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## What to serve at a Napa Valley wine auction?

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This guest-post comes to us from Mira Advani Honeycutt, author of [California's Central Coast, The Ultimate Winery Guide: From Santa Barbara to Paso Robles](#). She frequently contributes wine and travel pieces to the Good Food Blog.



*Gott's Ahi Burger with Shafer Vineyard's 2006 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon.*

Napa Valley has its share of star chefs. So at this year's Auction Napa Valley, the event organizers decided to include a food truck, a group of Bravo's Top Chef winners and Tennessee chef Joseph Lenn (known for his Foothills cuisine) to join local chefs.

Our auction weekend kicked off at the Shafer Vineyard-hosted dinner, savoring the family's lush Cabernets and a silky Syrah with Gott's burgers.

"We asked Thomas Keller, but he was booked," joked Doug Shafer, recalling how as a teenager he hung out at Taylor's burger joint in St. Helena. It was an institution, said Shafer, adding that the roadside landmark was acquired by Gott's 15 years ago.

Served buffet style, the selection of burgers — beef, tuna, veggie and chicken—with Asian slaw, onion rings, sweet potato fries and salad were dished out of Gott's food truck. The thick slab of medium-rare Ahi-tuna burger tasted divine paired with three Shafer wines: the 2006 and 2003 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon and a sublime 2009 Relentless Syrah.

The high-spirited annual auction this year raised a record \$16.9 million collectively from the live, barrel and E-auction lots, its proceeds benefiting local health care and youth education

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About Evan Kleiman's "Good Food"

Evan Kleiman has been the host of Good Food on KCRW since 1998. A longtime restaurateur and owner of Angeli Caffe on Melrose. She was the founder of Slow Food, Los Angeles and is an avid gardener.



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*On a hot Saturday afternoon at Meadowood Resort, Napa's cool whites and rosés were a welcome sight.*


The Saturday live auction began at the Meadowood Resort with a walk-around lunch prepared by nine of Bravo TV's Top Chef winners and ended with a picnic-style Foothills cuisine with seasonal, farm fresh ingredients, created by Chef Joseph Lenn of Blackberry Farm Resort in Tennessee's Great Smoky Mountains.

This year I noticed a rise in lifestyle packages such as luxury cruises, vintner-hosted travels to Asia, Europe, South America, and culinary experiences with world-class chefs. But this being America's wine capital, the collection of cult Cabernet bottles still held its ground as the star attraction.

The excitement kicked into high gear under the white tent when one Balthazar size bottle of Screaming Eagle went for \$500,000 and Harlan Estate's four double magnums plus dinner/accommodation and a 20-vintage tasting for eight people brought a whopping \$800,000.

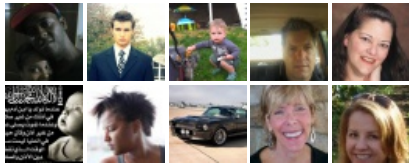
However, it was newcomer Dana Estates that turned out to be the top-selling lot, offering wine and a trip to Seoul, South Korea. Owner Hi Sang Lee decided to double the \$500,000 lot bringing the total bid to \$1.02 million.

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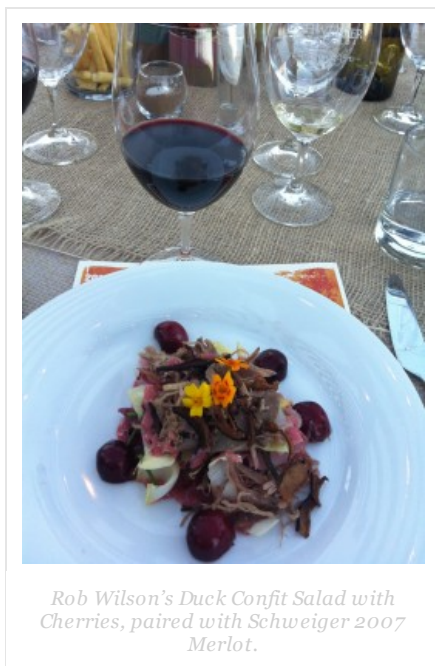
*Kristin Davison's dark chocolate Ghanaian Tart at the Schweiger Vineyards dinner*

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Celebrating its 40th anniversary, Joseph Phelps' collection of 40 wines was snatched up for \$450,000 and the Cent'Anni lot honoring the 100th birthday of the late Robert Mondavi (one of the founders of this auction), fetched \$260,000. The package included 100 bottles of Robert Mondavi wines plus trips to Switzerland and Italy.

It was either the constant flow of fine wines or the compassionate spirit in the tent that concluded the three-plus hour auction on a high note – the Marvels to Miracles package raised \$3.7 million for children's mental & physical health and education. It offered no wine or exclusive trips, but a priceless sense of satisfaction for some 100 people who raised their paddles, with bids ranging from \$250,000 to \$1,000.

Our Friday night vintner-hosted dinner was on the scenic grounds of Schweiger Vineyards in the MountVeeder appellation. Rob Wilson, the executive chef of Montage Resort in Laguna Niguel, created a perfect meal to match with Schweiger wines. The pairing of the velvety 2007 Merlot with the duck confit/cherries salad was simply outstanding as was the lamb loin with the 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon. But it was pastry chef Kristin Davison's killer dessert, the Ghanaian Tart, that had everyone ecstatic. The melt in your mouth dark chocolate was magical with the Cabernet port IX.



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The Friday Barrel Auction held on the sprawling grounds of Raymond Vineyards drew a crowd of some 2,000 people savoring delectable bites created by 40 local chefs/restaurants. Over 100 vintners poured their current vintages. On this hot afternoon, the popular spot was the cool barrel room where the Barrel Auction was in full swing. By auction's end, it was Shafer Vineyards that garnered the top bid of \$78,000 at the barrel auction. Their live auction lot of 40 bottles of wine, four nights at Auberge du Soleil, and cooking immersion at Morimoto and The French Laundry fetched \$230,000.



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