



Melka's wines raise \$220,000

David Stoneberg Napa Valley Register | Posted: Thursday, March 1, 2012

Winemaking consultant Philippe Melka had a hand in making eight Premiere Napa Valley wines that were auctioned off Saturday at the Culinary Institute of America, Greystone. Together they raised \$220,000.

The auction of the 200 special and unique wines from Napa Valley Vintner member wineries raised an event record of \$3.1 million. All of the wines, mostly from the 2010 vintage, were barrel samples and won't be released until either later in 2012 or next year. The event is a fundraiser for the NVV, a nonprofit trade association that represents 425 wineries in the Napa Valley. The funds are used to promote, protect and enhance the Napa Valley.

One of Melka's wines, a 2010 cabernet sauvignon from Dana Estates, drew the highest bid in the auction, selling for \$14,000 a case, or \$70,000 for the five-case lot. The five cases were blended from Dana Estates' three estate vineyards: Helms, Lotus and Hershey. The wine will be released in September 2013. It was bought by The Wine House from Los Angeles.

The rest of Melka's 2010 cabernet sauvignons included:

- Five cases made from To Kalon grapes from Moone-Tsai, which sold for \$31,000.
- Five cases of the 2010 Roy Estate cab called "Voix Basse" ("A Whisper"), which sold for \$25,000 and was the subject of much merriment on Saturday. During the auction, Fritz Hatton spoke in a whisper and "shushed" the crowd several times. It was a shock when he banged the gavel down and announced the price. The grapes were from Roy Estate's 17-acre vineyard.
- A lot from Gemstone made with grapes from the Yountville estate. The five cases sold for \$22,000.
- Also selling for \$22,000 were five cases of cab from Vineyard 29, which were made from the grapes produced by Aida Vineyard in St. Helena.

- The Henry III Cabernet Sauvignon from Lail Vineyards was made with grapes from the Vine Hill Ranch in Oakville. Its five cases sold for \$19,000.
- The Dream Hill offering from Cliff Lede Vineyards, which sold for \$19,000, was made from two estate vineyards, “Dream On” and “Solsbury Hill.” Grapes from those two vineyard blocks should make up a good part of the winery’s Poetry cab from 2010.
- Five cases of “Fortune Teller” from Parallel Napa Valley, which sold for \$12,000.

Melka and his wife, Cherie, founded their own brand of Melka wines in 2006 after planting a vineyard of cabernet franc and merlot vines. Currently on the market are his 2008 Metisse from his Knight’s Valley Mekerra Vineyard. It was released earlier this month after being aged 22 months in 70 percent new French oak. The blend of 55 percent merlot and 45 percent cabernet franc retails for \$125.

Another of his 2008 wines from the Napa Valley’s Jumping Goat Vineyard also is now available. It’s a cabernet sauvignon (85 percent), merlot (12 percent) and petit verdot (3 percent) blend that was released a year ago. Melka produced 325 cases and suggested retail is \$155 per bottle.

Melka was born and raised in Bordeaux and earned a geology degree from the University of Bordeaux. He completed a master’s degree in agronomy and enology and worked at Dominus Estate in the Napa Valley, Chittering Estate in western Australia, at a winery in Chianti in Italy, and at Chateau Petrus. He has spent the past 15 years as a winemaking consultant in the Napa Valley.