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# Festival Napa Valley: A Treat for All the Senses

*By Jennifer Boden*



In its 11th year, Festival Napa Valley has emerged as one of the region's most spectacular celebrations. Consider the scope of their offerings: 60 events, ten days of food, wine, music and dance, spread throughout the lush Napa Valley landscape. Amazing chefs

partner with some of the finest wineries to produce unimaginable feasts.



*Photo: Bob McClenahan*

Festival Napa Valley is truly in a class of its own, combining luxury with a remarkable mission of raising money to help fund art programs in Napa County public schools and providing free or affordable access to exceptional performances to local residents. This year Festival Napa Valley raised more than 1.3 million dollars at a high-energy live auction featuring a dozen once-in-a-lifetime luxury lots. The auction was held at Meadowood Napa Valley and the highest bid of the evening was \$180k for a private performance by Burt Bacharach and dinner by Tyler Florence hosted by Jean-Charles Boisset and Gina Gallo.

For some, this event would be the pure definition of heaven. Here's a look at a few of my favorite moments.





*Photo: Paul E. Richardson*

## **Vintner's Luncheon at Grgich Hills Estate**

Forty years ago, Miljenko “Mike” Grgich turned the wine world upside down when his 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay beat the best France had to offer in the famous Judgment of Paris blind tasting. It made Grgich’s international reputation as a winemaker.

So it was altogether fitting that Grgich Hills host a sumptuous vintner’s luncheon and concert by the baroque chamber music quartet Les Violettes led by Mike’s daughter, harpsichordist Violet Grgich.

Immediately following the concert, Violet hosted a French-style luncheon, featuring the winery’s award-winning offerings paired with stellar cuisine, which included a tasty Silverado summer strawberry dessert.



*Photo: Bob McClenahan*

## **Some Enchanted Evening**

Later in the evening I visited St. Helena's V Sattui Winery, a stunning family-owned property in Napa Valley with a sprawling estate surrounded by manicured gardens, lawns and 35 acres of vineyards. The night began with a concert from Gino Quilico with his ensemble TrioSphère, who performed a variety of romantic Italian songs – with birds chirping in the background perched atop the high branches of giant oak trees.



*Photo: Bob McClenahan*

Dinner followed in the impressive Barrel Room, starring cuisine by Stefano Masanti, the Michelin-starred founder, visionary and chef of one of northern Italy's most beloved restaurants, Il Cantinone. V. Sattui's award-winning Director of Winemaking Brooks Painter selected the wines for the delicious meal.

## **Full Moon Party**

Frequent festival patrons were not surprised to see iconic violist

Sarah Chang on the docket. She joined Festival Orchestra Napa for a thrilling concert that included The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires – a marvelous fusion of tango and classical music.



*Photo: Paul E. Richardson*

Following the concert, many guests headed to the Harvest Inn for an exclusive after party featuring wines from Whitehall Lane, delectable hors d'oeuvres, great music and a fire dancing performance on the Harvest Patio, which faced acres of sunset lit vineyards.



## *Cliff Lede Vineyards*

### **Lunch at Cliff Lede Vineyards**

Another highlight was the Vintner's Luncheon at Cliff Lede. Drawing on grapes from estate vineyards named after rock-'n-roll songs, Cliff Lede produces handcrafted Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon. The flagship wine, Poetry Cabernet Sauvignon, has been called "bottled perfection".

The party started in the White Room where guests enjoyed select vintages to a soundtrack of carefully curated sonic gems from Lede's personal music collection.

Lunch was served family-style on the expansive and art-adorned patio, paired with the estate's wines. Guests were served wild salmon filet and New York "Manhattan" steak with roasted summer vegetables. "My wife and I certainly enjoyed the festival. The variety of concerts, the food and wines were impressive. We'll definitely be attending all the events next year and have already bought tickets for 2017", said Bill Urbach, Scottsdale Resident.



## *Napa Valley Lodge*

### **Relax in Charming Yountville**

In between events, Napa Valley Lodge in Yountville is always a great place to recharge, especially when the events are close by. Set within a picture-postcard vineyard, this Yountville hotel is a favorite of mine. Whether you're staying for a romantic celebration or sharing the camaraderie of a wine-centric getaway with friends, the Napa Valley Lodge stays true to its simple yet sophisticated setting with an upscale farmhouse vibe steps from Yountville's coveted delights.

"Festival Napa Valley is a one of kind experience for food, wine and art lovers. It attracts people to our region from all over the world. We enjoy it when guests share their favorite festival events upon returning to the Lodge", said Nancy Morgan, Lodge Sales Director.



*Photo: Bob McClenahan*





*Sophia Loren*

## **So Much More**

It would be hard to encapsulate the depth and breadth of Festival Napa Valley in a single article. There was a delightful evening with Broadway icon Kristin Chenoweth at Castello di Amorosa. The next morning there was the 5 and 10k Sun Run. A few days later, Neiman Marcus presented the Brunello Cucinelli Fall Collection at Solage Calistoga. Toward the end of the festival the ever-beautiful Sophia Loren stunned during her visit to Far Niente Winery to celebrate Margrit Mondavi. The final day, guests indulged in a wine country brunch at the tranquil Auberge du Soleil.

The list of wine luncheons and dinners was enough to make any foodie's mouth water: St. Supery, Robert Mondavi, Hall, Alpha Omega, Peju and on and on. Each one pairs their fine wines with meals so amazing you have to stop and ask yourself: How can anything be this good?

“For the past decade, the festival has been instrumental in building Napa Valley’s reputation as a cultural destination. Art lovers from around the globe return year after year for an extraordinary experience that only Napa Valley delivers,” said President & CEO

Rick Walker.

Alas, the festival has closed for the year. But on the bright side, summer 2017 is a lot closer than you think. Festival Napa Valley – there's just nothing else like it.

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