



napa valley vintners

Press Release

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History-Making \$100 Million Milestone Surpassed as Napa Vintners Bring in \$7.3 Million at Charity Event

Rain Cannot Dampen Enthusiasm at 31st Annual Auction Napa Valley

St Helena, CA—For the first time in its 31 year history, rain—and lots of it—fell on the main event of Napa Valley's renowned charity wine auction held on the lawn of Meadowood Napa Valley in St Helena, Saturday, June 4. While Mother Nature opened up the skies and let it pour, the bidders rallied together opening their wallets and pouring \$7.3 million into auction revenue that will provide for the region's charities.

Perennial bidders John and Sandra Thompson of Woodside, CA were caught up in the excitement of the rainy Auction Napa Valley. Mr. Thompson said, "What was most interesting about this year's Auction was that, in light of the weather, people turned out and really, really opened up and had a good time. The weather didn't seem to deter the bidding at all."

Mrs. Thompson: "Actually I think it brought people together—and they had fun with it."

Mr. Thompson: "So it was an amazing experience—absolutely amazing."

The fairway at Meadowood, which has served as the Live Auction's venue since its inception in 1981, has seen typically beautiful weather with daytime highs in the low 80s most often—and even a few notable warmer years—but never rain and temperatures in the mid-50s in June, which is typically one of the three driest months of the entire year in Napa Valley.

The member vintners offered up forty lots at the Live Auction on Saturday for bidding that followed the ultimate Napa Valley picnic prepared by Napa Valley star chef Cindy Pawlcyn with inspiration from her three iconic restaurants: Go Fish, Cindy's Backstreet Kitchen and Mustards Grill. Originally planning to offer open-air seating, the event organizers quickly rallied to find additional tents to create complete coverage from arrival to the main tent. So while heads were dry, the lawn turned in spots to mud and the well-planned auction fashion included rubber boots of every style and color. All of the planned 800 attendees joined the festivities.

The Live Auction opened with a flair as professional dancers took to the stage to entice bidders to raise their paddles on a collection of wine in magnum from dozens of Napa Valley producers that were packaged with professional ballroom dance lessons and a trip to the next season's finale of "Dancing with the Stars" in Hollywood. The lot sold for \$70,000 to a bidder from Menlo Park, CA.

Hands-down the most heartfelt lot of the day was the one with no prize to be won other than the goodwill of helping provide for programs for children's health and wellness: the Fund a

Need Lot 24. Carrying balloons and cupcakes for a high stakes bake sale were 25 children who have benefitted from the wellness funding. Taking the stage with the youngsters was the Rombauer Family, 2011 Auction Napa Valley honorary chairs, led by patriarch Koerner Rombauer. A total of 132 bidders brought in a total of \$1.1 million including five \$100,000 bids.

Auctioneers Fritz Hatton and Ursula Hermacinski partnered again on the main stage leading bidders and working their magic. Bidding launched into six figures soon in the proceedings and by Lot 10 from Chiarello Family Vineyards and Staglin Family Vineyards the bidding closed at \$300,000—and then doubled with two successful bidders capturing a duplicated lot of wine and culinary experiences bringing a total of \$600,000 for the lot.

Doubling down became a theme to create the top lots for the day, occurring again at Lot 15's offering from BOND with two bidders doubling the \$120,000 bid to \$240,000—then again at Lot 35 with Raymond Vineyard's offering bringing \$195,000 times two at \$390,000. Proud, first-time father of newborn twins and owner of Raymond Vineyards, Jean Charles Boisset was on-hand to toast the winning bidders. And just shy of the final lot, Lot 39 from Chappellet Vineyard and Winery sparked bidding with yet another doubling with two \$200,000 bids bringing \$400,000 to the tally. Along with these lots, offerings from Opus One, Lokoya, Rombauer Vineyards, Shafer Vineyards, Napa Valley Vintners in partnership with *Robb Report*, Araujo Estate Wines and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars rounded out the top ten live lots.

A family-style dinner inspired by his Italian heritage prepared by vintner and renowned Napa Valley Chef Michael Chiarello made for a most memorable culinary extravaganza, undeterred by the weather. Dancing under the tent continued into the night and the skies cleared enough to allow for a fireworks display on the distant fairway.

The highlight for this year's auction, before the bidding even began, was knowing that this was the year the Napa Valley Vintners would reach and exceed the milestone in giving of \$100 million to the community for healthcare, youth service and affordable housing non-profit programs in Napa County.

