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THE **tasting**panel

MAGAZINE

MEET THE MASTERS:

The Duke's son, Ethan Wayne; Chef Rick Moonen, whose RX Boiler Room hosted our final challenge; Chris Radomski, CEO, Duke Spirits; Fred Dame, MS, Vice President, Prestige Accounts, American Wine and Spirits; and Francesco Lafranconi, Executive Director of Mixology and Spirits Education, Southern Wine and Spirits of Nevada.

THE MASTERS OF FLAVOR

THE FIRST ANNUAL
DINING WITH THE DUKE COMPETITION
HITS EVERY NOTE ON THE PALATE

PHOTO: MONA SHELLEY PAYNE

EVENT RECAP

Transcending Tradition

RAYMOND VINEYARDS' FIFTH ANNUAL NAPA GRAS MASQUERADE
CELEBRATES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PREMIERE NAPA VALLEY

by Izzy Watson / photos by Alexander Rubin

In mid-February, Raymond Vineyards held its highly-anticipated fifth annual Napa Gras, a burlesque-themed celebration to inspire and delight the wine trade, journalists and VIPs in town to bid on the extraordinary wines for Napa Valley Vintners' 20th annual Premiere Napa Valley.

"It is exhilarating to bring excitement, passion and a certain *je ne sais quoi* and flair to everyone during Napa Premiere week," said enthusiastic host and Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset. "To bring the world of trade, a journalism and VIP guest together to celebrate style, embrace *joie de vivre* and transcend terroir, is energizing and brings magnetism to all the wine world."

Jean-Charles greeted attendees with his JCB No. 21 Crémant de Bourgogne while seated in a larger-than-life Champagne coupe. Suited up to this year's burlesque theme, attendees came donning unique masks and wearing custom-made attire. Raymond Vineyards' wines were served throughout the night and entertainment was the highlight of the evening. Special performances by Brook Lynn's Burlesque, aerialists and gold body-painted models from Aurora Circus Arts-Aerial Entertainment entertained party-goers throughout the evening by performing on the main stage in Raymond's Crystal Cellar tasting room. DJ Jeff from Wine Country Entertainment was on hand playing music throughout the winery, while live music from Honey Mahogany serenaded guests in the famous Red Room.

At the Premiere Napa Valley barrel tasting and auction, which took place on Saturday, February 20, Raymond Vineyards' lot brought in \$27,000 for five cases (or \$450 per bottle) of Masquerade, a 2014 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. The work of esteemed Raymond Winemaker Stephanie Putnam, world-renowned Consulting Winemaker Philippe Melka and Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset, Masquerade combines the best lots of fruit from Raymond's cherished Napa Valley vineyards into a stunning expression of pure velvet opulence in a glass. The Raymond lot contributed to the staggering results achieved at the barrel auction, with a total of \$5 million being raised for Napa Valley Vintners. ■

Guests enjoyed Raymond Vineyards and other Boisset offerings, including the JCB No. 21 Crémant de Bourgogne sparkling wine, all night.



Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset greeted guests of Napa Gras seated in a larger-than-life Champagne coupe.