



**NAPA VALLEY'S FAR NIENTE WINERY MARKS
125TH ANNIVERSARY**

**SUMMER CELEBRATION FEATURES
FAMOUS VINTAGES, CHEFS,
AND PERFORMANCES BY
CHRIS BOTTI, JOSHUA BELL, JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET
AND
“O” BY CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®**

Oakville, CA – Far Niente, the Napa Valley Wine Estate, marked its 125th anniversary on Saturday evening, July 17 with a spectacular celebration of wine, food and the performing arts at the Oakville winery. Performances by Grammy Award®-winning jazz trumpeter [Chris Botti](#) and his band, with special guests, Grammy Award®-winning violinist and Far Niente ambassador [Joshua Bell](#) and world-renowned pianist [Jean-Yves Thibaudet](#) highlighted the evening. A special contortion act from “O™” by [Cirque du Soleil®](#), a resident show at The Bellagio, Las Vegas, added a twist to the entertainment. Far Niente accompanied by pouring its most memorable Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon vintages since 1979, the year the winery was reincarnated in its modern era, paired with signature dishes from 15 of Napa Valley’s greatest restaurants, set to the contemporary jazz harp of [Carlos Reyes](#).

“We are thrilled to be celebrating the 125th anniversary of Far Niente, but our real success lies in looking forward. Everything we do is with the expectation that Far Niente will be here at least another 125 years. We thank our dedicated staff, friends and colleagues who have enabled us to reach this incredible milestone, and to position Far Niente for generations of achievement,” said Larry Maguire, president and CEO of Far Niente.

Close to 800 guests were greeted at the winery gates and, after being entertained by zebra and ballerina characters from Cirque du Soleil and enjoying the late-harvest wine Dolce with foie gras, were ushered into Far Niente’s wine caves for a reception with Chardonnay and hors d’oeuvres. Following the

reception, dinner was served on the lawn by 15 of Napa Valley's greatest restaurants, including Angele, Auberge du Soleil, BarbersQ, Bistro Don Giovanni, Bottega, Bouchon, Cole's Chop House, Farm, Mustards, Press, Redd, Rutherford Grill, Solbar, The Model Bakery and Tra Vigne. During dinner, winery friends and staffers paraded into the party accompanied by a musical samba dancing troupe and carrying three-, six- and nine-liter bottles of aged vintages, including 1985 and 1991 Chardonnay, and 11 vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon from select years between 1982 and 2005.

Performances from the main stage commenced following dinner, and led with Joshua Bell on violin, accompanied by Jean-Yves Thibaudet on piano. Bell took a moment between songs to mention his fondness for the wines of Far Niente and joked that his 1713 Stradivarius violin was the oldest vintage at the winery.

The Cirque du Soleil troupe took the stage next and starred in approximately five-minute contortion performance, which offered a spellbinding interlude between musical acts.

Headliner Chris Botti and his band followed with a one-hour concert that showcased Botti's virtuosity on the trumpet as well as the exceptionally talented band musicians. Vocalist Lisa Fischer, who sang with the Rolling Stones for more than a decade, joined Botti on stage for a moving set, weaving her soulful voice with Botti's mesmerizing music.

Guests then ascended to the winery's Carriage House, which normally contains a collection of classic and vintage cars, but was transformed for the night into "Club Dolce," a nightclub featuring inventive Dolce cocktails and dancing set to the music of DJ Steven Leflar. Last call and the last dance ended the evening.

About Far Niente

Far Niente, a privately owned winery that specializes in producing ultra-premium Napa Valley estate Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, was founded in 1885 by John Benson, a Massachusetts native who came to California with the gold rush. Benson established his wine estate along the western edge of the center of Napa Valley, in an area known today as the Oakville American Viticultural Area (AVA) in the Napa Valley appellation.

Designed as a gravity flow, stone winery, Far Niente was a marvel of winemaking technology and was the first of its kind in the valley. The winery prospered for several decades and its success was measured

partly by the fact that it packaged its wines in individual glass bottles, as opposed to shipping in bulk containers, a practice commonplace to most wineries of the era.

A bottle of 1886 Far Niente Sweet Muscat, complete with the original label, cork and capsule and known to be the oldest intact bottle of California wine, is retained in the winery's holdings. The label carries an illustration thought to be drawn by the American Impressionist painter [Winslow Homer](#), nephew of Far Niente founder John Benson.

