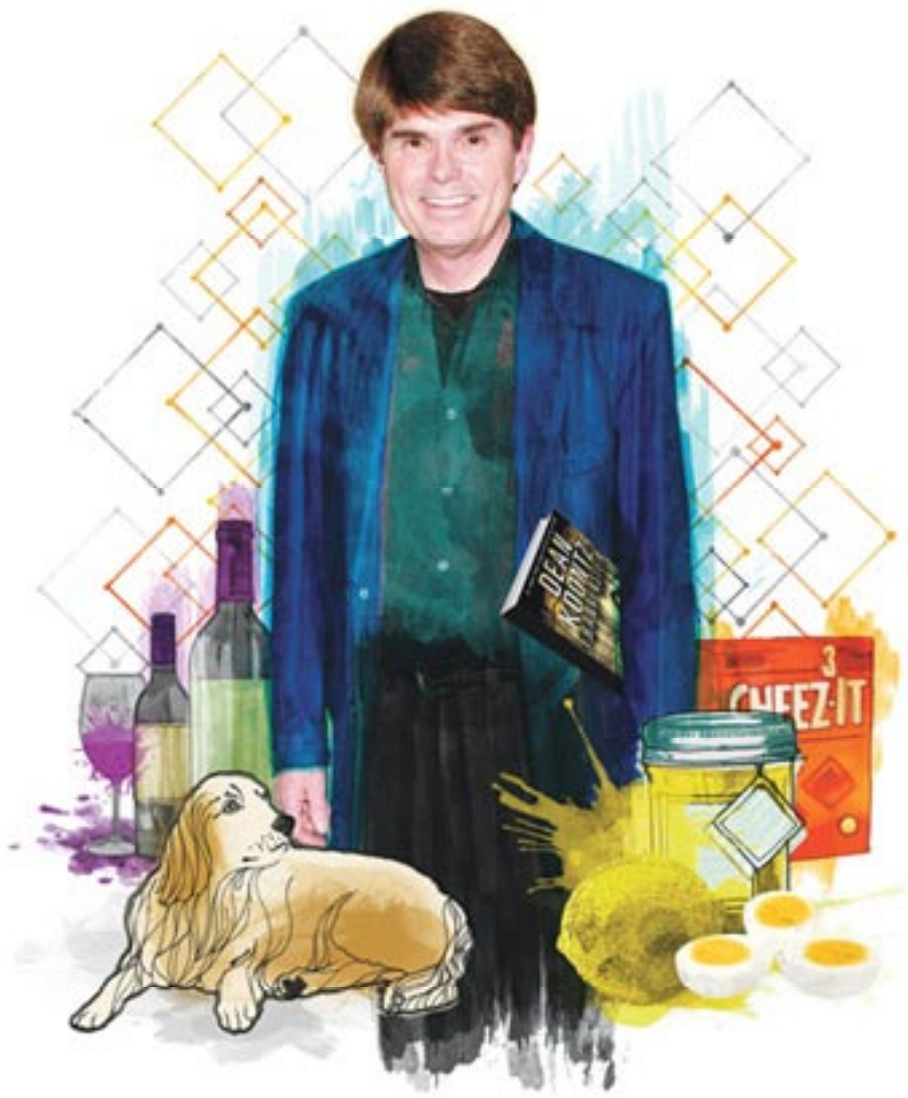


Dean Koontz

novelist

The master of suspense (he's had 27 number one books on the *New York Times* best-seller lists) guarantees more thrills with his latest novel, *Frankenstein: Lost Souls*. It's the newest installment in his saga that retells the classic monster tale. What keeps him busy during his downtime? Koontz is an avid wine collector with an impressive home cellar and tasting room.
INTERVIEW BY BEKAH WRIGHT



The author reveals his penchant for Cabernet, the food that scares him, and the culinary importance of ceramic dogs.

What's your favorite dish to make at home?

I am the Inspector Clouseau of cooks. With merely a spatula, I can destroy a kitchen. I restrict myself to sandwiches. My favorite is thinly sliced filet mignon *au jus* with chopped peperoncini and melted provolone on a French roll.

Tell us about the wine cellar you built in your house.

Gerda [his wife of 43 years] and I designed an Art Deco wine cellar with a lacquered-copper vault ceiling, stacked-stone walls, and high-gloss redwood cabinetry. A frameless glass wall with a glass door separates the cellar from the tasting room. When we entertain, I feel like I'm in a movie with William Powell and Myrna Loy.

What's your drink of choice?

At home or out, it's always a smooth but robust Cabernet Sauvignon: Lancaster, Robert Mondavi, Far Niente, Cakebread, Caymus...

Do you base travel plans on the wines you'll find in that region?

We don't travel much. When we do, our concern is that we can take our golden retriever, Anna, and eat where she's welcome at a patio table. She's better behaved than I am, and finer than any wine.

Where did you have your most memorable meal?

At a benefit for the James Beard House at Zov's Bistro in Tustin, California. Julia Child and Emeril Lagasse were there. Zov [Karamardian] prepared a nine-course dinner to

die for. I didn't die, but with every bite, I felt as if I were already in paradise.

What would people be surprised to find in your kitchen?

Me. Aside from that, antique ceramic statues of dogs. Dogs make me happy, and when I'm happy, I digest well.

Name three things that you always like to keep in your refrigerator.

Hard-boiled eggs, lemon marmalade, and salsa. I don't eat all of them at the same time, though.

What would you say are the perfect snacks?

Cold roast turkey, Swiss cheese, and sweet pickles. Or an entire box of Cheez-Its if it's been a rotten day.

What would you never eat again?

Shoofly pie. As a kid, I had it at Amish restaurants. Thirty years later, seeing it on a menu, I tried a piece. My teeth ached for days, and I had nightmares about being force-fed molasses.

Any favorite comfort foods?

My wife's macaroni and cheese and her spectacular baked corn. When you have them at the same meal, you follow dinner with an arterial lavage at a medical facility, but the treat is worth it.

What's for dinner tonight?

A cheese and pepperoni omelet, potatoes au gratin, sautéed cauliflower, and sugar snap peas. The pepperoni allows me to justify a Cabernet Sauvignon. ■