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Photo Caption: Chef de cuisine for the 2011 Naples Winter Wine Festival is award-winning chef Lee Hefter of Spago Beverly Hills.

### **Nation's most talked-about chefs add culinary excitement to 2011 Naples Winter Wine Festival**

NAPLES, Fla. (Aug. 19, 2010) – When the 2011 Naples Winter Wine Festival kicks off Jan. 28, Naples will be the epicenter of the U.S. culinary world. The roster of 17 chefs participating in the nation's most successful charity wine event includes chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants, winners of numerous James Beard Foundation Awards and other top accolades.

"Food connoisseurs buzzing about a "hot" new chef or must-dine restaurant, are likely talking about a chef or two coming to the 2011 festival," said Joan Clifford, chair of the 2011 chefs committee and a trustee of the festival's founding organization – the Naples Children & Education Foundation.

Three participating chefs are 2010 James Beard Awards winners: Sean Brock, Curtis Duffy and Jeff Michaud. Jennifer Jasinski of Rioja is a 2010 James Beard Awards semifinalist, and Rioja is a Zagat Guide choice for "America's Top Restaurants" 2010.

"The chefs are a mix of talented veterans and rising stars from great restaurants all across the country, and chef Luke Mangan of Australia is hopping hemispheres to join us," Clifford explained. Twelve chefs are first-time festival participants, including Art Smith, well-known from his 10 years as Oprah Winfrey's personal chef. "The chefs bring rich and varied culinary styles to the festival—everything from contemporary American to classic French to Mediterranean-Fusion," Clifford said.

According to NCEF trustees Bruce and Cynthia Sherman, co-chairs of the Jan. 28-30 festival, the theme of uncorking a new decade factored into the chef selection. "We thought it fitting to welcome many first-time chefs as we enter a new decade of giving," Cynthia said. "All the chefs are 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."

The chefs and 28 world-renowned vintners will play a starring role at the festival's vintner dinners, which are hosted at 17 NCEF trustees' homes. Each themed dinner has 20 to 40 guests and is a collaboration among hosts, chefs and vintners, resulting in delectable courses prepared by the chefs, with vintners personally pouring their special vintages paired with the cuisine.

#### **Chef de cuisine**

Lee Hefter, a four-time festival participant, has been named 2011 chef de cuisine. He is the executive chef of Spago Beverly Hills and managing partner and executive corporate chef of the Wolfgang Puck Fine

Dining Group and Wolfgang Puck Catering and Events. Known for his impressive breadth of sophisticated dishes, he has partnered with Wolfgang Puck for 18 years. Hefter's creative culinary direction is behind several new dining establishments including Spago Maui at the Four Seasons in Wailea and CUT Steakhouse at the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills. He has won numerous awards, and reviewers of Spago Beverly Hills heap praise on Hefter for his wonderful flavors and consistently high quality.

"I am always thrilled to be asked to take part in the Naples Winter Wine Festival largely because it benefits underprivileged and at-risk children," Hefter said. "I feel very strongly about the cause and what it provides for the children."

"Lee Hefter is an exemplary chef and has provided invaluable support to the festival," Cynthia said. "He is a favorite of past attendees and NCEF trustees, and he was a unanimous choice for this award."

### **2011 Naples Winter Wine Festival Celebrity Chefs**

#### **Michael Anthony**

James Beard "Outstanding Restaurant" 2008  
Gramercy Tavern  
New York

#### **Sean Brock**

James Beard "Best Chef: Southeast" 2010  
McCrary's  
Charleston

#### **Curtis Duffy**

James Beard "Legacy Chef" 2010  
Avenues at The Peninsula  
Chicago

#### **Ken Frank**

The Michelin Guide - One Star 2009  
La Toque  
Napa

#### **Lee Hefter**

The Michelin Guide - Two Stars 2008  
Spago Beverly Hills  
Beverly Hills

#### **Jennifer Jasinski**

James Beard "Best Chef: Southwest" semifinalist 2010  
Rioja  
Denver

#### **Eli Kaimeh**

Restaurant Magazine "World's 50 Best Restaurants" (ranked sixth) 2008  
Per Se  
New York

#### **Christopher Kostow**

San Francisco Chronicle - Four Stars 2010  
The Restaurant at Meadowood  
Napa Valley

**Gabriel Kreuther**

James Beard “Best Chef: New York City” 2009  
The Modern  
New York

**Christopher Lee**

Food & Wine “America’s Best New Chef” 2006  
Aureole  
New York

**Luke Mangan**

G’Day USA featured celebrity chef in 2009  
Glass Brasserie  
Sydney, Australia

**Tony Mantuano**

Nine-time James Beard Award winner or nominee  
Spiaggia  
Chicago

**Jeff Michaud**

James Beard “Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic” 2010  
Osteria  
Philadelphia

**Carrie Nahabedian**

Chicago Culinary Museum and Chef’s Hall of Fame inductee 2009  
Naha  
Chicago

**Gabriel Rucker**

James Beard “Rising Star Chef of the Year” nominee 2008 – 2010  
Le Pigeon  
Portland

**Art Smith**

James Beard “Humanitarian of the Year” 2007  
Table Fifty-Two  
Chicago

**Michael Tusk**

James Beard “Best Chef: Pacific” nominee 2010  
Quince Restaurant  
San Francisco

**Festival Highlights**

The festival begins with a tour of children’s charities, enabling festival 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 Executive Chef Derin Moore, Certified Master Chef, oversees culinary action stations prepared by distinguished Ritz-Carlton chefs as well as a select group of celebrated Ritz-Carlton alumni chefs. After the luncheon, the festival's famous, world-class auction begins, with 72 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 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 nearly 100,000 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 \$7,500 per couple; \$20,000 for reserved seating at the same vintner dinner for two couples. For a schedule of 2011 festivities and more information about the Naples Winter Wine Festival, please visit [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com), or call the wine festival office at 888-837-4919.