

## THE WINE GUY

# Oenophiles, charities reaping the benefits of Taste of Vail's success

At its heart, the Taste of Vail is a fundraising vehicle for Vail Valley charities, and its organizers are proud that in its 15 years, it has contributed more than \$300,000 to various causes.

But it's the food and wine that bring in the people, and Taste of Vail has become widely regarded as one of the best such events in the country. And, based on what I've been told over the years, it's one of the most sought-after among wine producers.

At this year's event, held April 5 to 8, more than 30 world-class restaurants (several of which sport Wine Spectator awards) served delectable food at the Après Ski tasting, Mountain Top Picnic, Grand Tasting and three chef's showcase dinners.

And, of course, those events, along with the wine seminars, featured a variety of wines from 60 wineries representing California, Oregon, Washington, Canada, France, Italy, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand.

Among the wines that impressed me were two California wines: 2004 vintage samples of Roussanne from Garretson Wine Co. of Paso Robles and Terre Rouge of Sierra Foothills.

Another white wine from Rhone varietals, the 2002 Treana White, was a delightful blend of marsanne and viognier.

Cabernet Franc proved it could be as good as its cabernet sibling, with 2003 vintage pours from Pride Mountain and Ehlers Estate, both of Napa Valley.

Pinot noir showed its stuff from four wine regions — none of which was Santa Barbara: 2002 Calera Jensen Vineyard (Mount Harlan, east



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Riverblock Del Rio Vineyard (Oregon) and 2003 Melville Estate (Santa Barbara).

Finally, there was a real Champagne discovery, for me, at least. I had heard of Henriot but had never tasted its wines before. At Vail, I found the nonvintage Brut Souverain and 1990 Cuvée Des Enchantereurs extraspecial.

One of the more entertaining events for wine aficionados was a live auction that included top-notch vintages and wine events. The top five winning bids for prizes at the grand tasting included:

- \$2,600 for four VIP passes to the 2007 Hospice du Rhone wine festival in May, donated by Garretson Wine Co. of Paso Robles.

- \$2,200 for a signed magnum bottle of 2002 Chardonnay, along with a winery tour, tasting and lunch for four, donated by Chalk Hill Estate in Sonoma County.

- \$2,200 for two 6-liter etched bottles, one each of 2002 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and 2003 Pinot Noir, donated by Amici Cellars of Napa Valley.

- \$2,000 for a 6-liter etched bottle of 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon, a winery tour, tasting and lunch for four, donated by Napa Valley's Far Niente Winery.

- \$1,800 for a 5-liter etched bottle of 1999 Pinot Noir Barrel Select, a winery tour, tasting and two nights' accommodations, donated by Van Duzer Vineyards, in Ore-