

April 28, 2011

More Than 3,000 Wine, Food, Beer and Spirits Aficionados Support 16th Annual United Way Miami Wine & Food Festival

MIAMI, FL — The 16th annual [United Way Miami Wine and Food Festival](#) attracted a record-breaking crowd of more than 3,000 wine and food enthusiasts. Presented by American Express, the new four-day festival featured first-time beer and spirits events, and a Best in Glass Wine Challenge, along with its popular wine-tasting and interactive dinner. The festival netted almost \$300,000 in proceeds to support [United Way of Miami-Dade's](#) work in the areas of [education](#), income and health.

Festivities began on Thursday, April 14, with the *Taste & Toast - Fine Wine Tasting*, presented by Miccosukee Resort & Gaming at Village of Merrick Park, where Jay's Blues Band entertained, 65 international wineries poured their finest wines and more than 35 premier restaurants and caterers served gourmet treats to more than 1,500 attendees. Guests also enjoyed the Glenfiddich "Music to Drink Whiskey By" afterparty featuring whiskey ambassador [Heather Greene](#) and DJ Adam Williams.

Friday night's *Food Friends & Fun Interactive Dinner*, prested by Bacardi USA, belonged to Chef [Dewey LoSasso](#) of The Forge Restaurant, and Bombay Sapphire's master mixologist [Gary Hayward](#). The two guided the nearly 600 guests through the preparation of a three-course meal and two mixed drinks at their tables. The dinner included lobster lettuce wraps infused with Bombay Sapphire, calabaza blossoms filled with ricotta and pecorino and rolled spiced dates as the first course; black truffle matzo ball and mushroom soup with duck and vegetables as the second course; and Stone Creek Farms filet mignon with wheat berry fig salad and local Malabar spinach gratin as the main entrée. In between the cooking, Hayward taught guests how to make a proper Tom Collins and Bacardi Daiquiri.

Saturday, April 16, the *Cellarbration - Good Food and Award-winning Wines*, presented by Cypress [Financial](#) Group and Scott Storick, of [Storick & Associates, an office of Metlife](#), paired gold-winning wines from the Best in Glass Wine Challenge with a multi-course family-style dinner, showcasing culinary creations by chefs Antonio Bachour of Solea, David Bracha of River Oyster Bar, Alex Feher of InterContinental Miami, Richard Hales of Sakaya Kitchen, Alejandro Piñero of Sustain, and Tom Rhyneer of Miami Culinary Institute. A small live auction, led by Local 10 news anchor and United Way board member Laurie Jennings, and TV personality Beatriz Canals, featured wine vacations in France, Italy, Australia and California; big bottles of fine wines; and in-home chef, winemaker and mixology experiences. Guests also enjoyed dancing to live entertainment by quintessential jazz vocalist Kevin Mahogany, bocce ball and other treats.

The festival culminated on *Sunday, April 17*, with the festival's newest addition, *Brews & Bites-Craft Beer Tasting*, presented by CBIZ, at Mary Brickell Village. More than 1,000 guests enjoyed craft beers and micro-brews from around the world and bites from top area restaurants.

"I cannot thank our generous supporters enough. We are so grateful to our sponsors and to the many chefs, restaurants, wineries and breweries that gave of their time, talents and resources to make the festival a success," Harve Mogul, president and CEO, United Way of Miami-Dade, said. "We are so very proud of benefits the festival will bring to our community."

Dan Hanrahan, president and CEO of Celebrity Cruises served as festival chair, and Lyn Farmer served as festival director. The founding trustees of the festival were Linda and Michael Bittel; Nelly and Mike Farra; and Cristina and George Fowler.

American Express was the presenting sponsor of the festival. Other sponsors include: American Airlines and Bacardi USA at the Vintner level; Celebrity Cruises, CBIZ, Cypress Financial Group and [Storick & Associates, an office of MetLife](#), Fresh Point South Florida; Glenfiddich, Miccosukee Resort & Gaming and Selected Brands at the Sommeliers level; Baptist Health South Florida at the Connoisseur level; Baltic Linen Company, Inc.; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida; Carnival Cruise Lines; 97.3 The Coast and Easy 93.1, Cox Media Group Miami; Downtown Coral Gables & Miracle Mile; Ernst & Young; Florida Power & Light; Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau; Inktel Direct; In the Gables Magazine; MCM Corporation; Miami New Times; Nestle Waters, North America; Ryder Charitable Foundation; Steiner [Transocean Ltd.](#); Yelp; World Fuel Services; and Zuni Transportation at the Cooper level. The Miami Herald/el Nuevo Herald and Comcast were the official media sponsors of the festival.

For more information, visit www.miamiwinefestival.org or www.facebook.com/miamiwineandfoodfestival or follow us on Twitter [@MiamiWineFest](https://twitter.com/MiamiWineFest).