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World-Renowned Master Sommelier Larry Stone to be Honored at the 2015 Naples Winter Wine Festival

Stone Joined by Elite Group of Master Sommeliers Pouring at Festival

Naples, FL – December 2, 2014 – Michelin-starred Master Sommelier Larry Stone, one of the nation’s most renowned sommeliers and wine educators, will serve as the Honored Sommelier for the Naples Winter Wine Festival, taking place at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort from January 23-25, 2015. Returning for his third year, Stone will lead a team of twelve other Master Sommeliers who come to Naples from some of the United States’ most renowned wine programs.

Since becoming America’s 9th Master Sommelier— the ultimate professional credential that only 219 wine professionals have earned worldwide—Stone has gone on to open and curate some of the best restaurants and wine programs in the country, opening the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago and working with famed chef Charlie Trotter at his eponymous restaurant before co-founding Rubicon Restaurant in San Francisco. Rubicon earned Stone a Michelin star, the Ivy Award, and a Silver Spoon from *Food & Wine*, as well as recognition from the James Beard Foundation and *Wine Spectator*. Stone was the first American to win the prestigious Grand Prix de Sopexa as Best International Sommelier in French Wines, and the only one awarded the title of Maître Sommelier L'Union de la Sommellerie Française.

Now the Dean of Wine Studies at the International Culinary Center and Estates Director of Huneus Vintners, Stone is returning to the Festival to pour some of the best wines ever produced.

"It is a privilege to work with such an enthusiastic group committed to the community’s welfare," said Larry Stone. "The entire Festival is organized to have an exceptional turnout with people donating and giving so freely. It is exhilarating for all the sommeliers, vintners and chefs to participate in this unsurpassed event with such high standards and goals."

For one unforgettable weekend, Naples becomes the epicenter of the food and wine world, bringing together exceptional vintners from 15 global wine-producing regions and top chefs along with over a dozen of the best Master Sommeliers in the world. All proceeds from the weekend go to support the Festival’s founding organization, the Naples Children & Education Foundation, which gives out annual grants that have provided nearly 200,000 children with the services and resources they need to excel.

"Wine is the cornerstone of the Festival," said Sandi Moran, Vintner Chair and Co-Chair of the 2015 Naples Winter Wine Festival. "With the incredible talent of all thirteen Master Sommeliers, and with Larry Stone at the helm, guests know that each of the more than 7,500 glasses poured by Master Sommeliers have been expertly chosen and carefully paired and served by one of the finest teams in the world, elevating the entire experience."

The talented Master Sommeliers attending the Festival have been widely recognized for their talents. They include Desi Echavarrie and Jason Heller, winners of the National Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Young Sommelier competition; Alexander LaPratt, former sommelier at Jean-George's flagship restaurant in New York City and current owner of the popular Brooklyn restaurant Atrium; and Ian Cauble, whose journey to become a Master Sommelier was documented in the highly popular documentary film, "SOMM."

The full list of Master Sommeliers attending the Festival includes:

Robert Bath of the Rudd Center at The Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, CA

John Blazon of The Spire Collection in Orlando, FL

Ian Cauble of SommSelect in Napa, CA

Desi Echavarrie of Realm Cellars in St. Helena, CA

Jason Heller of Dana Estates in Rutherford, CA

Alexander LaPratt of Atrium Restaurant in Brooklyn, NY

Sur Lucero of Jackson Family Fine Wines in Napa, CA

Christopher Miller, Wine Consultant in Los Angeles, CA

Kathy Morgan, Wine Consultant in Washington, D.C.

Emily Pickral Papach of Chappellet Vineyard in Yountville, CA

Jarad Slipp of RdV Vineyards in Delaplane, VA

Larry Stone of Huneeus Vintners in Napa, CA

Lindsey Whipple of Vegas Vine in Las Vegas, NV

Ticket packages to the Festival are available and start at \$8,500 per couple, with a \$20,000 package that includes reserved seating for a party of four at the same vintner dinner and at the live auction.

Additionally, raffle tickets are now on sale for a chance to win a three-year, pre-paid lease on an all-new 2015 S-Class Coupe Mercedes, a breathtaking new expression of Mercedes' flagship S-Class. The car features an Alanite Grey Matte finish with a porcelain and espresso brown exclusive Nappa leather interior. The drawing will be held during the Festival on Sunday, January 25, 2015 at 12:00 pm at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples, Florida. The minimum suggested contribution for one ticket is \$500, and the winner need not be present to claim the prize.

For more information about the Naples Winter Wine Festival, and to purchase raffle tickets, please visit <http://www.napleswinefestival.com> or call 888-837-4919.

About the Naples Winter Wine Festival

The Naples Winter Wine Festival is one of the world's most prestigious charity wine auctions, bringing together renowned vintners and chefs with wine enthusiasts and philanthropists for a three-day Festival that raises millions of dollars for underprivileged and at-risk children. Every dollar raised under the tent funds the Festival's founding organization, the Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), whose annual grants and strategic initiatives have provided around 200,000 children with the services and resources they need to excel. For more information, please visit Napleswinefestival.com.

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