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LUXURY HOMESTYLE

By the sea

Special Holiday Issue

MONTEREY BAY'S
HOME AND GARDEN MAGAZINE

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By Michael Chatfield | Photos by Anthony Peres and Wayne Capili

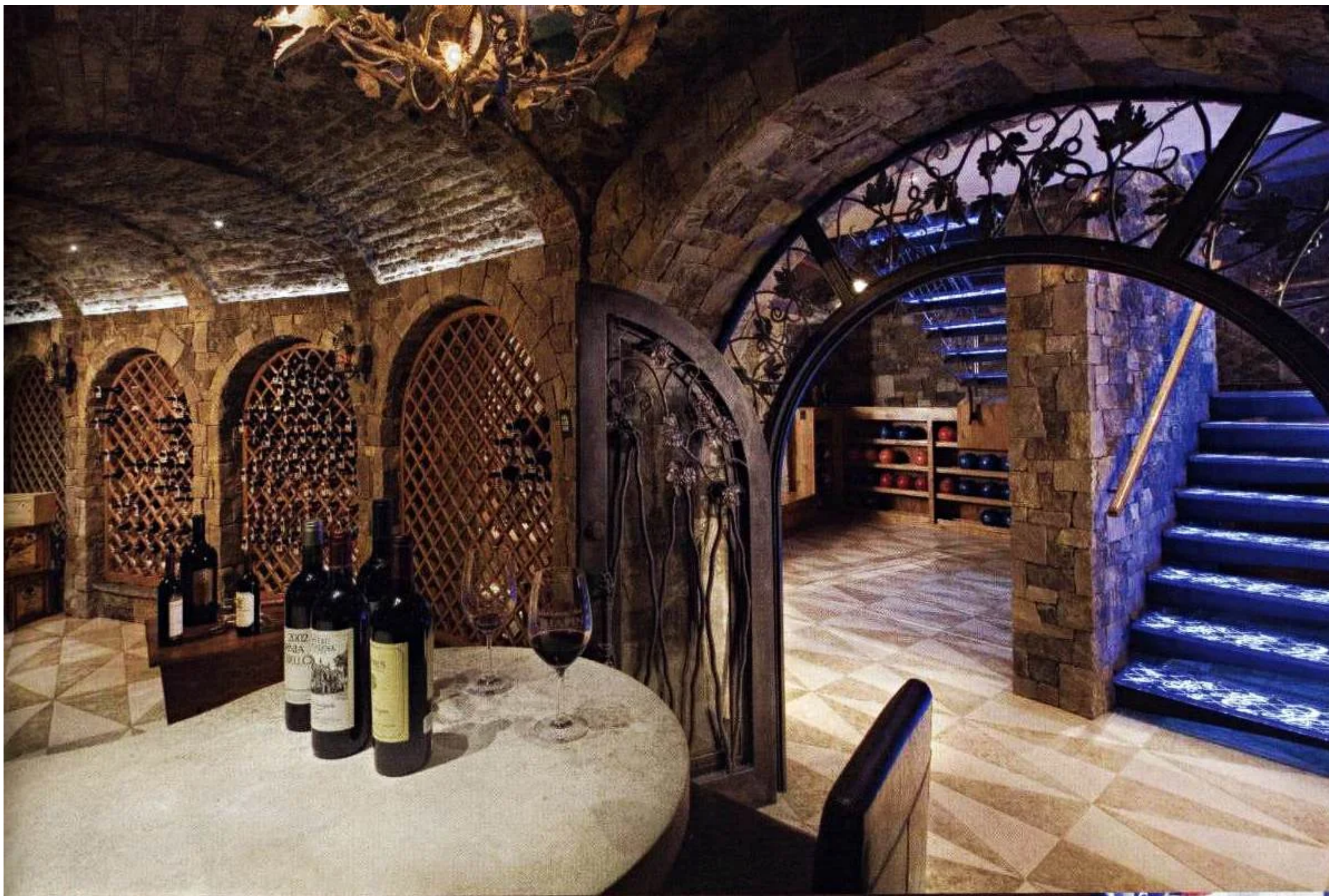
Visible throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties, the Don Chapin Company is a key player in the building of high-profile commercial and public-use projects. That kind of construction must be built to last.

