



napa valley vintners

Press Release

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Optimism and Revenues High at Napa Valley Vintners' Charity Wine Auction

30th Annual Auction Napa Valley Up 49% Over Previous Year

As the final gavel fell, more than \$8.5 million was raised with fun, excitement and optimism as the keywords for the Napa Valley Vintners' (NVV) 30th Auction Napa Valley—The American Wine Classic. The annual charity wine auction was held this past weekend in Napa Valley. Paddles were raised high and raised often at Saturday's Live Auction, the centerpiece of the renowned fundraiser that took place at Meadowood Napa Valley in St. Helena on a postcard-perfect afternoon.

The highlight of the day by all measures was Fund a Need, which raised more than \$1 million for children's health and wellness programs in Napa County. Long-time auctioneer Fritz Hatton, along with his freshman partner David Reynolds called on bidders to offer cash commitments, with no prize to be won other than the pride taken for providing for programs like children's immunizations, literacy and mentoring programs, and protection from abuse. Normally just a paddle raise, this year, an old-fashioned lemonade sale where local children festooned in bright yellow t-shirts helped first-hand with the fundraising.

After the initial round of pledges were recorded, bidders tossed wooden chips with dollar amounts on one side and their bidder number on the other into tin buckets carried by the youngsters resulting in thunderous clanking under the auction tent. After several other lots were sold in the auction, vintner-bidder Rick Jones of Jones Family Vineyards asked to reopen Fund a Need bidding with a \$100,000 offering from his family's foundation. Others joined in which brought the final Fund a Need tally to more than \$1 million and included donations large and small from bidders, vintners, volunteers and even attending media.

"I think the auction week might be a metaphor for the economy and the wine industry. It had been unseasonably rainy in the days leading up to the event, with dark clouds looming overhead. But the spirit of the attendees gathering to raise money for charity and celebrate with wine could not be dampened. When it was time to get to the bidding, the sun came out—bidders were happy to be here and were generous," said Bruce Cakebread, president of the NVV's board of directors.

Organizers created a daytime gathering for the Saturday event so as to enjoy the natural beauty of the Napa Valley, and guests were thrilled with the new, more casual format. “We had a spectacular weekend—a perfect Napa Valley experience where longtime friends of the auction returned to spend time with the vintners and their fellow bidders, and opened their wallets for the scores of non-profit programs that will benefit from the funds raised this weekend,” said Beth Novak Milliken of Spottswoode Estate Vineyard and Winery. She, along with her mother Mary Novak, presided over the year-long planning as honorary chairs

The auction launched with a unique lot of more than 30 magnums titled “What’s New,” and was an offering from the many new-to-the-association member wineries along with the original artwork from this year’s auction poster. Lot 1 was purchased by returning bidder Jose Nazar of Los Angeles.

Excitement mounted at lot 16’s bidding for Colgin Cellars’ offering of eight magnum bottles of Cariad. Initially there were four bidders battling for the lot, driving the price to \$250,000 when auctioneers asked Ann Colgin if she wanted to quadruple her offering to allow for four successful bidders, which she and the bidders all agreed to, and the gavel eventually closed at \$1 million for the expanded offering.

MK Koo of Hong Kong returned to Auction Napa Valley said, “I am always happy to come to Napa Valley. I was first introduced to the Auction in 1995 and I keep coming back because of the friendships created with the people who are here. And, it’s an opportunity to taste and toast with the best wines.” As for his successful \$200,000 bid on a single 6-liter bottle Screaming Eagle, “It was top of my list, first because it’s a great wine, and second because it’s easy to carry home!”

The top 12 live lots were: Fund a Need, Colgin Cellars, Harlan Estate, Arietta and Hudson Vineyards, Beringer Vineyards, Shafer Vineyards, Dalla Valle Vineyards, Spottswoode Estate Vineyard and Winery, Casa Piena, Araujo Estate Wines, NVV in partnership with Lexus, and Screaming Eagle.

Another winning bidder of the day, seven-time attendee Harry Lange of Boston said “This is always an exciting, classic event,” and he takes away the Yountville Appellation and Far Niente lots as his prizes this year.

The Friday Festivities

Bidders from across the country and around the globe joined the four-day event. Friday featured the ever-popular Taste Napa Valley and Barrel Auction at the historic Rubicon Estate in Rutherford. With more than 100 wineries pouring white wines along side 60 of the region’s top restaurateurs and artisanal food producers around the grand fountain, the attendees were entertained by a trio of vintner rock bands.

One vintner band member, David Duncan of Silver Oak Cellars said, “Everybody wants to be a rock star, but I’m far more nervous about performing in front of these folks than I am about making wine.” Entertainment chair of this year’s auction steering committee

was Jeff Smith of Hourglass Winery, whose band Wrist Rocket performed as well. “We had a ball,” said Smith, and the crowd got really into the music and the wine—we had a great time.”

