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JOSH DUHAMEL

THE *TRANSFORMERS* STAR TALKS FATHERHOOD,
HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT, AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

\$20.00

The BUZZ



PADDLES READY

Above: a jubilant scene from last year's live auction. Right: the Barrel Room at Robert Mondavi Winery, where the 2016 Friday event occurred.

Lights, Camera, AUCTION!

THE COPPOLA FAMILY GEARS UP TO HOST WINE COUNTRY'S 37TH ANNUAL EXTRAVAGANZA

BY KATIE SWEENEY

This June, a little bit of old Hollywood glamour is coming to the Napa Valley. The Coppolas—Francis, Eleanor, Sofia, Roman, and Gia—whose ties run deep in both the wine and movie industries, are honorary chairs for the Valley's biggest annual fundraiser, Auction Napa Valley (ANV). Although oenophiles will travel from around the world to bid on the 350 or so lots, at its heart, ANV is a celebration of, and for, the folks who call the Napa Valley home. Since its inaugural event in 1981, the Napa Valley Vintners, the trade association that puts on the auction, has raised \$170 million for the local community making it the most significant wine charity event in the country. "The proceeds from Auction Napa Valley benefit our community in meaningful ways in the areas of children's education and



community health,” patriarch Francis Ford Coppola recently told *Haute Living*. “Last year alone, 100,000 clients of the Napa Valley Vintners’ nonprofit partners received essential services in these areas.”

Cherie Melka, the CEO of Melka Wines and a co-chair of this year’s barrel auction agrees wholeheartedly with Coppola. “There’s a lot of

sharing, caring, and community spirit here. We do this not for notoriety and to rub elbows with other bigwigs,” Melka says. “We do this because at the base of it it’s helping a very important cause in the community.”

A core group of 25 nonprofits are the beneficiaries of the funds raised at the auction. Recent strategic initiatives include ensuring that every child in Napa County enters kindergarten ready to learn, establishing a relief fund for local disasters like the 2014 earthquake, and the building of a new clinic facility for Ole Health, a primary health-care provider dedicated to giving everyone in the community access to medical care, including migrant farm workers. Michelle Baggett, who co-owns Alpha Omega Winery, sits on the board of the St. Helena Hospital Foundation and is co-chairing ANV’s live lot auction this year. She echoes the importance of the auction to the livelihood of the local community. “We take care of our farm workers. We provide farm-worker

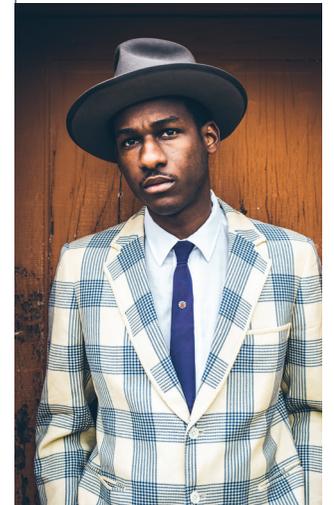


housing. We provide free medical care for them and their families. Through the Ole clinic, we’re building a new hospital for our farm workers,” she says. “There is something in the air here in Napa Valley. We provide a lot of hospitality to a lot of people who come here to taste our

products that we worked so hard on. But it’s also crucial we’re able to give back to all those who have chosen to live here when it’s so expensive, and to those who drive long distances to come work in our tasting rooms, to come and farm our grapes.” Hearing the passion in Baggett’s voice, it’s almost as if the community is an extension of her personal family—and that’s how most of the vintners involved with ANV see it as well—like the Valley is one big happy family.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Both Baggett and Melka work alongside their husbands to run their respective wine labels. “That’s ultimately what this whole message is about. It’s a family endeavor,” Melka explains. “95% of Napa Valley wineries are family-owned.” An emphasis on family is a natural extension of this year’s auction—since the honorary chair role is going to the Coppolas rather than to an individual vintner as it has often



AT RIGHT: the Coppola family: top row, from left: Francis and Eleanor; bottom row from left: Roman, Sofia, and Gia. Above: special musical guest Leon Bridges will perform at the after-party on Saturday night.



