

Charity Wine Auctions: 2015 in Review

Established events with luxury packages and large-format bottles get top billing

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Top-earning charity auctions saw moderate success in 2015, remaining significantly stronger than in 2013 but falling slightly below 2014's live-bid totals. In 2014, the highest-ranking auction brought in more than \$12 million in live-auction bids, while last year's chart-topper earned just more than \$11 million.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival and Auction Napa Valley have traded the top two spots since *Wine Spectator* began compiling a Top 10 ranking, in 2001. In 2015, the Naples festival once again overtook the 2014 leader, Auction Napa Valley. The ranking is based on total live auction-bid earnings excluding paddle-raise or fund-a-need lots.

Despite the rivalry, Naples Children & Education CEO Maria Jimenez-Lara says the relationship between the organizations remains friendly. She credited this year's success in part to the event's first-ever use of online mobile bidding, which she said opened up the excitement to a wider community not present at the actual auction.

The Culinary Evening With the California Winemasters auction in Burbank, Calif., also found success with silent mobile bidding, but at

a cost. "We have pictures from 2014 versus 2015," said Barbara Balik, director of the partner beneficiary, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. "In the earlier year you can clearly see bidders talking and interacting with each other, and in 2015 they were completely absorbed in their phones [with the online bidding process], not interacting as much."



The Classic Wines Auction in Portland, Ore., raised \$1.6 million for charity in 2015.

She added that in 2016, the auction will employ a combination of mobile bidding and in-house-only bidding sheets.

In the past five years, auction organizers have shifted the emphasis to lots featuring wine-focused activities, in comparison to bottle-only packages. Of the top 10 charity auctions in 2015, eight reported a luxury travel experience among their top lots.

Auction Napa Valley recorded

2015's highest bid for a live-auction lot: \$2.4 million for a two-week wine-centric getaway to Paris and San Francisco with premium accommodations including private-jet service and a two-night stay at Auberge du Soleil. The V Foundation Wine Celebration in Oakland, Calif., raised \$180,000 for a lot that featured dinner and cocktails with

jeroboam (4.5 liters) of 2013 Liger-Belair La Romanée (\$34,000) and a methuselah (6 liters) of 2013 Frédéric Mugnier Musigny (\$32,000). The event raised a total of \$750,000 for the foundation's Emergency Food Pantry.

At the Destin Charity Wine Auction in Florida, which raises money for 14 local children's charities, large-format bottles helped boost earnings to new records. The top wine-only lot was a collection of 39 autographed magnums, which sold for \$45,000.

"We were thrilled with the results of our auction," said John Russell, president of the auction foundation. "This was the first time we exceeded \$2 million in live revenue."

Although the majority of top charity auctions are based in the South or on the West Coast, 2015 was a boom year for the Motor City. Detroit's International Wine Auction, which supports the College for Creative Studies, raised \$722,000 in live bids, while a donated Corvette C06, sold at an off-site auction, raised an additional \$500,000.

Other organizations focus on children's health and education, cancer research, the arts, and in the case of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's wine auction, Rodeo Uncorked!, youth agriculture scholarships. □

TOP 10 U.S. CHARITY WINE AUCTIONS OF 2015

EVENT	BENEFICIARIES	LOCATION	LIVE BIDS*
Naples Winter Wine Festival	Naples Children & Education Foundation	Naples, Fla.	\$11,100,000
Auction Napa Valley	Local health and children's organizations	St. Helena, Calif.	\$11,060,000
Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction	Various in Sonoma County	Kenwood, Calif.	\$2,441,500
Southwest Food & Wine Festival	Gosilano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida and others	Miromar Lakes, Fla.	\$2,200,000
V Foundation Wine Celebration	V Foundation for Cancer Research	Oakville, Calif.	\$2,128,950
Destin Charity Wine Auction	Children's charities in northwest Florida	Miramar Beach, Fla.	\$2,017,417
Rodeo Uncorked! Champion Wine Auction & Dinner	Houston educational and agricultural programs	Houston	\$1,796,000
Classic Wines Auction	Children's and family charities	Portland, Ore.	\$1,613,115
Rusty Staub Foundation Wine Auction Dinner	Rusty Staub Emergency Food Pantry	New York	\$1,363,600
High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction	High Museum of Art	Atlanta	\$1,172,592
		TOTAL	\$36,893,174

*Each year, *Wine Spectator* tracks the results of charity wine auctions in the United States. These auctions have multiple revenue streams, from ticket sales, corporate sponsorships, and silent and live auctions. For the purpose of comparison, the auctions are ranked by their self-reported live auction totals.