



Acclaimed Sonoma County Chef-Vintner Dustin Valette to be Honored as Chef de Cuisine at the 26th Annual Naples Winter Wine Festival

NAPLES, FL (June 17, 2025) – The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), founders of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, today announced that acclaimed Sonoma County Chef-Vintner Dustin Valette will be honored as Chef de Cuisine at the 26th annual Naples Winter Wine Festival on January 30, 2026 through February 1, 2026 at The Ritz-Carlton Naples, Tiburón.

Valette is the Chef-Owner of Valette and The Matheson in Healdsburg, California, and Owner of Valette Wines. As the Festival's Chef de Cuisine, he will be recognized for his love of seasonality and distinctive culinary experiences which have earned him many accolades. Valette joins an impressive line-up of renowned vintners, chefs and featured sommeliers hailing from many regions, setting the stage for a weekend of unique, one-of-a-kind wine and culinary experiences.

"Having participated in the Naples Winter Wine Festival over the past several years, I have seen firsthand the awe-inspiring impact that it has on the most vulnerable children in the community," Valette said. "I am sincerely honored to be selected as the 2026 Chef de Cuisine and I look forward to joining some of the finest chefs and vintners in the world for such an important cause."

Valette's ties to Sonoma County date back to the 1820s, when his great-grandfather settled in the area and opened bakeries in the buildings where his restaurants stand today. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in New York, Valette has more than 25 years of culinary experience, learning under some of the world's top chefs, including Thomas Keller and Laurent Manrique.

His first kitchen as Executive Chef was VOX Restaurant & Wine Lounge in Henderson, Nevada. After a year and a half, he returned to wine country and began six years as Executive Chef at Dry Creek Kitchen. In 2015, Chef Valette and his brother Aaron made good on a childhood pact to open their own restaurant, Valette, a fine-casual restaurant that became hugely popular with locals. Valette followed that with a small production wine brand, Valette Wines, made in collaboration with three notable winemakers. The wines have since developed a cult following.

Valette and a business partner opened The Matheson in 2021 in the original location of his great-grandfather's bakery, which is integral to the project. The upscale farm-to-table restaurant is a modern ode to micro-seasonal ingredients working with local farmers, ranchers and artisans. His many honors include *Wine Spectator's* "Award of Excellence" and SARA's "Award of Excellence."

“Dustin is an excellent choice to be our 2026 Chef de Cuisine,” said Kelley Bailey, 2026 Chef Committee Chair. “His cuisine is a true representation of wine country, blending bold, dynamic ingredients with strong community ties and collaborations with local farmers and purveyors. We are pleased to recognize his commitment to the success of the auction throughout the years and delighted to welcome him back to the Naples Winter Wine Festival for his ninth time.”

The 2026 NWWF comes following the record-breaking event in January 2025 at which over \$34 million was raised. Spanning three days, the Festival will once again showcase dozens of award-winning chefs and acclaimed vintners who generously donate their time and talents at intimate private dinners throughout Naples, plus an incredible live auction with one-of-a-kind auction lots.

This year’s theme “Picture This” reflects the NCEF’s mission of transforming the lives of children in need. It is a call to imagine and to believe in what is possible when compassion meets action. The theme challenges Festival supporters, vintners, chefs and donors to picture the impact their generosity can have in creating a world of endless futures for children in our community.

The 2026 NWWF Co-Chairs are Nena and Bill Beynon and Ashley and Adam Gerry. Both couples are well-known community supporters who have actively participated in the past several Festivals.

Ticket packages for the Naples Winter Wine Festival are sold for the entire weekend and start at \$17,500 per couple for a Double Magnum package and \$40,000 for two couples to experience a Jeroboam package. For more information, please visit: napleswinefestival.com/about-the-festival.

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About Naples Children & Education Foundation

The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), the founding organization of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, is improving the educational, emotional and health outcomes of underprivileged and at-risk children. Through its annual grants and strategic initiatives, NCEF has impacted close to 90 of the most effective nonprofits in the local community, providing 350,000 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.

About Naples Winter Wine Festival

The Naples Winter Wine Festival (NWWF), one of the world's most prestigious charity wine auctions, offers a weekend of unforgettable memories. Guests enjoy world-class food and wine during intimate dinners in elegant, private homes and other landmark settings throughout Naples and are invited to bid on once-in-a-lifetime travel and wine experiences during an electrifying live auction. Since its inaugural event in 2001, the NWWF has raised more than \$336 million, making a profound difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in Collier County.

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