



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Journalists: High-Resolution Event Artwork
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Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Co-Chairs, Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction Theme Announced

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend presented by Visa Signature set for September 2 – 4, 2011

(Sonoma County, CALIF.) — **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend**, set for **Labor Day Weekend September 2 – 4, 2011**, is taking shape with the announcement of both the vintner and grower chairs for the event as well as the theme for the **Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars**. The announcement took place during the annual photo shoot for the auction poster at Sebastiani Vineyards & Winery.

Produced in partnership by the **Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation** and the **Sonoma County Vintners**, the 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend event features the **Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®**, the **Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars** and an assortment of intimate and exclusive winery lunch and dinner parties at multiple locations throughout Sonoma County. **Visa Signature®** is the Presenting Sponsor of Sonoma Wine Country Weekend for the fourth consecutive year.

“We are pleased and honored to announce that the Benziger family and the Dutton family will co-chair Sonoma Wine Country Weekend,” said **Honore Comfort, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Co-Executive Director**, “Each family is being recognized for their significant contributions to the development of Sonoma County as a wine region and destination.”

“As fourth and fifth generation Sonoma County farmers we are honored to have been named as the Grower Chair for Sonoma Wine Country Weekend,” said **Steve Dutton, Dutton Ranch**. “We are very much looking forward to being a part of this outstanding event.”

“My family is so thrilled to serve as the Vintner Chair for Sonoma Wine Country Weekend!” said **Kathy Benziger-Threlkeld, Benziger Family Winery**, “The money raised benefits so many important causes that are really close to our hearts. Getting involved and giving back as a family has been a major priority, and now it’s a blast to see our third generation of Benzigers participating!”

“The theme for the 2011 Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars is ‘Sonoma Homecoming – Class of 2011,’” said **Maureen Cottingham, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Co-Executive Director**, “The auction, which has now grown into a high-end, world-class charity wine auction, has long been known as a fun event. It is on that foundation that we continue with an annual theme in which vintners, growers and attendees can participate. From marching bands and cheerleaders, to the homecoming court and letterman’s jackets, this theme will be upbeat and memorable.”

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Proceeds from Sonoma Wine Country Weekend support Sonoma County non-profit organizations; to date a cumulative total of more than \$10 million has been donated directly to Sonoma non-profits by the local wine community.

Tickets, which range from \$85 to \$500 per person, will go on sale to the public June 1, 2011. Presenting Sponsor Visa Signature will offer cardholders event perks and savings, including access to an exclusive ticket presale starting April 25, 2011. For more information visit www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com.

2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Schedule At-A-Glance

Friday, September 2 and Saturday, September 3 – Winery Lunch and Dinner Parties

12 p.m. – Winemaker Lunch Series, sponsored by TricorBraun WinePak

6:30 p.m. -- Winemaker Dinner Series, sponsored by TricorBraun WinePak

Saturday, September 3 – Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®, Healdsburg

11 a.m. - 4 p.m. – Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®

Outdoor wine and food event featuring Sonoma County's top vintners, chefs and food purveyors;

Tasting seminars, Sonoma Steel Chef Competition, harvest Crush Pad, Sommelier Stars Tours and more!

Sunday September 4 – Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction at Cline Cellars, Sonoma

1 p.m. – 7 p.m. Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction, sponsored by Trilogy Glass & Packaging

2:30 p.m. – Live Auction

Tickets

Tickets On Sale: June 1, 2011 (General Public)

Winemaker Lunch: \$85/person; **Winemaker Dinner Parties:** \$160/person

Specialty Varietal and Chairman's Dinners: \$175/person

Taste of Sonoma at MacMurray Ranch®: \$150/person (General), \$195/person (Grand Reserve)

Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction: \$500/person

** Special Visa Signature Cardholder pricing and benefits available at www.SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com*

About Visa Signature®

Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented for the fourth consecutive year by **Visa Signature®**, a premium consumer payment card bringing cardholders instant access to dozens of perks in addition to the points, miles, or cash back they may already earn. Cardholder perks include access to and discounts at SF Chefs, complimentary 24-hour concierge services to assist with travel and entertainment planning, exclusive hotel perks through the Visa Signature Luxury Hotel Collection, and much more. For complete information visit www.visa.com/signature.

About MacMurray Ranch®

Nestled in the heart of the Russian River Valley, the historic MacMurray Ranch® is home to award-winning Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. MacMurray Ranch® crafts a collection of elegant, expressive wines from cool-climate vineyards in premier growing regions. Look for MacMurray Ranch® at fine wine shops and dining establishments nationwide, or visit us online at www.macmurrayranch.com.

About 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend Sponsors and Beneficiaries

A partnership **between Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation and Sonoma County Vintners**, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is California's premier wine, food and social event, taking place on Labor Day weekend each year. The events comprising Sonoma Wine Country Weekend have raised over \$10 million in support to local charities that benefit students, children, farm workers and people in need. The 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is presented by Visa Signature®. In addition to Visa Signature, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend sponsors include: TricorBraun WinePak, MacMurray Ranch®, Trilogy Glass & Packaging, Wine Spectator, Wall Street Journal, San Francisco Magazine, Cline Cellars and Jacuzzi Family Vineyards. For a complete list of beneficiaries and sponsors, visit SonomaWineCountryWeekend.com. Follow on Twitter at twitter.com/SonomaWCW and Facebook at facebook.com/winecountryweekend.

About Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance and Foundation and Sonoma County Vintners

The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) is a non-profit trade organization serving over 500 members who share a mission to promote awareness of Sonoma Valley's grapes, wine, and history as the birthplace of the California wine industry. The Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Foundation (SVVGF) is a non-profit 501c.3 organization that has raised over \$8,000,000 for local Sonoma Valley charities. For more information on the SVVGA and SVVGF, please visit www.SonomaValleyWine.com.

Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) is the leading voice of Sonoma County wine, dedicated to raising awareness of Sonoma County as one of the world's premier wine regions, noted for its heritage of artisan winemaking, distinct growing regions, and extraordinary quality. Founded in 1944, SCV represents more than 175 wineries of all sizes throughout the county. Learn more about SCV at www.SonomaWine.com.

Journalists: High-resolution artwork is immediately available. For more information, to speak with an event representative or to inquire about press credentials for the 2011 Sonoma Wine Country Weekend please email or call **Lisa Adams Walter at (707) 255-0300** or lisa@adamswalter.com.

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