



35TH ANNUAL CLASSIC WINES AUCTION "SAVOR THE EXPERIENCE"

| BY TRACY BEARD

A large envelope arrived in my mailbox in late February. Inside was a black spiral-bound book with numerous pages describing every aspect of the upcoming event. As I read about the featured wines, gourmet cuisine, silent and live auction items and information about the five nonprofit beneficiaries — Metropolitan Family Service, New Avenues for Youth, Friends of the Children-Portland, YWCA Clark County and Unity Center for Behavioral Health — I brimmed with excitement. The 35th Annual Classic Wines Auction, selected once again as one of Wine Spectator's Top 10 charity wine auctions in the U.S. for 2018, was only days away. This event is renowned for its phenomenal fundraising, incredible food and delicious wine.

THE RECEPTION AND SILENT AUCTION

On the evening of March 2, 2019, my daughter Brittany and I entered the Oregon Convention Center and admired the tables overflowing with silent auction items. Roaming about with a glass of champagne in hand, we perused the items and speculated as to how much money each lot would raise for the benefiting recipients.

Guests flowed into hallways. Women wore stylish evening gowns and precious jewels while most of the men were quite debonair dressed in tuxedos with black ties. People flocked toward the auction tables and wrote in their bids or meandered over to one of the 16 wine tasting stations.

Music by DJ Short played in the background, and guests feasted on pork and beef meatball sliders, cauliflower soup, grilled lamb meatballs, and hamachi tostadas with avocado, chile morita, and peanut salsa. Tarts, composed of caramelized onions, niçoise olives, and tomato conserve, and ahi tuna sandwiches, assembled with black garlic, sriracha aioli, and puffed rice, were on display for hungry attendees.

THE DINNER AND LIVE AUCTION

The climax of the evening began with a performance by LoveBomb Go-Go featuring impressive acrobatics and lively music. Executive Chef Allan Wambaax presided over dinner while the live auction commenced. Chef Wambaax's experience includes working as the personal chef to the royal family of Saudi Arabian Prince Fahd bin Khalid Al-Saud. He spent time in the

kitchen at Seattle's Palisade Restaurant, and he worked as the executive chef at Benaroya Hall with chef Wolfgang Puck.

The four-course dinner commenced with a jumbo prawn and Dungeness crab tartare Napoleon with avocado cream, pepperonata, micro anigula, lemon oil and black caviar. Three different wines were served: a rich and luscious 2017 Rombauer Carneros Chardonnay with aromas of vanilla, crème brûlée and butter, a 2016 VGW (Very Good White) Chardonnay that I found well-rounded with oak exhibiting notes of pineapple and guava, and a pale pink 2017 Domaines Ott Chateau Romassan Bandol Rosé parading notes of citrus fruit.

The second course was a delicious pan-roasted muscovy duck breast with purple Peruvian potatoes and a spiced pomegranate citrus coulis. Chef paired this dish with two red wines, a well-balanced 2013 Cristom Eileen Vineyard Pinot Noir with notes of cinnamon and berry and a dense and fruit-forward 2015 Lignier-Michelot Morey-Saint Denis VV.

Three Cabernet Sauvignons arrived at the table with the third course of Lamb Osso Bucco with Milanese risotto, fried lacinato, and balsamic cippolini onions. The wines consisted of a 2013 Doubleback from Walla Walla Valley in Washington that displayed hints of cassis and licorice, a 2014 Silver Oak from Alexander Valley in California that offered up subtle traces of chocolate and vanilla, and a rich and luscious 2015 Woodward Canyon Artist Series from Washington that revealed notes of blackberry.

The dessert, an assortment of bite-size treats — blood orange chocolate cake, lemon lavender mascarpone cheesecake and branded cherry goat cheese bavares — arrived with no accompanying wines.

THE EVENING COMES TO A CLOSE

The evening ended with Nightcap, an after-hours party with Hit Machine playing energetic dance music. Moonstruck Chocolates provided tasty treats, and the smore cart fired up marshmallows into the late-night hours.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The 35th Annual Classic Wines Auction procured over \$3 million. These funds will be added together with monies raised at each winemaker dinner series along with the upcoming Corks & Forks event. Due to outstanding attendee participation and generously donated auction lots like the Mercedes-Benz S50, trips and cruises to Europe, domestic wine tours, and a variety of other exciting contributions



both large and small, radical changes will continue to take place in the community.

Since its inception in 1982, the Classic Wines Auction has raised nearly \$50 million for local nonprofits. Luis Vargas, the owner of Modern Adventure and live auction donor of a trip to Tuscany and Rome with a private meeting with Pope Francis, said, "Do something good in your own backyard. This event is a singular opportunity here in Portland, Oregon, to gather around the energy of a monumental event that makes such a big difference in one night. The funds raised during that evening are the lifeblood that supports the vital work

performed for the recipients. It is a privilege to play a small part."

"This auction and its supporting events fund five noteworthy local nonprofits. Join in the fun and plan to attend next year's 36th Classic Wines Auction. ■