

OREGON WINEPRESS

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PURSUING PERFECTION
IN CRAFTING
VINS CLAIRS

BASE INSTINCTS

ALSO

WINE COUNTRY JOYRIDES
CHARDONNAY CELEBRATION
HIGGINS MARKS 25 YEARS
CELLAR SELECTS: PINOT GRIS
CALENDAR AND MORE!



PHOTO BY JOHN VALLS

LEFT: Chris Hermann of 00 Wines excitedly wins an auction lot at the 2019 Classic Wines Auction at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. **BELOW:** The top auction item, a Mercedes-Benz 2019 550 SUV.

AROUND THE BLOCK

Classic Wines Auction marks 35 in the Rose City

BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

Music filled the air, while people in well-tailored tuxedos and long flowing gowns meandered through the hallways and top-floor ballroom of the Oregon Convention Center on March 2.

For 35 years, the Classic Wines Auction has raised nearly \$50 million for local nonprofits. This success is heightened by the event's selection as one of Wine Spectator's Top 10 charity wine auctions in the U.S. for 2018. This

year, the celebration featured a chic reception, silent auction, multi-course dinner paired with exceptional wines from around the world, live auction and a fun, lively after-party.

Andrew Plummer, the dealer operator of Mercedes-Benz in Beaverton, says, "This is the largest single-night auction in the Portland area, and it's fun. I have never seen so much fantastic wine all in one spot for such great causes."

Some 800 guests attended the 2019 affair, which raised a total of

\$3 million for five local nonprofit partners: Metropolitan Family Services, New Avenues for Youth, Friends of the Children-Portland, YWCA Clark County and Unity Center for Behavioral Health. Throughout the dinner, video interviews played on the overhead screens showcasing how lives were changed through the work of each organization.

Before the live auction, guests sipped Champagne and mingled while placing bids on more than 200 silent auction lots consisting of wine tours, concerts, plays, trips and more. Many wines were available for sampling, and several renowned local chefs

staffed tables offering delectable appetizers. Music by DJ Short Change added to the festivity of the evening.

LoveBomb Go-Go began the dinner and live auction with spirited music and an acrobatic performance. Dinner comprised of four courses led by Chef Allan Wambaa of pacificwild catering. The first three dishes were paired with two or three selections from Burgundy, Napa Valley, Walla Walla Valley and the Willamette Valley. The plates included a jumbo prawn and Dungeness crab tartare, duck breast with pomegranate citrus coulis, lamb osso bucco with risotto and a variety of tasty cakes for dessert.

The live auction dazzled with bidders attempting to win 30 lots, including exciting vacations, extraordinary wine trips and a 2019 550 Mercedes-Benz G-Class SUV driven by Seahawk Super Bowl champion quarterback Russell Wilson — see sidebar below for some final bids. These lots brought in exhilarating sums of money, but the success of the Auction belongs to everyone who participated in major and minor ways.

Every year, the Auction selects Honorary Wine Ambassadors recognized for their first-class wines. These wineries sponsor a one-of-a-kind experience show-

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CWA's Top-Dollar 2019 Auction Lots

Mercedes-Benz of Portland and Beaverton together donated the special 2019 550, plus a VIP trip for four with a meet-and-greet with Russell Wilson at the Seahawks' training camp: **\$157,500.**

Matt and Jasmin Felton assembled an elaborate trip to Sonoma County: **\$100,000.**

Modern Adventure contributed a tour to Rome and Tuscany, including a private meeting with Pope Francis, Michelin-star dinners, etc.: **\$70,000.**

Several benefactors collaborated to create a trip to Monaco for the Formula 1 Grand Prix: **\$70,000.**

Select donors gave a Northern Lights adventure in Finland that sold twice: **\$58,000 each.**

Rombauer Vineyards donated a cruise, airfare, two excursions and more: **\$16,000.**



PHOTO BY JOHN VALLS

CHARDONNAY

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nose, the older wine tasted simply delicious. The classy 2016 showcased a polished, fruity nose and palate. In the past, Etzel harvested at higher sugar levels but now picks the grapes around 20 brix.

Kate Payne-Brown contributed the 2010 and 2015 Stoller Family Estate Reserve Chardonnays. The 2010, while showing its age, still drank well. I enjoyed the butterscotch on the palate that emerged with some air. The younger example had a lovely bright nose and round flavors. Payne-Brown underscored Stoller's approach of exploiting its warmer site to get more fruit but balancing it with good acidity.

The panelists shared their histories of growing Chardonnay and views on producing a wine from it. They compared picking decisions, percentage of new oak, use of concrete and amphorae for fermentation, oxygen management and closures. The consensus, Payne-Brown advised, "farm for ageability," and, as Brittan recommended, practice "winemaking with intent." He also acknowledged "Chardonnay has been the greatest teacher of all the wines I've worked with over the years..."

THE GRAND TASTING

Fifty featured wineries, including the five mentioned above, shared samples of their Chardonnays accompanied by hors d'oeuvres. I tasted 26 wines from 25 producers. Many were still young yet augured a promising future. Not all the bottles were at optimal temperature nor had enough time to breathe. Nevertheless, in my opinion, these 13 stood out: the scintillating 00 Wines 2017 VGW Chardonnay; the distinctive Bergström 2016 Sigrid Chardonnay; the balanced Domaine Divio 2016 Chardonnay; the lovely Domaine Drouhin Oregon 2016 Roserock Chardonnay; the tasty Dukes 2015 Pearl Chardonnay; the promising EIEIO 2016 Yates Conwill Vineyard Chardonnay; the intriguing Elk Cove 2016 Goodrich Chardonnay; the toasty Flâneur 2016 La Belle Promenade Chardonnay; the really good Johan Vineyards 2015 Visdom Chardonnay; the bright Lavinea 2016 Elton Vineyard Chardonnay; the beautiful Lingua Franca 2017 Estate Chardonnay; the lovely VIDON 2017 Estate Chardonnay; and the complex Winderlea 2016 Chardonnay.

