

# Wine Spectator



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## WINE AUCTIONS

### Top 10 Charity Auctions of 2011

*Naples Festival helps push yearly total up 16 percent*

The past few years have seen ups and downs in the world of charity wine auctions. Following the record-setting highs realized in 2007 and the subsequent lows seen in 2009, many auctions are rebuilding, and while auction totals in 2010 showed signs of economic recovery, those of 2011 showed only a slight upward movement from 2010, suggesting that a return to full form might still be a few years away.

The combined total raised among 2011's 10 highest-earning events by way of live auction bidding was \$23,552,075, up 16 percent over last year's total. However, much of the difference can be credited to the Naples Winter Wine Festival, last year's top-earning auction as tracked by *Wine Spectator*, which brought in \$11,285,000, an impressive increase over the \$7,118,000 it raised in 2010.

With the exception of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's Champion Wine Auction, which, after grossing \$1,165,500 made the list for the first time since 2008, the Top 10 of 2011 is nearly identical to that of 2010. In addition, most of the auctions showed only a moderate fluctuation in their respective live auction totals.

Be that as it may, organizers were far from discouraged. "It'd be nice to raise \$1.5 or \$1.7 million like we did, but that's just not happening right now," said Rusty Staub of the namesake auction in New York. "But to raise \$900,000-plus at an auction is pretty damn good."

Central Coast Wine Classic chairman Archie McLaren agreed, adding that the consistency over the past few years has been particularly reassuring. "Given the fact that it's a time when the economic climate is challenging and variable, we're beyond pleased," he said, referring to the CCWC's \$726,325.

Though perhaps not a banner year, 2011 nonetheless gave auction-goers reason to celebrate. The annual Wine Auction and Dinner benefiting the Rusty Staub Foundation Emergency Food Pantries celebrated its 20th anniversary, an occasion that Staub marked by opening several wines that he'd saved especially for the occasion during the event at New York's Le Bernardin.



A Culinary Evening with the California Winemasters, in Burbank, Calif.



Winning bidders John Eddie Williams and Melissa DeMontroville for Antinori Guado al Tasso 2007, Grand Champion wine at Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's Champion Wine Auction.

Monetary records were set as well. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo bested its record price of \$120,000 for a wine lot when a 9L bottle of 2006 Alexander Valley Vineyards Cyrus sold for \$210,000.

Although Auction Napa Valley came up about a million dollars shy of last year's take, it celebrated surpassing the \$100 million mark in total donations for local health care, youth services and affordable-housing programs. And the V Foundation, which grossed a total of \$1,371,200 at its 2011 live auction, raised an overall event total of \$4,125,893—more than twice as much as last year—for cancer research.

Looking ahead, early indicators point to additional milestones in 2012. The Naples Winter Wine Festival kicked off the year by raising a cool \$12 million, and, just as Auction Napa Valley had done six months before, passing the \$100 million mark in donations to support the Naples Children and Education Foundation.

Though he was quick to acknowledge his excitement, NWWF co-chair Bob Clifford also noted that the focus of the auction is never solely monetary and expressed gratitude to the auctions loyal sponsors and supporters.

"We never anticipated any set numbers," said Clifford. "We were grateful for what we got."—Lizzie Munro

## TOP 10 U.S. CHARITY WINE AUCTIONS OF 2011

EVENT	BENEFICIARY	LOCATION	LIVE BIDS*
Naples Winter Wine Festival	Local children's charities	Naples, Fla.	\$11,285,000
Auction Napa Valley	Napa County Health and Wellness	St. Helena, Calif.	\$4,700,000
V Foundation Wine Celebration	The Jimmy V. Foundation for Cancer Research	Oakville, Calif.	\$1,371,200
Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo	Local, educational and agricultural programs	Houston	\$1,165,500
High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction	The High Museum Atlanta	Atlanta	\$1,125,000
Rusty Staub Wine Auction and Dinner	Rusty Staub Foundation Emergency Food Pantries	New York	\$904,200
Carnivale du Vin	Emeril Lagasse Foundation	New Orleans	\$795,000
Evening with the California Winemasters	Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	Burbank, Calif.	\$783,850
Central Coast Wine Classic	Healing, performing and studio arts charities	Avila Beach, Calif.	\$726,325
A Toast to Good Health	The Mount Sinai Hospital	New York	\$696,000