

# Top 10 Charity Wine Auctions of 2012

BY LIZZIE MUNRO

Though few charity wine auctions have set record highs since 2007, 2012 proved to be a promising year, with auction organizers quick to cite the steady growth and relative consistency of the market as reasons for encouragement. The combined total of the 10 highest-earning events by way of live auction bidding was \$26,311,920, up 12 percent over last year, and up 60 percent over the \$15,874,215 raised in 2009.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the 2012 list is that four of the highest-grossing auctions are new to the top 10: the Southwest Florida Wine and Food Fest, the Lyric Opera of Chicago Wine Auction, the Harmony Gala for the St. Helena Hospital Foundation, and the Destin Charity Wine Auction. The Lyric Opera of Chicago Wine Auction, which has been held once every three years since 1988, and the Harmony Gala, which began in 1994, both experienced record-setting sales in 2012, raising \$962,300 and \$928,000, respectively, in live-auction bids.

The Southwest Florida Wine and Food Fest, the youngest auction in the top 10, raised \$1,558,500 in live auction bids this year, and has donated a grand total of \$5.25 million in net proceeds since its inception in 2009. Likewise, the seventh annual Destin Charity Wine Auction raised \$894,620 in live bids—up from \$674,000 in 2011—and has contributed \$1,220,188 in net proceeds to children's charities in northwest Florida.

"In 2007 we donated \$457,000 [in total proceeds], and in 2012, it was \$1.22 million. To me that's just unbelievable growth," said John Russell, the event's president.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival, the top-earning auction this year,



Joan Carter celebrates a winning bid at the 2012 Destin Charity Wine Auction.



The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo raised more than \$1.4 million for charity.

posted a relatively small gain in 2012 for a total of \$11,880,000. Once again, Naples garnered the two largest live-auction bids: A private concert for 100 people with LeAnn Rimes, accompanied by a wine dinner prepared by chef Tom Colicchio, sold for \$1.1 million, while a collection of eight rare bottles of Château Haut-Brion, plus six bottles each of the 2010 Haut-Brion Blanc and Haut-Brion Rouge, sold twice at \$550,000.

The second highest-grossing wine lot, a 9-liter bottle of Marchesi Antinori Guado al Tasso Bolgheri 2007, was the Grand Champion Wine this year at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, selling for \$211,000.

"We had even greater enthusiasm this year," said executive director Joel Cowley. "We set records on the Champion and the Reserve Best of Show wines. That got us off to a great start, and it just did not let up until the last gavel fell."

But while some auctions saw notable increases in their live auction totals this year, others were met with challenges.

In 2012, many of the supporters of the V Foundation, including board member and Team USA basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, were unavailable, as they were participating in the summer Olympics in London.

"We were concerned because it was the first time we've felt in competition with an event," said executive director Jane Brovelli. "But it just made us work a little harder and it turned out to be really successful."

Looking at early numbers for 2013, the Naples Winter Wine Festival brought in \$8.6 million in its live auction, several million dollars shy of the 2012 total. Auction organizers, however, are far from discouraged. According to festival chair Bob Edwards, the event, which began in 2001, is still growing and maturing.

But perhaps with age comes consistency in the world of charity wine auctions. 2012 marked the 20th anniversary for the High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction. "At this point I'm very happy to have inherited a well-oiled machine," said Cate Candler Singerman, who has managed the event since 2011. □

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## TOP 10 U.S. CHARITY WINE AUCTIONS OF 2012

EVENT	BENEFICIARY	LOCATION	LIVE BIDS*
The Naples Winter Wine Festival	Local children's charities	Naples, Fla.	\$11,880,000
Auction Napa Valley	Health, children's education and affordable housing	St. Helena, Calif.	\$5,014,000
Southwest Florida Wine and Food Fest	The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida	Miromar Lakes, Fla.	\$1,558,500
Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo	Local educational and agricultural programs	Houston	\$1,411,500
Rusty Staub	The Rusty Staub Foundation Emergency Food Program	New York	\$1,282,000
High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction	The High Museum of Art	Atlanta	\$1,257,000
V Foundation Wine Celebration	The Jimmy V Foundation for Cancer Research	Oakville, Calif.	\$1,124,000
Lyric Opera of Chicago Wine Auction	The Lyric Opera of Chicago	Chicago	\$962,300
Harmony Gala	St. Helena Hospital Foundation	St. Helena, Calif.	\$928,000
Destin Charity Wine Auction	Children's charities in northwest Florida	Destin, Fla.	\$894,620

\*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 here ranked by their self-reported live auction totals.