

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Sommelier stars to pour world's finest wines at 2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival

NAPLES, Fla. (Nov. 29, 2012) – Ten of the nation's top sommeliers will pull corks on hundreds of bottles of the finest wines ever produced when the 2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival convenes Jan. 25-27. Their expertise and passion for wine will complement the talents of 16 celebrity chefs and 28 world-renowned vintners who are also participating in the festival. The sommeliers include wine educators and wine directors from some of America's premier restaurants. Five among them are Master Sommeliers, a prestigious diploma held by only 129 professionals in North America.

Highlighting the all-star lineup is Master Sommelier Larry Stone of Charlie Trotter's and Rubicon fame. Stone won the prestigious Grand Prix de Sopexa for the title of Best International Sommelier in French Wines in Paris more than 20 years ago. Among his other accolades are a Michelin Star, the Ivy Award from Restaurants & Institutions, a Silver Spoon from Food & Wine, and Wine Spectator Grand Award for 12 consecutive years. Currently, Stone is dean of wine studies at the International Culinary Center, estates director with Huneus Vintners and a consultant for Trusted Wine Association. In a recent Wall Street Journal article, Stone estimated he has tasted nearly a million wines over three decades.

Rising American wine star Sur Lucero of Oenotri Restaurant in Napa, Calif., is also participating. Lucero has spent more than 20 years developing his palate at esteemed restaurants such as The French Laundry, Meadowood and Terra. He achieved the Master Sommelier title this year and became a Krug Cup recipient – one of only 14 to date – an honor bestowed on those who pass the rigorous MS exam on their first attempt.

Five sommeliers are returning to the festival for the second time including Chris Miller, wine director at Spago in Beverly Hills, Alexander LaPratt of Jean-Georges restaurant in New York City, and Heath Porter of The Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia. A festival newcomer, Master Sommelier David Glancy, CEO of the San Francisco Wine School, rounds out the seasoned wine professionals.

"Securing this sommelier dream team has added another exciting element to the already world-class event," said festival Vintner Liaison Bruce Nichols. The dream team joins more than 30 Florida-based sommeliers also providing wine service at the festival.

2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival top sommeliers

*** denotes participation for second time**

Elizabeth Dowty

Portfolio Manager and Director of Business Development, Vino Wholesale, New Orleans
Southeast regional winner, TopNewSomm 2012 according to Guild of Sommeliers

Justin Dragoo

President, Gargiulo Vineyards, Oakville, Calif.
Master Sommelier

David Glancy, CWE, CSS, FWS

Founder and Chief Education Officer, San Francisco Wine School
Master Sommelier

Alexander LaPratt*

Chef Sommelier, Jean-Georges at Trump Hotel, New York City
2011 Best Sommelier in America according to American Sommelier Association
One of Wine & Spirits Best New Sommeliers of 2011

Sur Lucero

Beverage Director/Head Sommelier, Oenotri Restaurant, Napa, Calif.
Master Sommelier and 2012 Krug Cup recipient (passed MS exam on first attempt)

Michael Meagher*

Luxury Account Manager, Treasury Wine Estates, Waltham, Mass.
Winner of 2010 Chaîne des Rôtisseurs' Best Young Sommelier in the U.S. competition

Chris Miller*

Wine Director, Spago, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Wine & Spirits Best New Sommelier 2008
Wine Spectator Grand Award since 2010
Master Sommelier

Heath Porter*

Wine Director, The Greenbrier Resort, White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.
Winner of 2004 Chaîne des Rôtisseurs' Best Young Sommelier competition – Pacific region

Larry Stone

Estates Director, Huneeus Vintners, North and South America
Master Sommelier

Jill Zimorski*

Wine Director, Hotel Jerome, Aspen, Colo.
Society of Wine Educators certified specialist of wine and certified Spanish wine educator

Naples Children & Education Foundation has raised more than \$107 million at the Naples Winter Wine Festival since 2001 to create and expand charitable programs serving underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. As a direct result of the investments of NCEF, more than 150,000 children have had their lives improved.

Naples Winter Wine Festival, the most successful charity wine auction in the world, is the primary source of funds for NCEF. Wine Spectator magazine has ranked NWWF as the nation's top charity wine auction since 2004. The festival is planned and executed by NCEF trustees, foundation staff and hundreds of volunteers.

Festival events span three days, beginning with Meet the Kids Day, during which guests interact with children who have benefited from festival proceeds and witness charitable dollars at work. Guests enjoy wine tastings throughout the weekend. They also attend intimate dinners prepared by famous chefs at private homes of NCEF trustees and supporters, with wines selected and poured by renowned vintners and sommeliers. A festival highlight takes place at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples – a founding sponsor of the festival – with a culinary showcase and live auction of 65 lots. A wine-down party that evening and brunch the next day bring festivities to a close.

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 2013 festivities and more information about the Naples Winter Wine Festival, visit www.napleswinefestival.com or call 888-837-4919.

Photo: Larry Stone

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