So, to his family home, Don Chapin brought the same sense of permanence. “I give my customers value and quality,” he says, “and I expect that in my own home.”

The original 5,500-square-foot house and horse ranch were built on 15 acres in pastoral Prunedale. The addition featured here, begun in 2004, brings the total footage to 12,800. Offering commanding views of the Monterey Bay, the Peninsula and the steep golden slopes of Fremont Peak, the site is part of Hidden Canyon Ranch, a Chapin Company luxury home development. “This is pretty close to God’s country,” marvels Don.

Don turned to Lafayette architect James Phillip Wright, AIA on a colleague’s enthusiastic recommendation. Don wanted a relaxed living space for his family that would incorporate strong, natural materials and complement the country setting. “I want a house I can live in.” James says, “This project says a lot about Don.” Above all, the owner values his family. “He wanted the addition to be a comfortable playground for him, his wife, kids and friends,” he adds.

James—both a licensed general contractor and architect—designed and built many prestigious residences in Southern California before choosing to concentrate solely on architecture and relocating north. It was a good match: these men share guiding principles of quality and meticulous attention to detail that permeate their lives and their work.





“The wine cave was first off the drawing board” says James, “done before I met Don in person. I put together something completely off the wall, thinking that he would make changes.” But Don loved it.

Inspiration for the 900-bottle-capacity cave came from cellars James had visited in Europe and Napa Valley. “There are no right angles,” James says. Organic curves lend the sense of an ancient Burgundian cellar. Fiber optics bathe the space in cool light. Wrought iron doors—which also adorn the new elevator—were crafted to James’ specifications. The cave’s columns are faced with French limestone.

James got the green light to design the rest of the structure. “Don loved his original house, so I designed the extension to appear as if it had always been there,” he says.

This part of the home is entered through a short hallway, a barrel-ceiling tunnel finished in a herringbone pattern of sandblasted wood slats exquisitely executed by Salinas general contractor John Wright. “John is a can-do guy,” James says. “There are very few contractors who have the confidence and experience to pull off a project like this.” A magnificent set of equine-themed etched glass doors by Heather Glass of Santa Cruz are illuminated from within by blue fiber optic lights. To the left is a long bar, backed with a wall of windows looking out on two stone-surrounded swimming pools, a hot tub and outdoor kitchen.



The home theater is like something from a big-shot Hollywood producer's mansion. A Da-Lite screen automatically compensates for the size of image being projected onto it. An audiophile-quality system pumps out sound and everything is controlled by an up-to-the-minute Crestron network that does everything but pop the corn.



A guest suite completes the upper floor. It's a self-contained one-bedroom apartment with a steam shower (there's another in the pool's changing area), kitchenette and glassed-in private patio featuring that awesome Bay view. "We call it the 'three-day limit' suite," Don laughs, referring to the fact that visiting friends and family never seem to want to leave.



Now we come to what is perhaps the most striking feature. The lower floor of the wing is reached by a remarkable glass stairway, lit from below with an ethereal blue glow. Another brainchild of James—a thin layer of phosphorescent LCE material made by Ceelight, impregnated with the Hidden Canyon Ranch logo—is affixed to the bottom of inch-thick glass stair risers. Medium-voltage current, passed through the panels, results in a warm, unearthly glow.

Here also is a two-lane bowling alley powered by the latest Brunswick technology. Behind a curved sofa, a wooden tabletop contains a delightful surprise: at the flick of a switch the top motors up to reveal a shelving system housing neat rows of bowling shoes in several sizes.



This design and construction have truly met Don's vision—despite its size, the home feels cozy and puts one at ease. It is filled with natural light and truly feels at one with the surroundings. Above all, the sense of top quality workmanship is evident in even the finest points. "I've been in the building trade for more than 30 years," he says. "I know which contractors can deliver the goods." How'd it turn out? "I'm very happy with it." But: "My home will always be a work in progress." ■

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