

# BEYOND THE AUCTION

## THERE'S LOTS TO SAY ABOUT THE REST OF PREMIERE WEEK, TOO

by Meg Houston Maker / photos by Alexander Rubin

history, but really an extraordinary one." Those extraordinary five cases of Scarecrow sold for the highest auction price of \$200,000.

Andres Montoya of The Wine Barn, a wholesale wine market and wood-fired pizza restaurant in Winter Park, Florida, noted, "We've been coming to Premiere Napa Valley for the last nine years. We've bid on and won six barrels during that time. What we get out of Premiere is the true expressions of the vintage, and in this case the 2015 and 2014 vintages. We get the chance to taste the wines we cannot taste at home. We get [our customers] closer to the valley, giving them the sense of the valley. I'm really impressed with some of the smaller producers like Odette and Dalle Valle, a spectacular wine.

Chuck Jenkins of Nos Caves Vin, a private wine storage facility in Houston, explained, "I come to up to Premiere to buy new wines and to purchase specific wines for our members. This is probably the best place to discover so many new wineries and talk to the winemakers. I cannot tell you what I am going to bid on today, but Scarecrow will probably get the top bid."

Kevin Zraly, author, *Windows on the World: Complete Wine Guide Revised* noted, "I'm here to have a good time and see people I've known over the last 45 years. Also to see what has happened 45 years later to this great CIA building [the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone]—and it's better than ever." 🍷

*Premiere is more than an auction;* it's a weeklong celebration. During Premiere Week, producers host preview parties and group tastings throughout the Valley, building excitement for the big event.

On Thursday morning at the CIA at Copia in Napa, for example, trade visitors were offered a limited-seating seminar by top Napa growers and winemakers. On Friday morning, Hall Winery hosted a walk-around "Vintage Perspective" blind tasting of Napa whites, plus verticals of Napa Cabs from 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Later on Friday, Spring Mountain vintners stormed the Odd Fellows Hall in St. Helena with

offerings from Cain, Pride, Stony Hill and more. And Frank Family Vineyards opened their cellars to family-owned wineries like Schramsberg, Trefethen, Silver Oak and Joseph Phelps (predictably, the Schramsberg table was jammed from the get-go).

These events give members of the trade a chance to pre-taste the auction lots, but unlike Saturday's Barrel Tasting, producers can pour other wines from their lineups, too, offering tasters a view into house style. The casual settings also mean less elbowing for a taste and more time for talking—a reminder of what makes our wine business great.

**Schramsberg 1996 J. Schram Late Disgorged, Napa Valley:** A cuvée of 85% Chardonnay and 15% Pinot Noir that rested on lees for an astonishing 20 years. It's creamy and richly nutty, with flavors of marzipan, cherry stone and pastry. Release date: October 2017.

**Cliff Lede 2015 Dark Love Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District:** Grown in the steep, stony Poetry Vineyard and sourced from two blocks, Dancing in the Dark and Sunshine of Your Love—hence its Dark Love moniker. The wine is both friendly and substantial, with inky blueberry



Ted Carmon of BevMo! attended the Friday morning seminar at the CIA.



CIA Professor of Wine & Beverage Bob Bath, MS, with Stony Hill Vineyard owner Peter McCrea.

fruit getting a lift from black spices. Release date: April 2018.

**Stony Hill 2016 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District:** Elegant and saline, a juicy sluice of yellow melon and citrus. The Chardonnay was pulled from Stony Hill's best blocks, all free-run, and raised in neutral French oak without malolactic. Release date: October 2018.

**Pride Mountain 2015 Summit Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley:** A high-elevation Cabernet Sauvignon, grown at 2,100 feet on Pride Mountain, saturated with black fruits and a filigree of spice. Release date: January 2018.

**Twomey 2015 Red Blend, Napa Valley:** A blend of about half Malbec plus Petit Verdot, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc, with a firm backbone of inky tannins and notes of blackberries and cassis. Release date: January 2019. 🍷

