



Nationally Acclaimed Celebrity Chef John Tesar Named Chef de Cuisine of the 23rd Annual Naples Winter Wine Festival on February 3-5, 2023

Naples, FL (July 28, 2022) – The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), founders of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, announced that nationally acclaimed, James Beard-nominated, Bravo’s “Top Chef” contestant and newly Michelin-starred Chef John Tesar will be celebrated as Chef de Cuisine at the 23rd annual Naples Winter Wine Festival on February 3-5, 2023.

A visionary chef renowned for his daring and bold moves, Tesar specializes in modern American cuisine prepared with authentic European techniques. He is the founder of the Michelin Star Knife & Spoon at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes as well as the critically acclaimed Knife steakhouse concept in Dallas and Outer Reef seafood restaurant in Dana Point, California.

As the Festival’s Chef de Cuisine, Tesar will be recognized for his classically trained approach and reinvention of the classic steakhouse dining experience. He joins an impressive line-up of the world’s most acclaimed vintners, chefs and sommeliers hailing from several different countries, setting the stage for a weekend of unique, one-of-a-kind wine and culinary experiences.

“The Naples Winter Wine Festival has built a reputation as one of the world’s premier charity wine auctions, attracting some of the very best chefs and vintners from all regions of the globe,” Tesar said. “I am astounded at the impact they have had on underprivileged and at-risk children in the community and I am sincerely honored to have been selected as the 2023 Chef de Cuisine.”

A native New Yorker, Tesar launched his career with a summer job in a Hamptons pub. He later received training from Paris’ La Varenne École de Cuisine, working at Westhampton’s Club Pierre for six years until ultimately purchasing it. Tesar furthered his craft during the 1990s at several iconic New York City restaurants, including the Supper Club, at which he worked alongside celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain, before joining Chef Rick Moonen in Las Vegas at RM Seafood.

Tesar opened Knife in The Highland Dallas hotel in 2014. Recognition includes *Eater National’s* “Most Anticipated Openings,” *Esquire’s* “Best New Restaurants,” *Zagat’s* “Hottest New Restaurants,” *Maxim’s* “America’s Best Steakhouse Specialties,” *D Magazine’s* “Best Steakhouse in Dallas,” *Gayot’s* “Top 10 Best Steakhouses,” and a feature on Esquire Network’s “Restaurant Revolution.” Under Tesar’s leadership, Knife is expanding throughout Texas and the country.

With eight successful years of growing the Knife brand, Tesar was ready to take on both coasts, bringing Knife & Spoon to The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes in 2020 and Outer Reef to Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa in Dana Point, California in April 2022. Outer Reef pays homage to Tesar's critically acclaimed seafood restaurant Spoon Bar & Kitchen with a selection of favorites from its menu including crudo, caviar and fresh shellfish, as well as select meat offerings from his steakhouse concept Knife, while Knife & Spoon blends the best of both worlds.

Never one to slow down, Tesar continues to grow the reach of his consultancy. In addition to his expansion of the Knife brand, he developed a successful television show and in 2017 launched his cookbook, *Knife: Steakhouse Meals at Home*, which features endorsements by talented chefs. His national media presence includes appearances on "The Today Show" and "The Early Show" as well as coverage in *The New York Times*, *Food & Wine*, *New York Magazine* and more.

"We are very excited to have John as our 2023 Chef de Cuisine," said Donna Solimene, 2023 Chef Committee Co-Chair. "Through more than four decades of hard work and dedication, he has built an influential culinary career, leaving a gastronomic footprint in the southwestern United States and on both coasts. His participation raises the bar further for another amazing Festival."

With the theme "In Perfect Harmony," the 2023 Naples Winter Wine Festival returns to The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples showcasing the finest wines, exquisite cuisine and incredible auction lots to benefit children in need in Collier County. This year's event will be led by dedicated Festival Co-Chairs Nena and Bill Beynon, Libby and Rick Germain, and Julia and Robert Heidt, Jr.

Festival guests will once again join in this charitable mission in 2023 as they bid on incredible, one-of-a-kind experiences during the famed live auction, part of a weekend that will also feature celebrated names in food and wine from around the world. It should be noted that for 2023, the NWWF moves to the first weekend of February, which is one week later than usual.

Ticket packages for the 2023 Naples Winter Wine Festival start at \$15,000 per couple for a Double Magnum package and \$35,000 for two couples to experience a Jeroboam Package. For additional information, please visit: napleswinefestival.com/about-the-festival.

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About Naples Winter Wine Festival

One of the world's most prestigious charity wine auctions, the Naples Winter Wine Festival offers a weekend of unforgettable memories. Guests enjoy world-class food and wine during intimate private dinners and are invited to bid on once-in-a-lifetime travel and wine experiences in an electrifying live auction. Since its inception in 2001, the Festival has raised nearly \$244 million, making a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Collier County.

About Naples Children & Education Foundation

The founding organization of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, the Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF) is improving the educational, emotional and health outcomes of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Through its annual grants and strategic initiatives, NCEF has impacted more than 50 of the most effective nonprofits in the community, providing over 300,000 children with the services and resources they need to excel. NCEF's unique approach, which emphasizes collaboration between organizations and bridges public and private resources, has become a blueprint for how to transform a community, one issue at a time.

For additional information on the Naples Children & Education Foundation or the Naples Winter Wine Festival, please contact Lisa Juliano at lisa@napleswinefestival.com or 239-514-2239.