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## Festival Napa Valley: 10 Days of Bliss

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Joshua Bell, "Seasons of Cuba" at Far Niente (Photo Credit: Paul E. Richardson)

Napa Valley is a prime destination year round, but every July, wine country kicks it up a couple of notches during Festival Napa Valley. The festival is an immersive 10 day experience: food, wine, music, dance and art. This year's event was true to form, showcasing a delicious sampler of Napa Valley culture. It's like augmented reality for all your senses.

The festival opened on Friday night, July 14, at Meadowood Napa Valley. With 250 acres, the resort offered an amazing venue to enjoy the intimate opera performance held on their new Redwood Lawn. This year's festival opener featured the talented soprano Danielle de Niese, as well as duets

with Brazilian baritone Paul Szot.

Meadowood's gourmet offerings were complemented with wines from Chateau Boswell, Domaine Carneros, PlumpJack, Realm Cellars and Williams Selyem.

**LIVE STREAM:**

The festival continued apace. Saturday featured a 5/10k run, the Taste of Napa at the Napa Valley Expo and a sunset dinner at Far Niente winery, featuring the Havana Chamber Orchestra, led by conductor Joshua Bell.

"Festival Napa Valley nurtures your soul, bringing extraordinary wine, talent, beauty, and great company all together to create a multitude of wonderful memories", said Board Member Maggie Mitchell Oetgen.



(<https://mgvtvchron.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/meadowood.png>)

Opening Night at Meadowood (Photo Credit: Drew Altizer Photography and Bob McClenahan)

## The Gala

Each year, the Arts for All Gala is one of the festival's supreme highlights. The gala raises money to support arts education – nurturing the next generation of artists, some of whom may eventually take the festival stage.



"This year's Gala was a huge success! The auction doubled its 2016 results, raising nearly \$2.5 million. Also announced at the Gala was a \$1,000,000 gift from Athena and Timothy Blackburn in support of the new Festival Napa Valley Music Academy, which will now be called The Blackburn Music Academy at Festival Napa Valley", said General Manager Sonia Tolbert.

Held at St. Helena's Hall Winery, the program started with the typically spirited live auction. Later, there were performances from actors Jordan Donica, Michael Luwoye and Isaiah Johnson from the Hamilton tour company.

"Aside from all the amazing performances and events, we are really excited to build on our mission of bringing the arts to all," said Tolbert. One of her personal favorite events is the annual Concert for Kids, a private concert for local Boys & Girls Club kids. "We're also introducing the Festival Napa Valley Music Academy, a tuition-free summer conservatory for 75 pre-professional musicians from top universities and conservatories. Conductor Ming Luke and an all-star faculty will lead them in a two week intensive program at Napa Valley College where they will receive daily coaching and master classes plus get valuable experience performing a number of concerts."



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Arts for All Gala at HALL (Photo Credit: Paul E. Richardson and Bob McClenahan)

## Happy Anniversary

One of the festival's more emotional moments came at Bouchaine Vineyards, which held a Joyeux Anniversaire dinner and concert for Maestro Stéphane Denève, music director at the Brussels Philharmonic, and his wife Åsa. The two met at the festival and were married in 2007 at Bouchaine.

To honor the couple's first decade together, a chamber orchestra featuring musicians from the Festival Napa Valley Music Academy Orchestra performed during dinner.

"The community support for all our festival events is impressive as illustrated by our record auction results," said Board Member Michael Polenske. "In addition to a successful fundraising gala – a sentimental favorite event this year was having Stéphane and Åsa back to celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary with us. Very special night."



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Joyeux Anniversaire at Bouchaine Vineyards (Photo Credit: Bob McClenahan)

## Words and Music

Bill Murray joined forces with renowned cellist Jan Vogler and a chamber trio as the group combined classic words with classical music. Murray read from a group of outstanding American writers: Whitman, Twain, Hemingway and Capote. Vogler and company played pieces from Bach, Ravel, Bernstein, Stephen Foster and others.

"While Bill Murray is known for being a funny man, *New Worlds*, is more a reflection of his passion for poetry and music", said Tolbert. "Being the ultimate entertainer that he is, he took the audience on a journey with him. A journey filled meaningful moments along with plenty of laughs!"



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Bill Murray, Jan Vogler & Friends – New Worlds (Photo Credit: Bob McClenahan)

## Everybody Take Five

In between events, Vintage House in Yountville is always a great place to recharge, especially when the events are close by. Relax on the outdoor balcony or garden patio, kick up your feet in the sofa seating area. All rooms have a wood burning fireplace, plush robes and bedding, multiple shuttered windows that allow for wonderful amounts of natural light and dual sink vanity bathrooms complete with twin walk-in rain-showers or over-sized soaking tubs. "Vintage House (formerly known as Vintage Inn) is wrapping up an incredible estate redesign that will flawlessly blend Napa Valley's warm culture with a modern and relaxing vibe. Vintage House already features beautiful, fully redesigned guest rooms and we're putting the final touches on a luxurious new pool area and lobby experience," said Steve Davino, General Manager.