REFLECTIONS

Ageability is a hallmark of most great wines. The panelists agreed the 2010 Chardonnays would last for, at least, another five years. I noted above my concerns about the Bethel Heights, though there may be some bottle variation at play. All were drinking well at more than eight years old and some will certainly go a few years longer. My greatest confidence lies in the following vintages: 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017. These are the bottles I've laid down for my grandchildren. Time will tell if we can keep our hands off until the kids are allowed to taste them. 🍷

CLASSIC WINES

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casing their winery while simultaneously representing a handful of the finest wine regions around the world — Cristom Vineyards and 00 Wines represented Oregon.

During the after-party, Hit Machine played energetic music into the later night hours while people danced, sipping on nightcaps and savoring chocolate from Moonstruck and treats from the s'mores cart.

While the main event is over, there are more opportunities in 2019 to support the nonprofit partners: Spring Winemaker Dinner Series, April 23–25 and 28; Corks + Forks, June 6; and the Fall Winemaker Dinner Series in November. 🍷

S.W. WASHINGTON

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check. Inside the historic hangar, winery booths will line walls, and down the center of the ample space, tables and chairs, plus a relaxation area, will be situated. A separate VIP area will occupy the east side of the building.

Brink says Savor Southwest Washington intends to play off the building's historic era with décor befitting its heyday. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the hangar was originally built in 1918 as a cut-up plant for aircraft spruce and re-purposed into a hangar about 1921. In addition to hangar doors, 24 windows running along the north and south walls allow light to flood the space year-round.

Steve Bader of Bader Beer & Wine Supply also will be on hand, demonstrating winemaking equipment for the budding enthusiast. A member

of the SWWA, Bader has been selling beer and wine supplies in Clark County since 1992.

Frequent wine tasters will be pleased to know the event will offer crystal stemware with wine glass lanyards, seating for 100 and additional surfaces such as stand-up bistro tables. Weather dependent, outdoor seating will be set up on the west side of the building.

An open-air photo booth and parting swag bags are just two ways the SWWA hopes to impart a sincere "thank you" to each visitor who comes out to spend an afternoon with them.

The SWWA officially formed in 2016 and has sponsored four recurring events since then: Valentine's Wine and Chocolate; Spring Wine Release; Labor Day Food and Wine Pairing; and Thanksgiving Weekend Barrel Tasting. Brink says last year the marketing committee determined it was time to take the lead in a wine event sponsored by the association, for the association and all about the members who make up the group.

Bringing supportive restaurateurs into the fold was a natural extension of what they've done on a smaller scale with the quarterly showcases. Tommy O's Pacific Rim Bistro, Farrar's Bistro, La Bottega, Elements Restaurant and Bleu Door Bakery will collaborate on the culinary portion of the experience to ensure all fare offered complements the wine and offers variety. A sixth, yet-to-be-disclosed restaurant is set to join the talented group.

Early bird tickets for Savor Southwest Washington Wine went on sale March 11 and can be purchased for \$65 through April 10. General entry tickets can be purchased for \$75, April 11–May 10. Day-of tickets will be sold for \$85 (unless sold out). For more information, visit swwwine.com. 🍷

HIGGINS

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other Portland restaurants — Jake's, Veritable Quandary, The Heathman — before his permanent home.

It's easy to see how the two have worked together for so long. The wine list perfectly complements the menu. From glass pours of Old World Arneis to powerhouse bottles of Oregon Pinot Noir, and Montrachet to Aussie Grenache, it's a healthy mix of quintessential and new discoveries.

It's no wonder Higgins is so revered

within the Northwest culinary community. He even has a beer named after him that's often on tap at his restaurant, brewed by Hair of the Dog. Many of the city's brightest chefs have worked under or collaborated with the Higgins team before setting out on their own.

"I'm thrilled to have played a role in the Portland food scene's coming of age," Higgins says. "In general, I like where it seems to be going. I hope to see the evolution and development of more food artisans to fuel the creative work of chefs around the region." 🍷

RED HILLS KITCHEN

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ner, the present lineup is a healthy mix of Oregon-minded surf and turf. There's seared sea scallops, a grilled New York strip with Pinot Noir sauce and charred pork shoulder with carrot mole and pesto. For those already missing the previous establishment, there's a house burger, served with tomato-bacon jam and charcoal-fired Jojo potato wedges.

The Atticus Hotel has made a point of showcasing local artisans under its roof. Its walls are adorned with original artwork by local painters and many of the furnishings, plants, snacks and coffee come from nearby producers. In that sense, Chef Jody's preference for local ingredients is right at home here. Red Hills Kitchen is a fitting hotel tenant and will delight many in wine country already familiar with the Red Hills Market model.

The new addition better matches the higher-end atmosphere of the Atticus Hotel, too. A luxury hotel shouldn't have any trouble fetching \$30 to \$40 for entrées. But the inclusion of a bar menu and to-go items will ensure that it's a welcoming mix of guests, tourists and locals, alike. So far, the transition has been pretty seamless.

"I love the intimacy of this beautiful space and the connection to the people coming to enjoy the bounty of Yamhill County," Jody says. 🍷