

SUSANA BATES FOR DREW ALTZER PHOTOGRAPHY



Past performers have included Joshua Bell; last year's festival feted Sophia Loren (below).

SOLE SURVIVOR

Now in its 10th year, Napa Valley's Festival del Sole is still going strong.

By FRED ALBERT

Wine is produced around the globe, from Portland to Portugal. But no other wine region has an event quite like Festival del Sole. The 10-day cultural celebration invites acclaimed artists from the worlds of music, dance and drama to perform in informal, iconic Napa Valley settings seasoned with the romance of fine food and wine.

"It's not just seeing great artists—you can see great artists in other places—but great artists in intimate settings with the beauty of Napa Valley and the hospitality of the vintners," says president and festival director **Rick Walker**, who cofounded the annual event with Barrett Wissman back in 2006.

This is the 10th year for Festival del Sole (the name is Italian, so the final word is pronounced "so-LAY"), which is scheduled to include some 60 events between July 17 and July 26. The festival has earned such a devoted following that many locals schedule their summer travels around it, and willingly pay as much as \$10,000 for an unrestricted festival pass. (All-access weekend passes are \$3,000, single concerts start at \$39—and some performances are free.) If culture stimulates your appetite, most performances are followed by elegant repasts at local restaurants and wineries. There's also Taste of Napa, offering samples from 70 wineries, restaurants and food artisans. (This year you can even burn off those extra calories at a 5K and 10K "Sun Run.")

Like a father who is reluctant to name his favorite child, Walker hesitates to disclose which events he's anticipating the most this summer. But when

pressed, he cites **Deborah Voigt's** opening night appearance, and performances by Dmitri Hvorostovsky, **Herb Alpert** and **Lani Hall**, and screen star **Kevin Spacey**, who'll be singing and swinging through the Great American Songbook at the Festival Gala July 19 at Meadowood. (Proceeds from the gala help support arts education in the community.)

The *Nob Hill Gazette* is sponsoring the Patron Dinner at Quintessa July 25, which will include an appearance by a surprise entertainer.

Each year's festival is dedicated to an outstanding figure in the arts. "We've saved the 10th anniversary to dedicate to **Ann and Gordon Getty**, who have been true friends and supporters since the beginning," says Walker. Fittingly, the festival will present the world premiere of new choral works by Gordon Getty July 18 at Napa's Lincoln Theater. Ann Getty will be honored with a luncheon showing of **Brunello Cucinelli's** fall collection presented by Neiman Marcus at Hall Wines.

Looking ahead to the festival's next decade, Walker says he'd welcome a return visit by **Renée Fleming**, and would like to embrace other forms of musical expression. "I think it would be interesting to bring **Gloria Estefan**, **Sting**—serious artists who expand what we're doing. I'd like to have **Patti LaPone**, **Joyce DiDonato**, **Isabel Leonard**. This is only 10 years, and there are many years to come." ■

To learn more, visit festivaldelsole.org.



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EAT

One of the benefits of attending Festival del Sole is being able to avail yourself of all the fine dining opportunities in the region. If you can't snag a reservation at the French Laundry, food writer James Stolic recommends these other culinary highlights:

Bouchon: Thomas Keller's Yountville bistro serves traditional French fare amid elegant, Old World surroundings; thorbaskeller.com.

Ad Hoc: Keller's casual dining spot down the street features classic American comfort food; thomaskeller.com.

La Toque: Ken Frank's Michelin-starred menu in Napa emphasizes fresh, local ingredients; latoque.com.

Goose & Gander: Rustic American food in a publike setting in St. Helena; goosegander.com.

Harvest Table: Restaurateur Charlie Palmer just added dining to the venerable Harvest Inn, with an emphasis on locally sourced ingredients; harvestblenapa.com.

STAY

Calistoga Ranch: For secluded opulence, hide away in a free-standing guest lodge tucked under a grove of ancient oaks, enjoying an outdoor shower, inside-out fireplace and hot tub. Don't miss the chicken coop lit with chandeliers; calistogaranch.aubergeresorts.com.

Harvest Inn by Charlie Palmer: The master chef's divine St. Helena resort celebrates amazing cuisine, great wine and opulent spa treatments. Ask for a room with a Jacuzzi, and don't miss the Fireside Friday and Saturday nights with local winemakers; harvestinn.com.

Silverado Resort and Spa: A celebrated California landmark for more than 140 years, with two PGA championship courses, outdoor massages and Thomas Keller's new pop-up restaurant, Ad Lib; silveradoresort.com.

The Westin Verasa Napa: Perfect for those traveling with families, it mixes luxury and living, with full kitchens in many of the suites. Stay at the resort and experience its Michelin-starred restaurant, La Toque, order room service, or dine al fresco poolside; westinnapa.com.

Villagio Inn & Spa: Yountville is one of the most Michelin-starred cities in the world, and Tuscan-inspired Villagio Inn consistently ranks as one of the best places to stay. Retreat into your plush room with its four-poster bed and fireplace, or relax in a private candlelit spa suite; villagio.com.

—Teresa Rodriguez



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