

The modern make-your-own-wine movement began at San Francisco's **Crushpad**, a state of the art, 34,000-square-foot urban winery. Founder Michael Brill sources from about 50 high-end West Coast vineyards (like Napa's Mt. Veeder) plus growers who supply wineries like Opus One, Harlan and Paul Hobbs. Clients pick a grape varietal and style, like "big cab" or "smooth pinot," then work with Brill and his five winemakers to select the right vineyards. In the fall, your grapes are delivered the day they're picked, and from that moment, would-be winemakers can be as hands-on as they want. Some work the crush, fermentation and return regularly to do barrel tastings. Whites are ready by the following spring or summer, lighter reds the following fall, and big reds can take 20 months or more. All-inclusive barrel pricing runs \$5,700 to \$13,900.

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## CITY WINERY

New York's first private label winery opened last New Year's Eve. It is overseen by respected French winemaker David Lecomte, who sources his grapes from the best West Coast vineyards. **City Winery** also offers Kosher winemaking, which has proven to be a surprisingly big hit. Launched by music industry insider Michael Dorf (of Knitting Factory fame), the downtown winery combines his passions, making this venue a wine bar and large performance space too. Barrel buyers become club members and have first crack at everything from show tickets to dinner reservations. Weekly performances attract big names like The Cowboy Junkies, Philip Glass and Suzanne Vega, and other weekly offerings include cheese classes and visiting vintner tasting dinners. Barrels run \$7,000 to \$11,600.

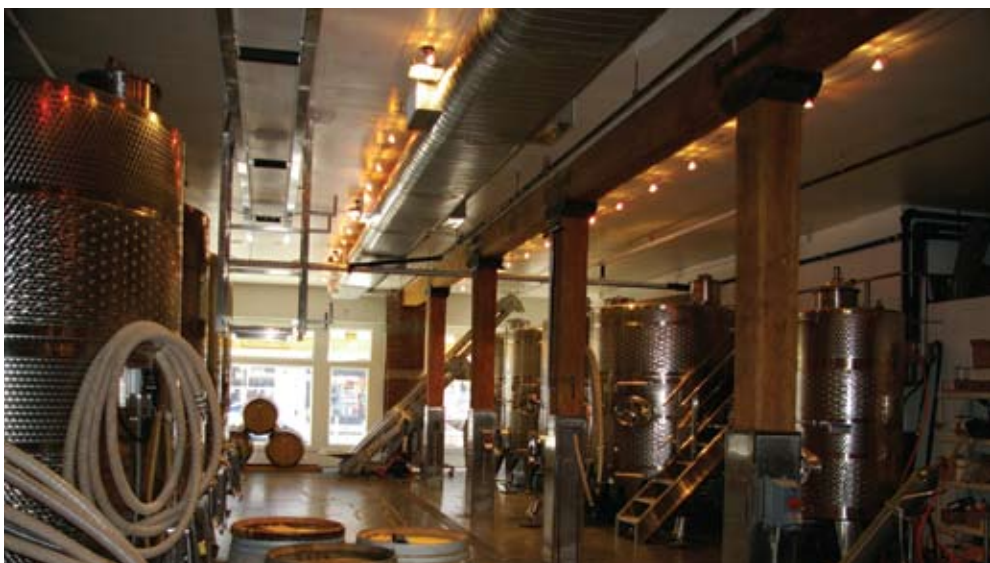
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## ALGODON WINE ESTATES

**Algodon**, just outside Mendoza, Argentina, is one of the world's premier wine-centric communities, offering homes with private vineyards, a golf course and hotel. Home-owners participate in the on-site vineyard, and now so can everyone else. Take part in choosing the type of barrel oak, then select the grapes from local varietals like Malbec or Syrah. And, in a bit of a twist, you will own your own barrels, which can be reused to yield nearly 900 bottles over three vintages. Barrel ownership also includes two nights lodging at the end of the first aging period to watch your wine at a formative time. Clients can also track the whole process online. With top quality French Oak, the three-year price starts at \$10,500.

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