Auction Napa Valley 2016 in full swing at Meadowood Resort

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY AND BOB MCCLENNAN FOR NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS



The entrance to last year's auction tent



The gorgeous table at St. Supéry Estate's 2016 vintner hosted dinner



BON APPETIT
The food was served family style at last year's event

“The proceeds from Auction Napa Valley benefit our community in meaningful ways in the areas of children’s education and healthcare.”

in the past. “My family has lived in San Francisco and Napa during the entirety of my film career, so what we’ll be reflecting, mainly, is Napa Valley as our home,” Coppola says. “Being something of a ‘show business’ family, I thought the five members of our family could each ‘direct’ one aspect or project of the auction individually.” Sofia is hosting the top-bidder welcome dinner on Thursday night, Eleanor is overseeing Friday’s Napa Valley Barrel Auction at the family’s winery, Inglenook, Roman is leading the production of the Live Auction on Saturday afternoon, Francis is cooking the post-auction dinner, and Gia is managing the after-party with special musical guest Leon Bridges. Phew! If it sounds like a whirlwind, that’s because it is. For four days, from June 1-4, 2017, 2,000 people will swirl, smell, and sip their way through an exorbitant amount of wine at a succession of over-the-top, luxe events.

Although some details of the Coppolas’ plans have been made public, the family is staying mum about specifics. “There may be a surprise or two along the way!” Coppola says when asked to elaborate on whether or not auction-goers can expect theatrical Hollywood-style elements throughout the weekend. “They won’t tell us everything,” Baggett says with a laugh. “We know they’re all working together as a family to produce some component of this amazing experience, but there are lots of inner secrets. It’s going to be pretty fun to watch how it all rolls out, because they each have beautiful, unique personalities. And they’re such a creative family.”

Coppola does say that he’s incredibly excited to do the cooking for the post-live auction dinner on Saturday night—although he’s never done a meal on this large of a scale. “This dinner will be for an estimated 900 people. I’ve worked on several dinners for around 600, so I’ve never overseen cooking a meal quite as big as this,” he says. 100 volunteers will sign up to cook with Coppola on the morning of the auction. The menu will reflect Coppola’s Italian-American heritage. Think antipasto platters, homemade gnocchi with Coppola’s recipes for pesto and pomodoro sauces, and grilled bistecca Fiorentina.

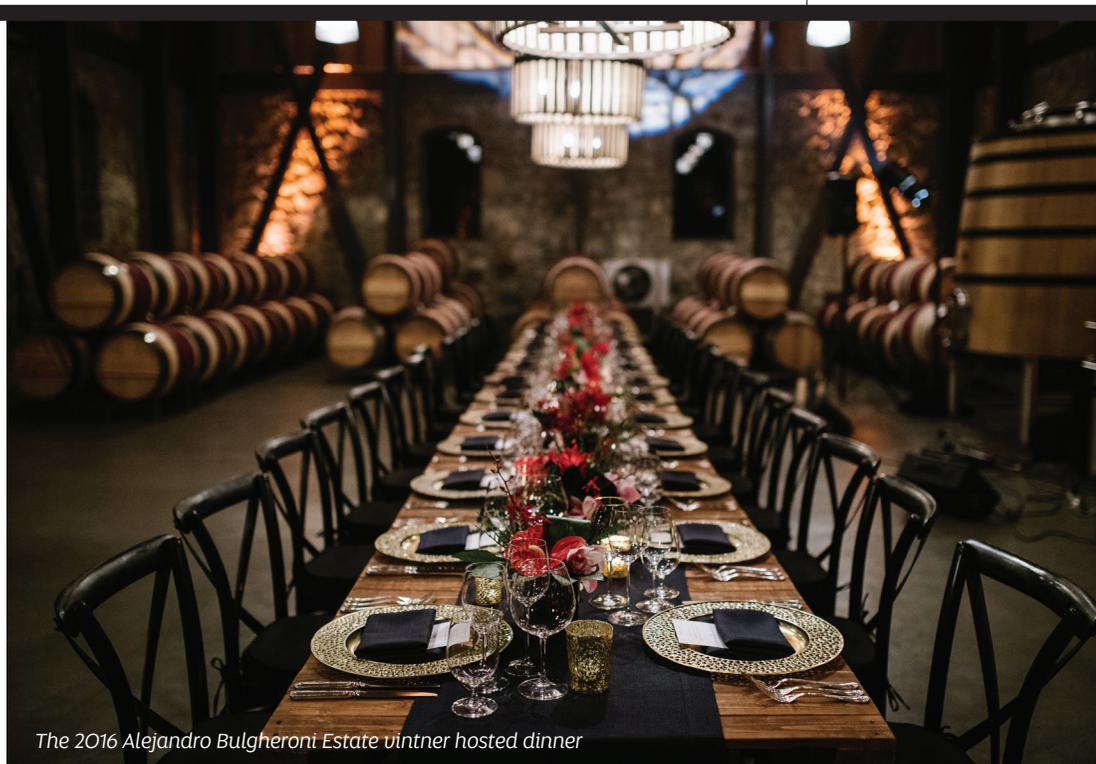
Food is clearly something that the Coppolas take very seriously. “We are excited to introduce a new concept to the Napa Valley Barrel Auction this year,” Eleanor says. “There will be wine pavilions focused on

