



**Unprecedented Line Up of Culinary All Stars and Lavish Auction Lots
Take Center Stage at 18th Annual Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction
Presented by Trilogy Glass & Packaging®**

**Iconic Sonoma County Chef John Ash Makes Debut as Culinary Chair
Welcoming First Ever Celebrity Chef and “Top Chef Masters” Winner
Hubert Keller**

**Auction Lot Highlights Include
Special “Sex in the City”, “Chef Camp” and “Around the World with Coppola” Packages**

SONOMA Ca (August 20, 2010) In keeping with the event’s **California Beach Party** theme, organizers of this year’s [Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction presented by Trilogy Glass & Packaging®](#) are making waves with an unprecedented line up of top chefs and extravagant auction lots. Taking place Sunday, September 5 at 1pm on the grounds of Cline Cellars, the famously irreverent auction serves as grand finale to the annual three day [Sonoma Wine Country Weekend presented by Visa Signature®](#), which runs September 3-5 and also includes [Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®](#) and the [Winemaker Lunch and Dinner Series presented by Caliber WinePak](#).

One of the country’s premier wine, food and fundraising events, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend has, to date, raised more than \$8 million dollars for local Sonoma County charities. For a full list of events and to purchase tickets for the Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, including those for the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com. Visa Signature® cardholders receive special savings and event perks when they use their card to purchase tickets. Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction tickets are \$500/person, general and \$450/person when purchased with a Visa Signature® card.

Surf’s Up!

This year’s auction takes on a festive **California Beach Party** theme with the tagline “**Endless Sonoma**”, as in endless wine, endless food and endless fun. Board shorts, flip-flops and Daisy Dukes with bikinis on top will be *de rigueur* as Sonoma Valley’s most celebrated growers and vintners take to the stage to introduce this year’s auction lots, surfer-style. Doors open at 11am with auctioneer Fritz Hatton getting the live auction underway at 1pm in the [Wine Spectator Auction Tent](#). In addition to the auction’s legendary display of fine wine, culinary extravagance and incomparable hospitality, ticket holders will enjoy full access to all pre and post-auction festivities and lounge parties. Tables for the live auction will be hosted by, and feature the wines of, Sonoma’s best known growers and vintners, allowing ticket holders the opportunity to select their preferred table assignments.



First Ever Culinary Chair, John Ash!

Acclaimed chef, educator and James Beard Award winning author **John Ash will make his inaugural debut as Culinary Chair of this year's Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction**, bringing his philosophy of cooking with ethically grown, locally sourced and seasonal ingredients to the auction's six course menu. Known as the Father of Wine Country Cuisine, who with his namesake restaurant John Ash & Company pioneered regionally focused, wine friendly dishes, Ash will head up an all-star roster that includes returning chefs **John Toulze** (the girl & the fig) **Chris Jones** (ESTATE) , **Josh Silvers** (Syrah Bistro), **Jeff Mall** (Zin Restaurant & Wine Bar), **Janine Falvo** (Carneros Bistro & Wine Bar at the Lodge at Sonoma), **Justin Everett** (El Dorado Kitchen), **Carlo Cavallo** (Sonoma Meritage Restaurant & Oyster Bar) and **Bruce Riezenman** (Park Avenue Catering), as well as first time participants **Mark Stark** (Willi's Wine Bar, Monti's Rotisserie & Bar and Stark's Steakhouse) and **Duskie Estes** and **John Stewart** (Zazu and bovolo).

"In designing the menu for this year's auction," said Ash, "we've fused the bountiful flavors and ingredients of Sonoma County with the lively, alfresco spirit of the beach party theme. I'm so honored to lead such an incredible team of chefs, all of whom I have great admiration and affection for. It's been an absolute blast coming up with a menu that we think will knock the socks off our auction guests."

First Ever Celebrity Chef, Hubert Keller!

World renowned chef/owner of San Francisco's famed Fleur de Lys restaurant and winner of BRAVO TV's "Top Chef Masters", **Hubert Keller will reign as the Auction's first ever Celebrity Chef**, courtesy of Visa Signature®. Winner of the James Beard foundation's lifetime achievement award of "Who's Who" in the industry, Keller is a culinary super star, reaching millions of people through his cookbooks and TV show "Secrets of a Chef". Keller will team up with Ash to present the first course of this unforgettable repast.

Best Ever Auction Lots!

After months of assembling the lots and rehearsing the elaborate skits, Sonoma's top growers and vintners hit the stage in an afternoon of lively competition for the top bid. The atmosphere will be fun and celebratory; one last chance to let their hair down before the rigors of harvest, and all for a good cause. Over the years, the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction has raised more than \$8 million for local charities that benefit students, children, farm workers and people in need.



Highlights of this year's lots, which are among the most exciting and extravagant to date, include:

“Sex and the City” - Presented by St. Francis Winery & Vineyard

This incredible “Sex and the City”-inspired fantasy has it all: limos, helicopter tour, a \$4000 shopping spree, spa treatments, winemaker hosted San Francisco soiree, and to top it all off, **a private dinner with “Sex and the City” star John Corbett** at St. Francis Winery & Vineyard.