1919 brought the onset of American Prohibition and the closure of Far Niente. The estate sat abandoned for 60 years, until 1979, when Oklahoma natives Gil and Beth Nickel moved to California with the dream of establishing a Napa Valley wine estate. The Nickels acquired the old winery structure and adjoining 100-acre vineyard and began a three-year restoration, while making their first vintages of [Far Niente Chardonnay](#) in a Sausalito warehouse. 1982 marked the completion of the winery renovation, the return of winemaking to the building, and the first vintage of [Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon](#). Shortly thereafter, Far Niente was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

A Legacy of Firsts

It would be easy for Far Niente to rest on its laurels, but instead, from its beginnings – and certainly in its modern era – Far Niente has created a legacy of firsts that have moved the winery – and the wine industry – forward. A few examples:

1885 – first gravity flow winery to be built in the Napa Valley

1981 – first winery to develop wine caves in North America in the 20th century

1982 – first Napa Valley winery to hand-sort grapes prior to crushing them

1983 – Far Niente's "Piano Case" lot for the Napa Valley wine auction sets the record and introduces specially packaged, custom lots that revolutionized charity wine auctions worldwide.

1997 -- Far Niente wins the international General Electric Edison Award for excellence in lighting design. The finalists included The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; Bloomingdale's, New York; and the FDR Memorial, Washington, DC.

2008 -- Far Niente becomes a 100 percent net-zero user of electricity, by going solar in a revolutionary way. The winery's ["Floatovoltaic™"](#) solar installation becomes the first-ever large-scale, grid-connected solar installation in the world.

2010 – Owners Beth Nickel, Erik Nickel, Jeremy Nickel, Dirk Hampson and Larry Maguire celebrate Far Niente’s 125th anniversary and are only the second people in the winery’s history to make wine at the iconic estate.

Today Far Niente remains in the hands of Beth Nickel, Erik Nickel and Jeremy Nickel, with longtime partners Dirk Hampson, director of winemaking and chairman, and Larry Maguire, president and CEO. Together, the owners manage Far Niente and its highly successful sister wineries: [Dolce](#), dedicated to the production of a single, late-harvest wine; [Nickel & Nickel](#), devoted exclusively to producing 100 percent varietal, single-vineyard wines; and [EnRoute](#), producer of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

About Chris Botti

Since the release of his 2004 critically acclaimed CD “When I Fall In Love,” Chris Botti (*pronounced boat-tee*) has become the largest selling American instrumental artist. His success has crossed over to audiences usually reserved for pop music and his ongoing association with PBS has led to four number-one jazz albums, as well as multiple Gold, Platinum and Grammy awards.

About Joshua Bell

Joshua Bell has captured the public’s attention like no other classical violinist of his time. Named by Musical America as the 2010 Instrumentalist of the Year, Bell’s efforts have resulted in many awards including the Grammy, Pulitzer, Oscar and the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. Bell performs more than 150 dates per year, and his richly varied catalogue of recordings includes more than 35 CDs. Bell plays the 1713 Gibson ex Huberman Stradivarius.

About Jean-Yves Thibaudet

Pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet continues to enthrall audiences worldwide with his profound and poetic artistry, enlightened interpretations and thrilling performances. Hailed as “one of the best pianists in the world,” Thibaudet is sought-after by today’s foremost orchestras, festivals, conductors and collaborative musicians for his virtuosity and charisma.

About “O™” by Cirque du Soleil®

Inspired by the concept of infinity and the elegance of water’s pure form, “O” pays tribute to the beauty of the theatre - from the simplest street performance to the most lavish of operas - where anything is possible and where the drama of life plays itself out before our very eyes. In residence at The Bellagio, Las Vegas, the international cast of world-class acrobats, synchronized swimmers, divers and characters perform in, on, and above a 1.5 million-gallon pool.

About Carlos Reyes

A virtuoso of the 36-string native Paraguayan harp, Carlos Reyes has been performing for international audiences throughout his career. His first album, “The Beauty of it All,” stayed on the Top Ten Contemporary Jazz charts in Billboard Magazine for over 15 weeks. Carlos’ charismatic personality and outstanding musical talents are a potent combination with which he performs an extensive and entertaining repertoire.

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