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS

wines made from Napa Valley's top grape varieties perfectly paired with dishes prepared by chefs from six of our favorite restaurants in Napa Valley.” Instead of having a marketplace where winemakers are pouring tastes and chefs are serving up bites, the Coppola matriarch has invited six restaurants to prepare more substantial servings. Ciccio will serve dishes that pair with rosé and other aromatic white wines, Morimoto will serve food that pairs with Sauvignon Blanc, Basswood will pair with Chardonnay, Mustard's Grill with Pinot Noir, Angèle with Merlot, and Galpão Gaucho with Cabernet Sauvignon. “It's going to be more copious food, and it's a bigger undertaking for each one of those particular six restaurants, but it's going to be so much more focused,” Melka says. “The food and the wine pairing is going to be really refined which is what the Valley's really all about, rather than just little noshes.”

A BREAKDOWN OF THE AUCTIONS

Besides the food, the four-day event does, in fact, focus on wine, specifically tasting it and buying it. There are three different types of auctions during the event. The first is an E-Auction, which is open to the general public—anyone who has internet can bid—not just ticket holders. The E-Auction consists of 188 lots for sale on the ANV website. At press time, exact details of this year's lots had yet to be announced, but last year's E-Auction included dinners, hot-air balloon rides, reserve and vintage cases, wine cave tours, and hard-to-find bottles. Many lots feature some sort of wining and dining experience with take-home items like engraved oversized bottles or cases of wine. During the 2016 E-Auction one of the highest bids went to the Grgich Hills Estate lot, which sold for over \$17,000. The



The 2016 Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate vintner hosted dinner

“My family has lived in San Francisco and Napa during the entirety of my film career, so what we'll be reflecting, mainly, is Napa Valley as our home.”



FREE FLOWING
The wine is plentiful at the four-day long event



After last year's auction, guests enjoyed a meal cooked over open fires by Argentine chef Francis Mallman



Quintessa vineyards was the stage for guests enjoying the 2016 top-bidder party

FUN IN THE SUN

At right: the tents set up at Meadowood; guests enjoy wine at Saturday's live auction.

lot celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Judgement of Paris with a weekend at the Grgich family home and private dinner with library wines hosted by Mike Grgich, a magnum of the 2007 Yountville Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, and three etched bottles including a 1.5L first vintage of the Paris Tasting Chardonnay. The E-Auction, which starts on Sunday, May 28 and lasts for a week, is the ideal place for wine lovers who can't make it to Napa for the auction to bid on the festive and opulent experiences.

