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JUNE 2008

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# Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association Auction 2008



**Celebrity Chef Suzanne Goin (AOC) with Direct Relief Int'l President & CEO Thomas Tighe.**

Santa Barbara celebrated its own while raising money for charity at The American Riviera Wine Auction 2008 in mid-March. The event, held at the seaside Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara, featured dinner prepared by Suzanne Goin, co-founder of Lucques and A.O.C. in Los Angeles and partner in Hungry Cat, which recently opened a second branch in Santa Barbara.

Local vintners hosted tables, bringing their own wines, so guests had access to a variety of the region's best. Additionally, each table held a double magnum of a custom Santa Barbara Rhône-style blend crafted by Bob Lindquist, but this was not for drinking that evening: Each was for sale for \$500.

Andrew Firestone, scion of the family famous for tires and wine—and former star of *The Bachelor*—emceed the evening. Honoree John Cleese (*Monty Python, Fawlty Towers*) was traveling out of the country for work, but the video he shot for the event was almost as good—and amusing—as hav-



**Event host Andrew Firestone, Foxen's Dick Doré, Bill Wathen and Direct Relief's Thomas Tighe.**

ing the local resident attend in person.

The bi-annual event had raised more than \$1 million through its four past efforts, and contributed approximately \$250,000 more from this evening, both from ticket sales (\$300 per person) and auction lots. Proceeds go to Direct Relief International, a Santa Barbara-based charity that helps people in need around the globe, with remarkably little money going to overhead. —Chris Rubin ■



**SBE's Mixologist Ryan Magarian.**

## "Bar Culture" Thrives at SBE Venues

SBE entertainment and restaurant group has been taking Los Angeles nightlife by storm in the past few years. What is SBE's formula for success? While CEO Sam Nazarian is a genius at creating themes and spaces, the secret ingredient to making these spaces come alive is in the glass. At a recent dining experience at one of SBE's newest restaurants and lounges, Foxtail, in West Hollywood, we were left awestruck by the cocktails. After having the same experience at Katsu-ya and Hyde, we began to see a trend.

Mixologist Ryan Magarian consults on the knock-your-socks-off list and trains all of the bartenders himself. He considers himself

fortunate to have found a way "to mix passion and profession," he tells THE TASTING PANEL. Magarian celebrates the cocktail, envisioning mixology as a "liquid kitchen," and rejects the mainstream perception of the cocktail as an "ADU" (Alcohol Delivery Unit). He comments that SBE is one of his favorite clients "because they really understand that bar programs need to become bar cultures."

The combined passion of Magarian and SBE certainly shows in the glass. Cocktails such as the Bella Uva, the Cucumber Pomegranate Deluxe and the Rio Goodness are executed with perfection at Foxtail. These drinks are so good that we're still thinking about them. —Lauren Asarnow ■