



NEWS RELEASE

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Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival

Announces 2012 Dates & Schedule of Events –Tickets Available Online Dec. 1, 2011

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC (November 30, 2011) – The Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival has set the dates for the 2012 Festival which will be held March 5 – 10, 2012. The Great Chefs of the South Wine Dinners will take place at various locations on Hilton Head Island, Monday March 5 through Friday, March 9, 2012, details and pricing to be confirmed. The Grand Tasting and Silent Auction will be held on Friday, March 9 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Sea Pines Resort, Harbour Town Conference Center. The Wine & Food Festival and Silent Auction will be held from 12 – 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, 2012 at the Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn. Additional information and tickets are available for purchase online December 1, 2011 at www.hiltonheadwineandfood.com.

The Pre-Festival events include, “Uncork” the Festival on Friday, January 27, 2012 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Bomboras Grille, and the International Wine Judging and Competition, Saturday, January 28 and Sunday, January 29, 2012 at Sea Pines Resort, Harbour Town Conference Center.

“Uncork” the Festival

This event scheduled for Friday, January 27, 2012 at 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Bomboras Grille and is fashioned after another popular wine activity called *Open That Bottle Night*. “Most of us have a special bottle of wine, champagne or spirits tucked away in a closet or in the back of the refrigerator. The bottle is special because of who gave it to us, or why they gave it to us, or why we bought it. The originators of Open That Bottle Night realized that we all have such bottles, but we never find just the right occasion to open them up and enjoy the contents,” says Jeff Gerber of Bomboras Grille and HHI Wine & Food Festival Executive Committee member. To kick off the 2012 event the organizers of the Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival are inviting members of the public to reserve a space at this exclusive, limited seating event and to bring their special bottle(s) of wine to taste with their friends and other attendees. In addition, the winning poster in the student poster competition will be unveiled. Tickets are \$35 per person and available online December 1, 2011.

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International Wine Judging & Competition

In a field of many wine and food festivals produced in the United States a limited few incorporate an international judging component as part of their activities. A unified online wine entry process (Enofileonline.com) allows the Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival to cross market its Wine Competition at many wineries and distributors internationally and more efficiently online.

The 2011 Festival received over 600 wine entries in the Wine Competition. Approximately 20 professional and accredited wine judges, with expert knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of wine will gather at the International Wine Judging and Competition which will take place Saturday, January 28 and Sunday, January 29, 2012 at Sea Pines Resort, Harbour Town Conference Center. The Judges are all accredited either through the Society of Wine Educators or by the Court of Master Sommeliers. This event is not open to the general public. The award recipients will be announced publicly on Saturday, March 10th at the Wine & Food Festival and Silent Wine Auction.

Great Chefs of the South Wine Dinners

A series of wine dinners at some of the Island's most outstanding restaurants and dining establishments take place for five days leading up to the Saturday, March 10th Wine & Food Festival. The Great Chefs of the South Wine Dinners partner great wines and local chefs for a wide variety of scrumptious menu pairings beginning on Monday, March 5 through Friday, March 9, 2012. In addition to the core activities of the festival, many local restaurants will schedule events at their respective businesses to join us in celebrating the island as a top southeastern culinary destination. Each Great Chef of the South restaurant pairs its host chef with a specific winery, and a special menu with accompanying wine, designed specifically for each different venue. Prices range from \$55 to \$125 per person; participating restaurants, menus and pricing to be determined soon.

Grand Tasting & Silent Auction

The success of the Grand Tasting & Silent Auction event last year established this event as an annual activity of the Festival, with an increase in the value of the wines submitted for tasting, as well as an increase in the number of attendees to 250 people. The tasting takes place at Sea Pines Resort, Harbour Town Conference Center on Friday, March 9th from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. with reservations secured through an online ticket purchase of \$65 per person. "This event sold out last year and provides those with sophisticated palates the opportunity to discover wines that they may desire to include in their private collections. Gourmet tastings will also accompany the wine," says Jeff Kruse, with Sea Pines Resort and HHI Wine & Food Festival Executive Committee member.

Wine & Food Festival and Silent Wine Auction

Wine lovers, connoisseurs and nouveau wine enthusiasts, will attend the Wine & Food Festival and Silent Wine Auction on Saturday, March 10, 2012 at Honey Horn. Ticket holders will have the opportunity to mingle with winemakers, sample hundreds of award-winning wines, learn from leaders in the food and beverage arena and enjoy gourmet treats and live music. The first 3,000 individuals through the gate will receive an official 2012 souvenir wine glass. In addition to tasting outstanding domestic and international wines, all of the Festival award-winning wines will be available for tasting. The Silent Wine Auction is an opportunity to bid on impressive lots of wine. Many popular spectator events are included once again this year in the Festival's schedule: Bartender's Challenge & Waiter's Race; Outdoor Gourmet – where award-winning local and regional Chefs offer cooking tips, demonstrations and free samples of cuisine throughout the entire day.

New this year at the Wine & Food Festival:

A wider variety of gourmet treats will abound at the new Culinary Court – with some additional seating areas; Special demonstrations, educational seminars and events will take place at two new stages and tents: Health & Wellness Stage and the Celebrity Lowcountry Authors Tent. A poster competition is underway and open to all students 18 and older, residents of South Carolina and Georgia. There has been several Naming Opportunity Rights sponsorship opportunities developed this year – for everything from the Outdoor Gourmet to the Health & Wellness Stage. A new Patron ticket is also available this year, which will allow admission to the Saturday, March 10 Wine & Food Festival, with V.I.P. Hospitality Tent access and preview access to bid in the Silent Auction, before it opens to the general public.

“We had so many requests for a V.I.P. ticket last year, that we developed the new Patrons ticket for 2012 which will have many additional perks for the Patron Festival attendee, such as V.I.P. access to the Festival Hospitality Tent with some comfy seating and an opportunity to preview and place bids in the wine auction before anybody else has an opportunity to do so. We are very excited about all of the new Festival happenings this year,” said Festival Chairman and COO of Equity Payment, Tami Bream.

The popular Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival event tickets will be available for purchase on-line December 1, 2011, with advance ticket discounts available for the Wine & Food Festival, Saturday, March 10, 2012, regular ticket price \$45 – advance purchase available online for \$39.99. You must be 21 or older to attend the Festival events. Online tickets will also be available to purchase for “Uncork” the Festival, \$35 per person; ,Grand Tasting & Silent Auction, \$65 per person; and the Wine & Food Festival Patrons Tickets, \$75 per person.

Attendees at the Pubic Tasting will sample a wide assortment of wines, witness competitive culinary events and enjoy gourmet treats and live music. The continued success of this event could not be possible without the sponsor support and the multitude of volunteers who work diligently on behalf of this Festival. A Sponsor Package with all of the 2012 sponsorship opportunities for the Festival is available online.

And the Island is rolling out its best, red wine-colored carpets and raising its glasses to toast the 27th annual Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival. There are many special Wine & Food Festival Accommodations Packages available for all budgets, from The Westin Resort & Spa, Resort Quest, the Hilton Garden-Inn and the Main Street Inn. All can be found on the website at, www.hiltonheadwineandfood.com.

The 2012 Hilton Head Island Wine & Food Festival’s Silent Auctions benefit educational opportunities for students in the Hospitality programs of study at the University of South Carolina Beaufort and the Technical College of the Lowcountry through the John T. and Valerie Curry scholarship fund.

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