The second auction component is the Barrel Auction, for registered ANV guests, which takes place on Friday at Inglenook Winery and features 108 barrel lots. The barrels hold wines that are not yet finished, but have one year left to mature. The vintners start pouring at 11 a.m. and the bids close at 4 p.m. When an event-goer tastes a wine that they absolutely love, they can bid on a case from that specific barrel. Each barrel holds ten cases, so the top 10 bidders from each lot will get a case of that wine when it's finally bottled. "The Barrel Auction tends to have a really good vibe because people love to taste at a barrel. It's a lot more fun. The ambience is fantastic," Melka says enthusiastically. "Vintners are siphoning wine out of their barrels, they are dipping in their pipettes, people are milling around with crazy purple teeth because they're tasting wines that are not finished wines. Everything is electronic and there's a big board and you can put in bids up until the very last minute. So everybody knows who won at the end of the day, which is great." Last year one of Melka's barrels was the top bid with the 10-case lot going for \$101,000. This June, Melka's barrel is a 2015 Metisse Martinez Vineyard. It's the first time they've produced a Cabernet Sauvignon from the Pritchard Hill vineyard and Melka is hopeful that it will be one of the top sells. It's a uniquely crafted blend of Cabernet Sauvignon,



Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot that Melka says “is going to be something really different for everybody to taste.”

The third and final auction is Saturday’s main event, the grand Live Auction at Meadowood Napa Valley. The afternoon starts at 3 p.m. with a

reception and lot preview. From 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., 38 spectacular once-in-a-lifetime experience lots will be auctioned off. Baggett played a large role in helping the participating wineries put together the unique lots. “In designing these lots, we always start with building that Napa experience,” Baggett explains. “Then we look at our friends and our partners that might be able to provide a luxury lifestyle experience and try to pair it with a like-minded winery.” The Coppolas’ lot takes place on two continents and is for three couples. The top bidders will spend three nights at the Niebaum Mansion on the Inglenook Estate before being jetted off on a private plane to Palazzo Margherita, the Coppolas’ luxury hotel in Bernalda, Italy, for an all-expenses-paid four-night stay. For the Alpha Omega lot, Baggett has partnered with Airstream to create the ultimate wine country glamping experience. The top bidders will kickstart their 2018 ANV with a stay on the Baggetts’ private property on Lake Berryessa. “We’re bringing in great chefs from Napa Valley. We’ll have three days of horseback riding, cattle branding, recreation on the water, and jeep rides up to the summit, where you can overlook the San Francisco Bay, Bodega Bay, and the Napa Valley. It’s a beautiful point,” she says. “This will all start the week of Auction Napa Valley next

“Let’s celebrate what makes Napa Valley unique: The sublime beauty, a welcoming warmth, a remarkable culinary scene and, of course, our world-renowned wines.”

year.” Another exciting lot includes passes to the Napa Valley Film Festival and a private event hosted by Italics Winegrowers with a screening of the documentary, *Decanted*. A trip to Japan, tickets to Elton John’s 2018 Oscars viewing party, and Bulgari jewelry are

other items up for bid in the sensational lots.

Despite the grandeur of the auction and the incredible amounts of money that are raised, at its core, ANV is still just one big family dinner. Over 90% of the 500+ wineries in the Napa Valley Vintners association participate in ANV and many open up their tasting rooms and vineyard estates to host invite-only intimate dinners on Thursday and Friday, or ticket holder al fresco activities on Saturday—showcasing the extreme sense of hospitality that is paramount in the Valley. Think of it as the entirety of wine country opening their homes up to you. As the Coppolas put it in a welcome letter published on the ANV website, “Like families throughout Napa Valley, our roots run deep in this place we call home. We’ve raised our family here, we’ve gone to public schools, we’ve made whole again one of Napa Valley’s most historic winery estates. We’ve shared bottles of wine and meals with neighbors and friends. For four days in June, you become part of an extended family of people who gather to celebrate what makes Napa Valley such a unique spot on earth. The sublime beauty, a welcoming warmth, a remarkable culinary scene and, of course, our world-renowned wines.” Who wouldn’t want to toast—or bid!—to that?



RELAX OR REVEL

Above: the live auction. At left: Guests enjoy the Stag’s Leap district during the 40th Anniversary of the 1976 Judgement of Paris party at ANV 2016.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRIANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS