



Canadian Trade Successes 11-06  
Gen-U-Wine Storage Systems Inc.

## UNCORKING SUCCESS IN FOREIGN MARKETS

### Company contact information:

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### Key Quotation:

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### Story details:

It began, innocently enough, with a question.

The year was 1995. Lance Kingma, a skilled woodworker, was at a gathering of wine lovers in Toronto when someone asked if he thought he could build a wine cellar. Not one to turn down a challenge, Kingma said, sure, he’d love to give it a shot.

“I had no idea,” he says now, “that when I started building that wine cellar, what I was really building was a company.”

More than a decade later, that company, Winnipeg-based Genuwine Cellars, builds custom-made wine cellars for satisfied clients across Canada and the United States. It has showrooms and representatives in all major Canadian cities, in several U.S. centres, and in Europe. “Today,” says Robb Denomme, the company’s Director of Operations, “Genuwine is a familiar, trusted and highly respected name among wine lovers and aficionados everywhere.”

While Kingma and Denomme acknowledge that their learning curve over the past decade has been steep, so has their company's climb to success. Two employees have become more than 20, and an 800-square-foot garage—with the machinery placed on wheels to save space—is now a 20,000 square foot (1,858 m<sup>2</sup>) state-of-the-art manufacturing plant. The company's selection of wine cellars has also grown, from modest add-ons for existing homes, to custom-built cellars costing well into the six figures.

In the early 2000s, with Genuwine's sales in Canada approaching \$500,000—and rising every year—the two partners decided to turn their attention to the lucrative U.S. market. By chance—“we bought a book about accessing government grants” says Denomme—they learned about Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada's programs and services.

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In fact, the company exceeded its expectations, paying off the assistance within the first year. Kingma and Denomme say they also got tremendous support from the Prairie Centre for Business Intelligence and from the National Research Council Canada.

Clearly, that support and assistance is paying off. Today, 65 percent of Genuwine's business originates in the United States. It is now a multimillion-dollar business, with clients in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Although more than 90 percent of the cellars it builds are for private homes, Genuwine cellars can be found at quality locations such as the CN Tower, the Banff Springs Hotel and the Air Canada Centre.