

# HAUTE LIVING

## Inside The Napa Valley Festival Del Sole 2015

BY OLIVIA HSU DECKER | FEATURE WELL | SEPTEMBER 8, 2015



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Napa Valley Festival del Sole celebrated its 10th landmark season July 17 through 26 in record-setting style: 10,000 guests, 60 events and nearly 40 venues. More than 150 wineries, hotels, resorts, theaters, restaurants and vintners took part. One of the country's premier summer events, the Festival has solidified Napa Valley's place on the map as a cultural destination.

The Festival started with a magnificent founders' dinner and fireworks display at Opus One, co-hosted with Bouchaine Vineyards. The following evening, the opening night concert and dinner at Castello di Amorosa took place with sensational soprano Nadine Sierra, who stepped in at the last minute for Deborah Voigt, who fell ill in Russia. Beth Nickel put on a magical patron dinner, which took place at Far Niente. At the Annual Festival Gala at Meadowood Napa Valley, 450 guests enjoyed a private concert by Academy Award-winner Kevin Spacey; Grammy Award-winning singer Patti Austin surprised us with a vocal performance, too. The sumptuous dinner was paired with fine wines. Auctioneer Fritz Hatton auctioned off a dozen lots offering once-in-a-lifetime experiences. The Founder's Lot: Cuba Libre!, featuring dinner with Gloria Estefan in Miami followed by a cultural exchange trip to Cuba with festival co-founder and president Rick Walker and his wife Karen, fetched \$250,000. The auction raised a record \$1.6 million to fund the festival's free and low-cost concerts for local residents, as well as Napa County public school arts education programs.

Other memorable events included: vintner luncheons at Ma(i)sonry, Martin Estate, Tamber Bey Vineyards, Charles Krug, Aloft, Seven Stones Winery and Spring Mountain Vineyard; a hot Brunello Cucinelli fashion show and luncheon (hot for both the fashions and the temperature), hosted by HALL Wines and Neiman Marcus at the stunning Hall estate in Rutherford; the "Town & Country Cook-Off" competition at Taste of Napa, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Getty World Premiere at Lincoln Theater performed by the Russian National Orchestra conducted by James Gaffigan; the Dance Gala which featured 12 dancers from the world's leading ballet companies on one stage; the heartfelt performance by the Young People's Chorus of New York City; a concert by jazz legend Herb Alpert and his wife Lani Hall in the intimate courtyard at Castello di Amorosa; an exceptional vertical dance performance by Bandaloop on the stone wall of Quintessa during the patron dinner; an appearance by Franc D'Ambrosio, the longest-running star of "Phantom of the Opera" and spectacular patron dinners at Hess Collection, Buena Vista Winery, V. Sattui, Harvest Table, Odette Estate and Dariouish Winery.

Major funding for Festival del Sole 2015 was provided by Maria Manetti and Jan Shrem, Ann and Gordon Getty, Tatiana and Gerret Copeland, Athena and Timothy Blackburn. Kathleen and Michael Covarrubias, José Luis Nazar, Claire and Steven Stull, Dede Wilsey, Prescott Ashe, Gina Gallo and Jean- Charles Boisset, Darioush and Shahpar Khaledi, and Maggie and Stephen Oetgen. Corporate sponsors included Whittier Trust, Tiffany & Co., Bouchaine Vineyards, Calistoga Ranch, Meadowood Napa Valley, Embraer Executive Jets, Union Bank, Neiman Marcus, Surf Air, Eurostampa, Pagani Automobili and Bentley Motors.

As a fourth-year attendee, I must admit, the 60 events were a bit overwhelming, but the artists, the food, the wine and the ambiance of venues were all amazing. This is by far my best festival experience, compared to the world-renowned festivals at Salzburg, Aix-en-Provence, Aspen and a few others I've attended. Save the date! Festival del Sole will return for its 11th installment July 15 through 24, 2016. Purchase your tickets early at <http://festivaldelsole.org>.

