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Heat doesn't spoil Napa Valley Barrel Auction fun



The Napa Valley Barrel Auction at Raymond Vineyards on Friday May 31, 2013.

Scott Manchester / The Press Democrat

By PEG MELNIK THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

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Nearly 2,000 people found a way to outsmart Mother Nature's sultry weather at the Napa Valley Barrel Auction on Friday without jumping into the pool at Raymond Vineyards.

"No, there was no pool jumping," joked Cate Conniff of the Napa Valley Vintners. "I was tempted but I didn't ... It was 93 degrees at its peak, but everything was under tents and in the shade."

The gathering at Raymond was one of the key events to kick off the annual four-day Auction Napa Valley that runs through Sunday. There will be a string of dinner parties, tastings and tours, with the main attraction the live auction today at St. Helena's Meadowood Resort.

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At Friday's barrel auction, bidding was in full force in the cellar, and Dana Rogerson and Teddy John of Napa were among the most resourceful in dodging the sun.

"The heat was no problem," said Rogerson. "You just had to find a way to beat it. We went to the barrel room and after that we found a shady spot and there was a tub of Mumm sparkling wine."

But before the couple had their sparkling picnic, they collected a sampling of finger foods from about three dozen restaurants in the Napa Valley.

"The food was out of this world," Rogerson said, referring to dishes from high profile restaurants like Morimoto Napa and Auberge du Soleil, a spread that included fish tacos, duck confit and lamb burgers.

John agreed that the food was delicious, but she seemed to have more of an appetite for the blue Lamborghini and the white Lexus, among the others cars that were displayed in the live lots, a spread throughout the 190-acre property in St. Helena.

"The cars were wonderful," she said. "I just kept looking at all the cars."

The live lot displays wound around the pool to the JCB Lounge where Jean-Charles Boisset's sparkler was plentiful. Deborah Evans of Napa said, "This winery is wild. It's really out there. It's really young and hip."

Evans was referring to the "hands-on" approach of the winery and in particular to the hallway with a line-up of aromas that include honey, coffee, cherry and vanilla.

As the barrel auction was wrapping up, Jean-Charles Boisset was in the JCB Lounge pouring his sparkler while Lady Gaga was on the big screen behind him. While the bids hadn't yet been tabulated, he suspected the event was a success, and he said he was happy to host it.

"We're very fortunate to get to give to others," Boisset said. "I'm saying that in my broken French, but that's a privilege on its own."



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