

California Wine Greats Celebrate at Wine Spectator's Bring Your Own Magnum Party

The annual event brought out some of the wine world's icons, large-format bottles in tow
Augustus Weed *WineSpectator.com* June 3, 2016

For one fun-filled night, the stars aligned over Napa Valley as some of the biggest names in American wine gathered with their favorite magnums for Wine Spectator's Bring Your Own Magnum Party on June 1. One of the most anticipated galas of the year, the annual event offers vintners a chance to kick up their heels and kick off the Auction Napa Valley weekend's many festivities with a bang.

Balmy weather and clear skies welcomed the nearly 600 guests as they flocked to Chef Christopher Kostow's soon-to-open Charter Oak restaurant in St. Helena, many carrying magnums of their favorite wines. The air was practically sizzling with excitement as vintners arrived early, eager to get the party started. "This is amazing," exclaimed Hanna Cort, assistant winemaker at Eric Kent. "I can't wait to get to all of the Cabernets."

This year the party moved outdoors to welcome the start of summer. There was plenty of room for guests to wander between various wine bars located in several courtyards. After grabbing wine and food, they could relax in chandelier-appointed gazebos. The pop of corks was a constant refrain at the sparkling wine lounge, a popular destination for people-watching.

And there were plenty of local vintners and other luminaries to pick out in the crowd. Deans of Napa's wine scene included Bill and Deborah Harlan, Annette and Doug Shafer, Chuck Wagner and Auction Napa Valley's honorary chairmen Agustin Huneus Sr. and Agustin Huneus Jr.

Representing Sonoma was Donald Patz of Patz and Hall, Bob Cabral of Three Sticks, Ted Seghesio, and Ulises Valdez of Valdez Family Vineyards, among many others. Italy's Piero Antinori, who owns Antica Napa Valley, was also on hand to celebrate with his New World companions.

"We have a lot to celebrate tonight," said Christopher Silva of St. Francis. "The industry is thriving." Vintners came prepared with hundreds of magnums to keep the party going. Being Napa, the Cabernet Sauvignon was flowing. But guests could also choose from an assortment that included Petite Sirah, Sauvignon Blanc and even an Oregon Pinot Noir.

There were plenty of collectibles, such as Peter Michael Cabernet Sauvignon Au Paradis 2013, **Phifer Pavitt Date Night 2012**, Shafer Hillside Select 2008 and Diamond Creek Red Rock Terrace 2010. Other gems included a double-magnum of Brewer Clifton Chardonnay Clos Pepe 2002, Belle Glos Pinot Noir Las Alturas 2014, Seghesio Zinfandel Cortina 2013 and a still youthful tasting Penfolds Yattarna 2005.

Kim Stare Wallace of Sonoma's Dry Creek Vineyard was excited to try the many Napa wines. "It's a chance to taste wines from the other side of the hill," she said as she sipped on a Spottswoode Sauvignon Blanc.

But it was also a chance for vintners to swap stories, catch up with old friends and make new connections. "It's fun to reconnect with friends you haven't seen in a long time," said Benovia's Mike Sullivan.

There was plenty of delectable food on hand to keep the crowd energized. The staff from Meadowood resort, where Kostow is also chef, provided an assortment of dishes, such as heaping pans of paella, delicate poached salmon, tender white beans with pork and carrots, and kale salad with mushrooms. The fried chicken was a particular hit.

As the stars came out, the party really started to heat up. Many vintners gravitated to the dance floor, where a live band kept the crowd swaying. Others happily puffed on cigars or indulged their sweet tooth at the ice-cream bar. A photo booth allowed guests to preserve the excitement of the evening. "I love this party," said Alan Viader of Viader. "This is my highlight of the auction week."