"Even if the auction had not taken place we knew we would be giving a minimum of \$5 million to the charities supported by auction grants," said NVV Board President Kathleen Heitz Myers of Heitz Wine Cellar. "Back in 2007 our board made what we called our 5 x 5 Community Promise—that we would give a minimum of \$5 million per year for the following five years no matter whether the auction raised that much or even if the auction didn't occur for some reason. We felt it was the responsible thing to do in offering a minimum funding guideline so that grants recipients could better plan their programs. We were lucky to have been able to surpass that amount in giving, significantly, over three of the past four years. We knew no matter what, we would top the \$100 million threshold this year."

"Everyone bonded together in the rain for a great event. And we're so thrilled to reach the milestone of \$100 million. To be able to give to the community in such a major way—*that's* what the Napa Valley is all about," said vintner Bruce Cakebread.

When asked how the rain affected this year's Auction, Stag's Leap Wine Cellar's Nicki Pruss replied, "What rain?" and continued, "It just created a whole new backdrop for our 31st Auction Napa Valley. The people here at Meadowood—all the great volunteers are totally soldiering on and everyone's contributing to making this a great experience."

The Barrel Auction and Marketplace

The part of Auction Napa Valley that truly sets this auction apart from the many charity wine auctions around the country is the Barrel Auction held this year on Friday, June 3, at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St Helena. Wine drawn directly from barrels to taste is offered as futures in classic Dutch-style bidding. Each barrel represents ten cases of wine, each sold as a separate lot. With 100 barrels representing 1,000 cases offered—the Barrel Auction captured \$1.2 million. The top barrel lot was Shafer Vineyards earning \$59,500, followed by Kongsgaard, Joseph Phelps Vineyards, ROY Estate, Crocker and Starr Wines, Darioush, Alpha Omega, Spottswoode Estate Vineyard and Winery, Pride Mountain Vineyards and Knights Bridge Winery rounding out the top ten.

In the ever-popular Marketplace, 2,000 attendees enjoyed wine from more than 100 wineries on the herb terrace at the CIA along with 45 artisan food purveyors and local restaurateurs.

New technology was in play throughout the day. Volunteers sporting t-shirts emblazoned with QR codes assisted on-site E-Auction bidders and sported iPads for bidding for those without mobile devices. Additionally the social media game known as SCVNGR offered a mobile scavenger hunt where players answered questions and took challenges on Napa Valley and Auction trivia to win prizes.

The Global E-Auction

With more than 150 lots of wine collections, large format bottles, cellar builders and vintner-hosted getaways to Napa Valley, participation in the online version of Auction Napa Valley was at an all-time high. Bidders hailed from as far away as China, Japan, Canada and the UK to all points across the US—all dueling with those in attendance at the event in Napa Valley as well. At the close of the E-Auction on Sunday, June 5 at 6pm, tallies of \$359,000 brought 93 successful bidders. More than half of all successful bidders, 55 in total, were virtual attendees bidding from Mexico, Hong Kong, Canada and across the US. The offering from Domaine Chandon was the top earning E-Lot bringing \$16,600 followed by offerings from Chateau Montelena; a joint lot among Etude, St Clement Vineyards and Stags' Leap Winery; Silver Oak Cellars with Twomey Cellars; Vineyard 29; Pine Ridge Winery; Appellation St Helena wineries; Stags Leap District wineries; V Sattui Winery; Frog's Leap; and Sherwin Family Vineyards.

Hospitality the Key to the Napa Valley Experience

The grand Auction events are the signatures of the annual June fundraiser, but the 45 intimate dinner parties that kick things off on Thursday and Friday nights--held from Carneros to Calistoga--make this the "must-attend" event for consumers each year and why Auction Napa Valley has such a loyal following.

"Offering our guests the renowned hospitality of our vintners in intimate settings in their homes and in their wineries is what really sets this event apart from all others," said KR Rombauer. "Our vintners are known for their welcoming of visitors throughout the year—but this weekend each year is the best of the best."

About Auction Napa Valley

Auction Napa Valley is the most successful charity wine auction in the world and when funds are distributed from the 2011 event in October will surpass more than \$100 million to scores of non-profit programs. The annual fundraiser is hosted by the Napa Valley Vintners. 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 the 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 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.

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