Inside the caves at Rubicon Estate, 100 vintners offered barrel-futures, mostly Cabernet Sauvignon and red wine blends, thieved right from the barrel for tasting before bidding. In the end just over \$1 million was raised from the 1,000 cases. Due to space constraints, 20% fewer barrels could be offered to bidders, so the income is significant that it remained at historic highs with fewer offerings. The top selling barrel lot for the day was from Shafer Vineyards which sold for just under \$59,000.

Rubicon’s General Manager Larry Stone said, “We were honored to open up the estate and be the host location for the Friday festivities. As one of the seven founding members of the NVV in 1944, being part of the 30th anniversary celebration was a great opportunity for us.”

The NVV was cautiously optimistic in March, when tickets went on sale on the 31st and the a la carte Friday event tickets sold out in less than 30 minutes online. Full four-day packages sold at a brisk rate not seen in a few years, and the event was full in record time.

Quintessential Food Lover’s Weekend

In addition to the private parties on Thursday and Friday nights with the vintners, and the offerings at the Marketplace at Friday’s Taste Napa Valley, 16 top chefs gathered to create lunch and dinner for Live Auction guests on the lawn at Meadowood.

The gentlemen’s team created a travel-around luncheon on the fairway as guests arrived and included the talents of: Octavio Becerra of Palate, Los Angeles; Jean Joho of Everest, Chicago; Thomas Keller of The French Laundry, Napa Valley; Christopher Kostow of The Restaurant at Meadowood, Napa Valley; Lars Kronmark of The CIA Greystone, Napa Valley; Paul LeMieux of Auberge du Soleil, Napa Valley; Walter Manzke, formerly of Church and State, Los Angeles; Michael Mina of Michael Mina, San Francisco; Richard Reddington of Redd, Napa Valley; Frank Stitt of Highlands Bar and Grill, Birmingham, AL; Michael Tusk of Quince, San Francisco.

As the bidding concluded, the evening’s festivities kicked-in with a Ladies’ Night theme with top women chefs—including: Suzanne Goin of Lucques, Los Angeles; Carrie Nahabedian of Naha, Chicago; Melissa Perello of Frances, San Francisco; Elizabeth Prueitt of Tartine, San Francisco; Suzanne Tracht of Jar, Los Angeles—with a family-style supper under the stars. Then, to add that last bit of shimmer to a sparkling evening with the ladies, the girl-band The Bangles performed and had everyone on their feet dancing to songs like their hit “Walk Like an Egyptian.”

The online E-Auction allowed bidders from around the globe to have a virtual Napa Valley experience by bidding and winning lots, even if they were not able to attend in person. More than 150 unique collections or large-format bottles of wine were offered.

Some up for bid included vintner-hosted meals, guest house stays and blending sessions. Online bidders hailed from Arizona, Illinois, Florida and all points across the US to Canada, Japan and China.

This year Auction Napa Valley was viral and the social media networks were a buzz with activities as everyone was tweeting, Facebooking and blogging about their experiences and insights into all things Auction Napa Valley. There were moment to moment updates from the Friday events at Rubicon, vintner dinner parties valley wide and robust play-by-play posts from the Live Auction on Saturday. On twitter, #AuctionNV is the hash tag.

Auction 2011

Planning has already begun for next year, where once again, Auction Napa Valley will convene the first full weekend in June, 2 through 5, 2011.

Auction Napa Valley by the Numbers

2010 is the 30th annual event, founded in 1981

The first auction raised an unheard of \$140,000

151 E-Auction Lots

100 Barrel Auction Lots (each barrel is 10 individual case offerings = 1,000 cases)

41 Live Auction Lots

486 successful bidders overall

Attendance at Taste Napa Valley at Rubicon Estate = 2,000 including bidders and vintners

Attendance at The Live Auction at Meadowood Napa Valley = 850 including bidders and vintners

More than 100 media attended from across the country and around the world

More than 600 community volunteers

Auction Napa Valley remains the world's most successful charity wine auction.

About Auction Napa Valley

Auction Napa Valley is the most successful charity wine auction in the world and to date has given \$90 million to scores of non-profit programs. The annual fundraiser is hosted by the Napa Valley Vintners, the non-profit trade association representing nearly 400 wineries in the renowned Napa Valley. The auction was founded in 1981 under the vision of Robert and Margrit Mondavi and has grown to be a four-day celebration of wine, food and fundraising held the first weekend in June.

About Napa Valley Vintners

The Napa Valley Vintners is the non-profit trade association responsible for promoting and protecting the Napa Valley appellation as the premier winegrowing region. From seven founding members in 1944, today the association represents nearly 400 Napa Valley wineries and collectively is a leader in the world-wide wine industry. To learn more about our region and its legendary American wines, visit www.napavintners.com