

CHARLOTTE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLOTTE WINE & FOOD

7th Annual Wells Fargo Kickoff Dinner
featuring Far Niente Family of Wineries & Vineyards
Sets New Fundraising Record Benefitting Local Children's Charities

Charlotte, NC, – **Charlotte Wine & Food** is pleased to announce that the **7th Annual Wells Fargo Kickoff Dinner** featuring **Far Niente Family of Wineries & Vineyards** was a resounding success. Held on Thursday, January 30th at the executive dining room atop the One Wells Fargo building in uptown Charlotte, the event **raised over \$155,000 to benefit four local children's charities, a new fundraising record** for this event since its inception seven years ago.

*"Thursday's evening set the bar high," said Lauren Deese, Executive Director of Charlotte Wine & Food. "Thanks to our amazing title sponsor Wells Fargo, the generous support of our patrons, donors, sponsors, charity volunteers and special guest, **Bruce Mooers - President of Nickel & Nickel**, we'll continue to make a difference in the lives of children and their families in the Charlotte community."*

As the prelude to Charlotte Wine & Food's thirty-second year of fundraising, the Wells Fargo Kickoff Dinner has become a cherished tradition in the Charlotte community and a great way to fuel excitement for the non-profit's annual main event, the four-day **Charlotte Wine & Food Week presented by Truist** taking place **April 22-25**.

"Wells Fargo is proud of our longstanding relationship with Charlotte Wine & Food. We were very excited to host the kickoff again this year, especially since Charlotte Wine & Food was able to bring in one of Napa Valley's most renowned wineries – Far Niente!" said Phil Smith, CWF Chairman Emeritus and Executive Vice President and Head of Specialized Industries at Wells Fargo.

Two hundred guests started the evening at a cocktail reception featuring **EnRoute** wines as well as the featured specialty cocktail, "Lily Wants a Pony", created by mixologist **Andrew Skelton** of **Dot Dot Dot**, both which paired beautifully with bites provided by **Chef Daniel Wheel**, also from Dot Dot Dot, in partnership with the host **Chef Michael Bader**. The reception was followed by a five-course wine-pairing

dinner created by Wells Fargo Executive Dining Room's Chef Michael Bader and friends, featuring the premier wines of renowned **Far Niente Family of Wineries & Vineyards**, with the honored guest of the evening, Bruce Mooers, President of **Nickel & Nickel**. The wine selection for the evening included the 2018 Far Niente Estate Bottled Chardonnay, 2016 Nickel & Nickel Suscol Ranch Merlot, 2017 Bella Union Cabernet Sauvignon, 2017 Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon and 2013 Dolce Late Harvest.

The night wrapped up with the most spirited of live auctions conducted by professional wine benefit auctioneer, **Ursula Hermacinski**, including a mix of exclusive wine lots and experiences. The top grossing lot of the night was a Japanese Kaiseki cellar dinner featuring wines from the private cellar of Advanced Sake Master and Restaurateur, **Birdie Yang and his wife, Janine** of **BAKU, YAMA, Yama Izakaya** and **Yama Asian Fusion**. Additionally, multiple large format bottles of Far Niente and Nickel & Nickel wines were ever popular - so much so that Bruce Mooers doubled their donation to fulfill demand. With the support of all our generous donors, the **auction alone raised over \$120,000** for Charlotte Wine & Food's beneficiaries.

A raffle featuring a luxury vacation from **Inspirato** helped raise another \$5,000 for our beneficiaries and was won by CWF's special celebrity guest, retired Panthers' player, **Jonathan Stewart**, who also donated his time to be part of a priceless tailgating experience that was sold at the live auction.

Charlotte Wine & Food would like to extend special thanks to the evening's Corporate Sponsors - title sponsor **Wells Fargo** and supporting sponsor **Foreign Cars Charlotte**. They'd also like to thank their additional partners - **M Squared Public Relations, The Plaid Penguin, The Wine Vault** and **Far Niente Family of Wineries & Vineyards**. And last but certainly not least, they'd like to thank their local charity partners for whom all of this is for!

ABOUT CHARLOTTE WINE & FOOD

Charlotte Wine & Food brings together leading wine industry experts from around the world and pairs them with Charlotte's top chefs to celebrate and advance public knowledge of and appreciation for fine wine and food, while making significant contributions to charitable organizations that benefit children and their families in the Charlotte community.

Charlotte Wine & Food is a non-profit 501(c)3 directed by a fellowship of wine and food connoisseurs that make up its volunteer board of directors. All events benefit strategically selected charity partners that support children and their families in the local community. The beneficiaries for Charlotte Wine & Food's 2019-2020 fiscal are GenOne, Mitchell's Fund, The Learning Collaborative, and The Relatives.

If you would like more information about the event, or you would like to attend April's events, please contact Michelle Harden at 704-338-9463 or email mharden@charlottewineandfood.org.

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ABOUT FAR NIENTE FAMILY OF WINERIES & VINEYARDS

Far Niente Winery was established in 1885 by John Benson, a forty-niner of the California gold rush and uncle of the famous American impressionist painter, Winslow Homer. Far Niente prospered until the onset of Prohibition in 1919, when it was abandoned and left to fall into disrepair. Sixty years later, in 1979, Gil and Beth Nickel purchased the winery and adjacent vineyard and began a three-year restoration of the

property, which resulted in placement on the National Register of Historical Places. 1982 marked the return of winemaking to Far Niente, with the harvest of the winery's first Cabernet Sauvignon. Chardonnay was also produced at the winery for the first time that year. Today, the winery continues to focus on producing only the two varietal wines but also offers wines from its sister wineries - Bella Union, EnRoute, Dolce, and Nickel & Nickel.