

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**America's culinary geniuses converge for the 2012 Naples Winter Wine Festival,
"Believe in the Magic," Jan. 27-29**

NAPLES, Fla. (Sept. 1, 2011) – Several of the country's most lauded celebrity chefs will participate in the 2012 Naples Winter Wine Festival, which will kick-off in Naples, Fla. on Jan. 27 with once-in-a-lifetime vintner and chef dinners hosted at Naples Children & Education Foundation trustees' homes. The roster of 17 chefs participating in the nation's most successful charity wine event were hand-selected by NCEF trustees and event chef committee chairs, Donna Solimene and Sandi Moran, for their talent, reputation and complementary fit with the 2012 vintners. The participating chefs feature some of the most revered names in the culinary world including Wolfgang Puck, Michelle Bernstein, Rick Tramonto and Chef de Cuisine, Tony Mantuano.

According to NCEF trustees Bob and Joan Clifford, co-chairs of the Jan. 27-29 festival, the theme of "Believe in the Magic" couldn't reign more true with this year's chefs. "We are humbled that these amazingly talented chefs will participate in the 2012 festival," said Joan Clifford. "It is truly magical for them to be donating their time and talent to help raise funds for underprivileged and at-risk children, and we are honored by their commitment to the festival."

Four of these esteemed chefs are at the helm of Michelin-starred restaurants, an impressive 10 are James Beard Award winners or nominees, while 8 boast a Wine Spectator Grand Award, Award of Excellence or Best of Award of Excellence, praising not only cuisine, but also remarkable wine lists.

The chefs and 26 world-renowned vintners will play a starring role in the festival's vintner dinners. Each themed dinner has 20 to 40 guests and is a collaboration among hosts, chefs and vintners. "We are able to provide festival attendees with an extremely intimate food and wine experience at the highest level," said Solimene. "It is one of the reasons our fundraiser is unique."

The funds raised by the festival, which have totaled \$94.5 million since its inception in 2001, fulfill the Naples Children & Education Foundation's mission of supporting programs, services and long-term strategic initiatives that have a profound impact on the quality of life for underprivileged and at-risk children.

Chef de Cuisine

The 2012 Chef de Cuisine is celebrity chef and James Beard Award winner, Tony Mantuano. Executive chef and partner of Chicago's beloved Spiaggia, Mantuano's authentic Italian flair is ever present in this prized eatery, making it the only Italian restaurant in Chicago to receive a four-star rating from Chicago magazine. This genuine Italian-style of cooking can be attributed to his years of working at numerous Michelin-starred restaurants in Italy prior to opening Spiaggia in 1984. Mantuano also holds the distinguished honor of being declared President Barack Obama's favorite chef, and Spiaggia was the go-to place for his election victory celebration in 2008.

"Tony is the epitome of culinary brilliance," said Moran. "While it is an honor to be able to share my love of food at such a widely respected festival, at the heart of this are the children," said Mantuano. "The Naples Winter Wine Festival is a highly effective charity which has a record of achieving life-changing results. I truly am honored to be involved."

2012 Naples Winter Wine Festival Celebrity Chefs:

Nick Anderer – Maialino, New York City

Forbes All Star Eateries in New York 2010 – Three stars

Michelle Bernstein – Michy's, Miami

James Beard Best Chef: South 2007

Justin Bogle – GILT, New York City

The Michelin Guide – Two stars since 2008

Wine Spectator Grand Award 2011

Dean Fearing – Fearing's Restaurant, Dallas

James Beard Best New Restaurant nominee 2007

Wine Spectator Award of Excellence since 2009

Joseph Lenn – The Barn at Blackberry Farm, Walland, TN

The Food Network's America's Best: Top 10 Destinations with Alton Brown 2010

Wine Spectator Grand Award since 2006

Kelly Liken – Restaurant Kelly Liken, Vail

James Beard Best Chef: Southwest nominee 2009 & 2010

Wine Spectator Award of Excellence 2011

Top Chef, Season 7

Tony Mantuano – Spiaggia, Chicago

Nine-time James Beard Award winner or nominee

Wine Spectator Best of Award of Excellence since 1986

Sisha Ortuzar – Riverpark, New York City

Bloomberg News Best Restaurants of 2010

Forbes 2010 All Star Eateries in New York – Three stars

Charles Phan – The Slanted Door, San Francisco

James Beard Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America induction 2011

Wolfgang Puck – Wolfgang Puck Worldwide

Two-time Emmy Award Winner for self-titled show Outstanding Service Show 2002 and Best Direction-Service Show 2003

James Beard Outstanding Chef Award 1991, 1998

Wine Spectator Grand Award 2010

Stephan Pyles – Stephan Pyles Restaurant, Dallas

Esquire Chef of the Year 2006

Michael Schwartz – Michael's Genuine Food & Drink, Miami

James Beard Best Chef: South 2010

Nancy Silverton – Osteria Mozza, Los Angeles

James Beard Pastry Chef of the Year 1990

James Beard Best New Restaurant nominee 2008

Kerry Simon – LA Market Restaurant, Los Angeles

Dubbed by Rolling Stone as Top Personalities 1991

Iron Chef America Winner, 2005, Season 2, Episode 2

with Hell's Kitchen Season 8 Winner Nona Sivley

Joachim Splichal – Patina Restaurant Group, Los Angeles

James Beard Best Chef: California 1991

Bon Appetit Food Network Restaurateur of the Year 2002

Wine Spectator Grand Award since 1994

Bill Telepan – Telepan, New York City

Wine Spectator Best of Award of Excellence since 2007

Rick Tramonto – Restaurant R'evolution, New Orleans

James Beard Amex Best Chef: Midwest Winner 2002

Festival Highlights

The festival begins with a tour of children's charities, enabling attendees to meet the children and charities supported by festival proceeds. Following is a luncheon wine tasting, with wines poured by top vintners. Vintner dinners take place that evening.

The next day, the festival's 550 guests gather under giant tents on the grand lawn of The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples, where new Ritz-Carlton Resorts of Naples Executive Chef George Fistrovich will oversee culinary action stations featuring cuisine from the resorts' distinctive dining experiences and prepared by his team of award-winning chefs. After the luncheon, the festival's famous, world-class auction begins, with 65 lots available for bidding. Rare wines, exotic trips with unique experiences, excursions providing unparalleled access, fine jewelry pieces and a vintage automobile will be among the treasures.

The festival comes to a celebratory close on the third day when executive chefs from WCI Communities prepare a farewell brunch. The Ritz-Carlton Resorts of Naples and WCI are both founding sponsors of the festival.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival is hosted annually in Naples, Fla., by trustees of the Naples Children & Education Foundation. Since 2001, festival proceeds have helped more than 125,000 children through grants to children's charities and collaborative funding of major projects including a pediatric dental center and early learning center. The festival has been ranked the most successful charity wine auction in the nation by Wine Spectator since 2004 and a top 10 event for wealthy Americans by the Luxury Institute.

Festival ticket packages are \$8,500 per couple; \$20,000 for reserved seating at the same vintner dinner for two couples. For a schedule of 2012 festivities and more information about the Naples Winter Wine Festival, visit www.napleswinefestival.com or call 888-837-4919. For more information on the participating chefs, visit www.napleswinefestival.com/chefs.php.

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