

Destin Charity Wine Auction Raises \$2.7 Million

Annual event for children's charities remains one of nation's top venues for winemakers to give back



Photo by: Courtesy Destin Charity Wine Auction

Guest vintners hold up large-format bottles for the magnum lot.

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The Destin Charity Wine Auction (DCWA) returned to the spotlight on April 29 for its 12th annual event, raising money for 15 children's charities in northwest Florida. More than 600 people attended, including guest chefs from *Wine Spectator* Best of Award of Excellence–winning restaurants the Fig Tree and Canoe, as well as a crowd of notable vintners.

Raising more than \$2.4 million in live-auction bids—a \$65,000 increase over 2016's total—the event collected more than \$2.7 million. “We always wonder, ‘Is there a top-end to a place like Destin?’” auction president John Russell told *Wine Spectator*. “We keep bringing in people from outside, which helps, but it’s challenging to keep getting [the proceeds] up there every year.”

Since making its first appearance on *Wine Spectator*'s annual Top 10 Charity Wine Auctions in 2012, DCWA has been gradually climbing in the rankings. In 2016, DCWA raised more than \$2.3 million during the live auction, placing them in the No. 3 spot behind Naples Winter Wine Festival and Auction Napa Valley, which have held the top two spots for over a decade. This year's result promises to keep them near the top.

The live auction began with the traditional “Mission Moment” video, which explains the charities' impact on children, helping on issues ranging from mental health and autism to emergency aid and developmental growth. “It was the most powerful one we have ever done,” said Russell. “People had tears coming down their eyes, and then we started the auction. People were so fired up.”

The auction surpassed the \$1 million mark just eight lots into the event. Offering 50 autographed 1.5L bottles from previous and current event vintners—including the Kosta Browne Kanzler Vineyard Pinot Noir 2014 and super Tuscan Marchesi Antinori Solaia 2013—the “Magnum Force” package sold for \$55,000. Alpha Omega's “Bordeaux to Burgundy” package went for \$60,000. The lot included a five-night trip to Alpha Omega in Napa Valley and Tolosa winery in San Luis Obispo for two couples, along with a yacht cruise, vintner-hosted dinners, and winemaker tours.

The showstopper was yet to come. Parked in the center of the tent was a 2010 Tesla Roadster Sport that went for \$85,000, the highest-selling lot of the night. “Everyone in the crowd was roaring about it. Now you say to yourself, beat that next year,” said Russell. “And we will.”