<https://mgtvkron.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/vintage.jpg>

Vintage House, Yountville

### CIA Patron Dinner

Refreshed and ready for more – later during the week, the festival held a patron dinner at the Culinary Institute of America's new facility at Copia. A gourmet dinner by Michelin-starred chef Matt Accarrino, was served alfresco in the gleaming new Jackson Family Wines Amphitheater alongside the Napa River. Violinist Cordula Merks, of the San Francisco Ballet, and cellist Amos Yang, of the San Francisco Symphony, accompanied the dinner.



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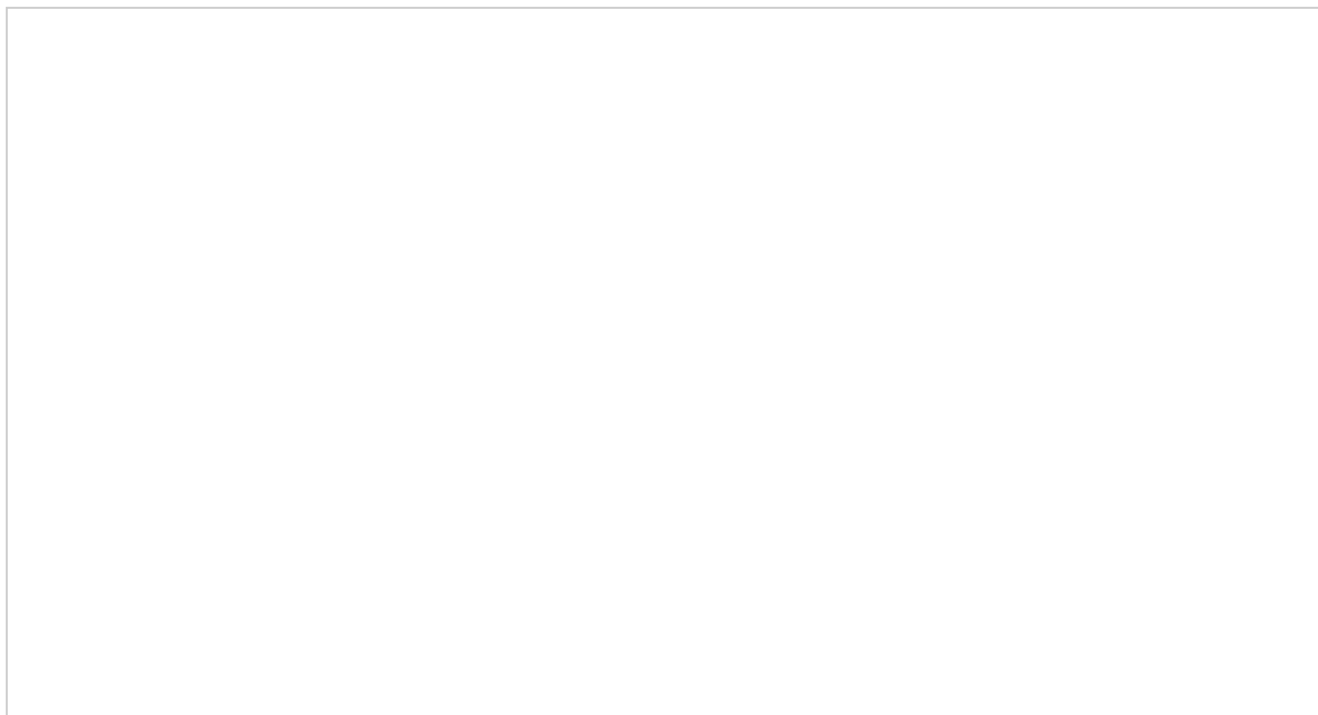
Patron Dinner at CIA at Copia (Photo Credit: Bob McClenahan)

## BBQ Farm-to-Table Feast

The festival finished up with the Season Finale at Alpha Omega where Proprietors Michelle and Robin Baggett pulled out all the stops with a barbecue, concert and delicious wines. “We have more than 20 smokers, and BBQing for charities on our vineyard terrace is something I enjoy doing”, said Robin Baggett. In addition to Chef Elaine Bell’s halibut, jalapeno cornbread and beet salad, Alpha Omega added a Cuban flair to their signature BBQ recipes. The BBQ team stayed up all night preparing Cuban-Inspired Beans, Cuban-Infused Smoked Suckling Pig and St. Louis Style Dry Rub Ribs. Paired with their wines – my summer favorite was their Sauvignon Blanc. The lunch ended with a dessert station with all sorts of treats: Cabernet Injected Truffles, Mini Crème Brulee, Petite Grilled Strawberry Shortcake Kebab French – paired with their Late Harvest Napa Valley wine.

“There is no other festival of this kind where every single one of your senses is highly touched”, said Alpha Omega vintner Michelle Baggett. “Music, wine and food came together seamlessly with the most captivating backdrop of the Mayacamas Mountains at our FNV Grand Finale event at Alpha Omega this past Sunday. The “T-Sisters,” who performed, had perfect harmony, clarity and style and will be the next female trio to make it big!”

This was just a taste of the many events this year. There were also art shows, dance, and more wine than we could possibly list. “Festival Napa Valley has become known for creating an experience like no other”, said Tolbert. We’re constantly searching for innovative programs, performers on the rise and spectacular venues to provide something special for our guests. The festival has clearly become one of the nation’s premier cultural events. Be sure to mark your calendars for 2018!





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Season Finale at Alpha Omega (Photo Credit: Paul E. Richardson)