Wine, Food, Adventure – Coppola Style

This extraordinary, around-the-world wine and food adventure from acclaimed vintner and filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola includes *two* week-long vacations; one to a private villa in Bernalda, Italy and the second to Turtle Inn, Palencia, Belize. Additional goodies include VIP dinners at Francis Ford Coppola Winery and Café Zoetrope, limited edition Francis Ford Coppola wines and a comprehensive library of Francis Ford Coppola films.

Hands-On Chef Camp – Featuring Sonoma’s All Star Chefs

Talk about happy campers! Winners of this special lot will enjoy a once in a lifetime culinary adventure into the private kitchens, homes and restaurants of Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction’s All Star Chefs. A foodie’s dream come true, the lot includes deluxe Sonoma accommodations, private cooking sessions, chef hosted dinners, wine and a once in a lifetime tour of Sonoma County’s artisan cheese producers led by acclaimed chef John Ash.

Beach Blanket Benziger

Here’s a beach party designed for everyone. At just \$500/bid for this “buy in” lot, the Benziger boys are hoping to top the \$50,000 they raised last year. Top 100 bidders will be hosted by the Big Kahuna himself, **Mike Benziger** and the multi-generational Benziger family for a beach barbecue and dance party featuring limited edition Benziger and Imagery wines, bocce on the lawn, barbecue feast and fixin’s from top Sonoma purveyors, live music and dancing under the stars, and more.

Fund a Wave of Philanthropy - Fund-a-Need for La Luz Center

This year’s Fund-A-Need recipient, La Luz Center, is one of Sonoma’s most active and essential non-profit organizations. For just \$250, bidders can help to continue the incredible work done by La Luz in support of Sonoma’s vibrant immigrant farm worker community.



New ! AVA Lots

For the first time in its history, the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction is open to participating wineries from all of Sonoma County's 13 AVAs. To celebrate this expanded partnership, the auction will highlight **first-time lots from Alexander Valley, Russian River Valley and Dry Creek Valley** featuring trips, wine tastings, blending seminars and more.

Online Auction: Bidding is Just a Click Away

For the third year, those who can't make it to Sunday's auction in person can bid on a special lineup of auction lots being made available online at www.WineCountryWeekend.cMarket.com. This pre-auction online bidding is being made available through Bidding for Good, an on-demand, online auction platform designed solely for organizations engaged in fundraising for nonprofit causes. Visitors to the site can bid on select lots ranging in value from \$100 - \$5,000.

Honorary Chairs: St. Francis Winery & Vineyards

In recognition of their significant contribution to advancing the image of the region's grapes and wines, St. Francis Winery & Vineyards has been selected as Honorary Chairs for 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend. As honorary chairs, St. Francis Winery & Vineyards will serve as spokespeople for the event, as well as hosts of the special "Chairman's Dinner" on Saturday, September 4.

About 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Sponsors and Beneficiaries

A partnership between Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation and Sonoma County Vintners, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is the area's largest wine and food fundraiser, having jointly donated more than \$10 million to local charities that support students, children, farm workers and people in need. The 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by **Visa Signature®**; Visa Signature cardholders will receive exclusive benefits throughout the event. In addition to Visa Signature, the 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is being made possible by the following sponsors: **Caliber WinePak, MacMurray Ranch®, Trilogy Glass & Packaging, Wine Spectator, Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Magazine, Cline Cellars** and **Jacuzzi Family Vineyards**. For a complete list of beneficiaries and sponsors of the 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, please visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com.



About Visa Signature

The 2010 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by Visa Signature®. Visa Signature cardholders will receive exclusive savings and perks throughout the event. From benefits that save time to benefits that help safeguard purchases, Visa Signature helps cardholders get the most out of life. Visa Signature offers cardholders a range of benefits and perks, in addition to a number of rewards programs that may be offered by Visa Signature partners, such as airline, hotel and cash back programs. Visa Signature cardholders have exclusive access to complimentary concierge services, the Visa Signature Luxury Hotel Collection, and complimentary wine tastings at more than 60 Sonoma County wineries year-round. Plus, cardholders enjoy premium merchant offers, as well as preferred access and seating at epicurean events, premier concerts, Broadway shows, and sporting events. For more information about Visa Signature, visit www.visa.com/signature.

About Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance and Foundation

The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) is a non-profit trade organization serving over 500 vintners, growers and associates who share a mission to promote awareness of Sonoma Valley's grapes, wine, and history as the birthplace of the California wine industry. The Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Foundation (SVVGF) is a non-profit 501c.3 organization that has raised over \$8,000,000 for local Sonoma Valley charities through the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction. For more information on the SVVGA and SVVGF, please call 707-935-0803 or visit www.SonomaValleyWine.com.

About Sonoma County Vintners

Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) is the leading voice of Sonoma County wine, dedicated to raising awareness of Sonoma County as one of the world's premier wine regions, noted for its heritage of artisan winemaking, distinct growing regions, and extraordinary quality. Founded in 1944, SCV represents more than 175 wineries of all sizes throughout the county. www.SonomaWine.com.

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