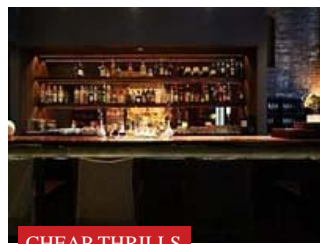


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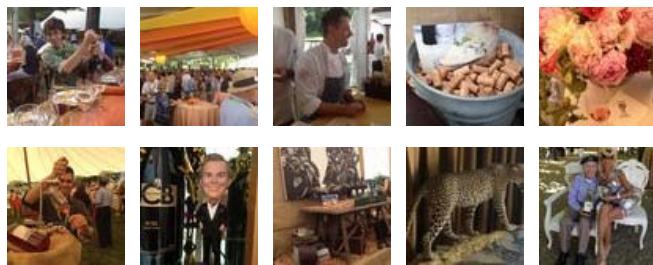
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## The Scene at Auction Napa Valley 2013

Tuesday, June 4, 2013, by [Courtney Cochran](#)



[Photos: [Courtney Cochran](#)]

**Hip Tastes** author and Eater contributor **Courtney Cochran** checked into this weekend's record-smashing **Auction Napa Valley** at **Meadowood** to bring us the scoop on the bad outfits, gustatory glitterati and auction highlights. With not one but ten **Top Chef** stars slinging apps before the auction, and more magnums of cult Napa cabs than could be counted, it was a weekend of delicious excess benefiting charitable causes in Napa County. Herein, the tastiest nuggets.

MEADOWOOD  
900 Meadowood Ln,  
St. Helena, CA 94574  
[GIANT MAP](#)

- WINE COUNTRY
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- CHRISTOPHER KOSTOV
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## EATER DATING

How about we... order cheeseburgers and

· **BARRELS & BLING:** Friday's Barrel Auction & Marketplace—a precursor to the live auction—was on an awkward footing at its new location, [Raymond Vineyards](#). Guests wandered in record heat between a convoluted network of four tents (and where were the big-name Napa chefs?). Raymond's owner, **Jean-Charles Boisset**, contributed one of the highlights, a deliciously audacious tasting lounge that was a riot of animal print and '70s-esque black lacquer and gold bling. A French transplant recently married to industry scion **Gina Gallo**, Boisset even had his own bobblehead doll on display, as if to say "Why so serious, wine business?"

· **PASTELS & PADDLES:** Saturday saw [Meadowood](#) overrun by 1,000 pastel-clad guests and volunteers for the record-shattering live portion of the auction. If **Lilly Pulitzer** and **Donald Trump** had a love child who split his time between Palm Beach and the O.C., this would be his wardrobe. Among the new bidders on the scene were a number of Asian wine enthusiasts and 20-somethings, including the Jackson daughters, **Julia and Katie**. The children of Barbara Banke and the late Jess Jackson of Jackson Family Estates took home two lots (and managed to sidestep any sartorial awkwardness). The top take of the evening? An unprecedented \$1.2 million for a single lot.

Offerings were heavy on money-can't-buy access to luxe enclaves, vintner dinners at the far corners of the globe, private jet transportation, use of rare fast cars and, of course, travel to destinations where more pastel-clad peeps hang (Kentucky Derby, anyone?)

· **FOOD FLAIR:** Auction chair **Shannon Staglin** explained that planners jettisoned the food trucks of yore in favor of a bevy of *Top Chef* stars (including **Kristen Kish**, **Richard Blais**, and **Hung Huynh**), who were on hand to sling everything from beef tongue to mini portions of seafood bisque to micro grilled cheese sandwiches. We like this upgrade. When the paddles finally went down, [Blackberry Farm's Joseph Lenn](#), a previous frontrunner for *Food & Wine's* People's Choice Best New Chef: Southeast, dished out a family-style dinner of Kentucky soy-glazed okra, chile-lime grilled corn, salt-and-pepper pork ribs and sweet-tea fried chicken that provided a fittingly casual denouement to a weekend of fancy fare.

[Screaming Eagle](#) vintner **Nick Gislason**, whose 12-liter bottle sold for \$500,000 during the auction, looked serene while sharing a magnum of his wine over dinner. We began to mentally calculate the value of the glass we were consuming, but quickly bagged the plan. All of the raucous bidding and excessive heat had dampened our faculties, and we found it far easier to kick back and enjoy the ride without worrying too much about something as quotidian as by-the-glass cost structure. After all, amidst an atmosphere of such stratospheric spending, **it was impossible to find much grounding in reality.**

· **NEW HIGHS, NEW 'CUT:** Given that pre-auction speculation pegged the fundraising take at \$12 million, the weekend's \$16.9 million haul led organizers to reassert claims that [Auction Napa Valley](#) is America's foremost wine auction (other, similar events had recently eclipsed the so-called "**Granddaddy of America's Charity Wine Auctions**" in overall fundraising). Though we can't confirm the veracity of this assertion, we *can* confidently report that [Meadowood](#) chef **Christopher Kostow** has a new haircut: the spikes are out, and a clean, spiffy side part has emerged as a key part (pun intended) of the uberchef's presentation. Definitely not in the same tier of preppy as a full seersucker suit, but not completely off the mark, either.



french fries at a greasy diner.

freemind2, 28, F

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