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## Tasting Progress at the 2017 Sonoma County Barrel Auction

Wine auctions are big business. Many major wine regions around the country and around the world hold auctions of some kind or another. They vary in their focus and approach, with some aimed at the general public, and others focused on the trade and media. Some are ways of raising money for the local community or charities. Some are used to raise money for the marketing of the wine region itself. All of them are a way of raising the profile of their regions through a focused celebration and the sale of what are often their best wines.

As a wine writer, such auctions are an opportunity to taste through a broad selection of wines (usually from the most recent vintage) in a single spot. Which is why I generally try to attend such events if I can, and try to taste as many wines as I can manage in the time provided for tasting.

I attend the trade-focused [Premiere Napa Valley](#) event every year and do my best to taste through all the wines on offer, but that has become nearly impossible as the number of lots on offer there has climbed past 200.

This year the stars aligned to open up a spot on my calendar and I had the opportunity to attend the Sonoma County Barrel Auction for the first time.

Like Napa's Premiere auction, the Sonoma County Barrel Auction exists to fund the operations of the Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) association and the AVA-specific marketing organizations that partner with the SCV, through the sale of one-of-a-kind barrel lots to members of the wine trade.

The Sonoma County Barrel Auction, however, is both smaller in scope than the Premiere auction, and much more in its infancy, this year being only its third incarnation. Thanks to increasing returns from the auction, however, it seems likely to continue. This year's auction of 90 lots raised a total of \$794,500, an increase of more than \$100,000 from last year. By way of comparison, Napa's Premiere auction raised \$4.2 million for the Napa Vintners this year.

### RED WINES WITH A SCORE BETWEEN 8.5 AND 9

2016 Buena Vista Winery "High Elevation Cabernet" Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County

2016 DeLoach Vineyards "Hand-Harvested, Biodynamic Grown Wine" Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley