

{ THE BIGLIFE SUMMER FOOD TOUR }

THE VINE AND DINE TOUR

words by JENNIFER WALTON

Summer is the season for food and wine festivals. Around the Mountain West, sommeliers and chefs, wine enthusiasts and foodies are gearing up for some of the best parties of the year. Here's a rundown of some of our favorite vine and dine festivals around the West.

1 FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN ASPEN JUNE 15 – JUNE 17

The *FOOD & WINE* Classic in Aspen is like no other festival for the food- and wine-obsessed. With over 80 cooking, wine, and cocktail seminars and the Grand Tasting Pavilion with 200+ wines and luxury lifestyle brands that include Best New Chefs' tastings, this three-day event continually sells out because the talent and programming are out-of-this-world. "We're thrilled to showcase incredible talent from the food, wine, beer, spirits, and travel industries and share with attendees the best new trends, ingredients, flavors, and techniques plus a whole lot of high-altitude fun," says *FOOD & WINE*'s Editor-in-Chief Hunter Lewis. There's a reunion-like atmosphere for repeat attendees; sure, it may be pricey at \$1,700 a ticket, but quality ain't cheap. Legendary chefs, 2018 Restaurants of the Year, exclusive events like Last Call presented by American Express, and the 30th Anniversary Best New Chefs dinner at the top of Aspen Mountain are only some of the reasons why up to 5,000 people flock each summer. Spendy and boozy, yes. Elegant and fun, most certainly.

Big Bonus: Take a quick run in the Celebrity Chef Charity 5K along the Rio Grande River to support Grow for Good, an organization that benefits Wholesome Wave Foundation—a national initiative that supports local farms and encourages sustainable agriculture.

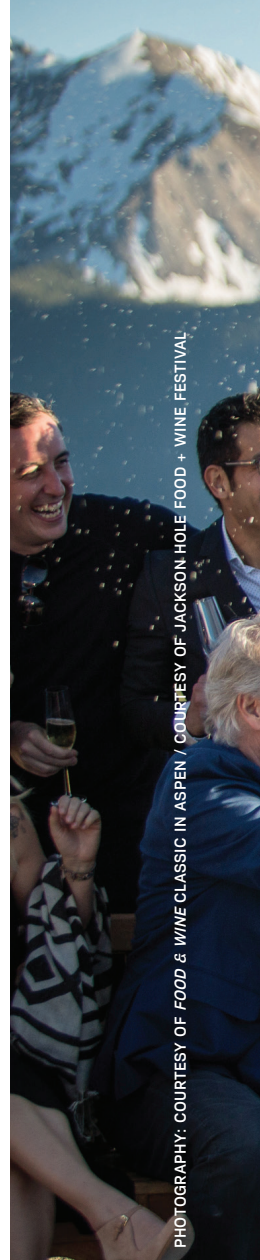
Big Tip: Get yourself on the list for the Infinite Monkey Theorem's Wine at the Mine night.

foodandwineclassic.com

2 JACKSON HOLE FOOD + WINE JUNE 21 – JUNE 23

It's not the first rodeo for former Grand Teton Music Festival Wine Auction's reputable team of Megan Gallagher and Haynes Poe. After that impressive auction retired, these talented women and a quartet of local business owners created the Jackson Hole Food + Wine Festival. Last summer's first festival featured Chris Shepherd of Houston's Underbelly and Ryan Prewitt of New Orleans' Pêche. This summer's event includes Mr. Nieporent, owner of New York City's Nobu and Bâtard—also now acting as JHFW's Culinary Director—and chefs Ricky Estrellado and Ryo Hasegawa, both from Nobu Downtown NYC. Also in the line-up? Two chef/owner couples with extraordinary creative vision. From San Francisco, Stuart Briozza and Nicole Krasinski of State Bird Provisions and The Theater, and from Los Angeles, Walter Manzke and Margarita Manzke of République and Sari Sari Store. And then there's the wine. Vintners include Vérité, Cakebread Cellars, and Tim Mondavi of Continuum. And the signature events like Taste of Jackson Hole (a local's favorite held at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's Rendezvous Lodge), Big Wines Small Plates (hosted by chef/owner Gavin Fine of Fine Dining Group), Savor at Mead Ranch, and a dinner series held in breathtaking locations throughout Jackson Hole.

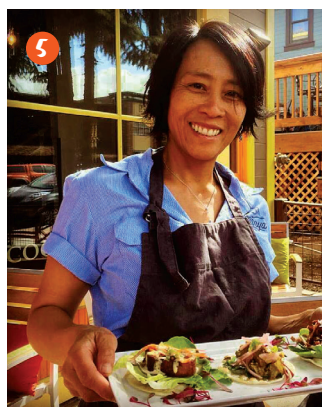
Big Impact: Jackson Hole Food + Wine donates some of its proceeds to Hole Food Rescue, a non-profit that distributes excess food from grocery stores, bakeries, farms, and local businesses to organizations serving the at-risk residents of Teton County, Wyoming. jhfoodandwine.com



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN ASPEN / COURTESY OF JACKSON HOLE FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL









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3 SUN VALLEY CENTER FOR THE ARTS WINE AUCTION

JULY 19 – JULY 21

Rewind to the 1980s when Sun Valley's matriarch Glenn Janss knew that her town could throw a good party and that her community would benefit from a wine auction to support its growing art habit. And so the Sun Valley Center for the Arts Wine Auction was born. History has proved that her assumptions were spot-on and The Center (the arts organization Janss helped create) is still throwing one damn fine weekend party and fundraiser. The highlights are plenty with hosted Vintner Dinners (intimate affairs at *Architectural Digest*-worthy homes around the valley), the Wine Auction Gala (raise that paddle high; the competition for out-of-this-world auction items can be enthusiastic), and Vine & Dine (a lawn party Sun Valley-style, with live music, dancing, and optional VIP tasting and early entry). Sip varietals from 100+ wineries, stroll through the beer garden while nibbling on pretzels with Sun Valley Mustard, and dance until the sun sets. The Sun Valley Center for the Arts uses the funds raised from this event to ensure that students of all backgrounds have an opportunity to be immersed in the arts—engaging their senses, passions, and curiosity. So, eat, drink, and be merry. All in the name of a good cause.

Big Impact: Last year, The Center served over 41,000 attendees at 338 events, 68% of which were free to the community. Over 9,000 students participate annually in Center events.

sunvalleycenter.org

4 TELLURIDE WINE FESTIVAL

JUNE 28 – JULY 1

There's a box canyon in the Rocky Mountains where art galleries sit next to Victorian-era homes, where sommeliers know the names of the surrounding peaks by heart, and where the only free gondola in the U.S. connects the 12-block-long town of Telluride to its partner in small town beauty, Mountain Village. Telluride Wine Festival commemorates its 37th year with an experience that is pure Rocky Mountain high. Above and beyond the "Celebration of Colorado," there are cooking demos, celebrity chefs, wine seminars and films, free kids' cooking classes, and non-alcoholic options for non-grape drinkers. The event, which carries the distinction as "the highest wine tasting in North America," offers a sizeable range of drinking festivities in an area that is incredibly scenic and blushes with hometown pride like a perfect summer rosé.

Big Tip: Looking to test a bit more of the Colorado culture? Sign up for an evening in a private home featuring "Consumption with Intention: A Mountaintop Food, Wine, and Cannabis Culinary Pairing." Transportation is provided.

telluridewinefestival.com

5 CRESTED BUTTE WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

JULY 25 – JULY 29

With an authentic mix of local, regional, and international chefs, the Crested Butte Wine & Food Festival receives big points for its eclectic carte du cuisine.

For its 37th anniversary, the featured events include: Thursday night's Wine-maker's Dinner: Risk-Taking Wines & Venturesome Cuisine with Chef David Wooding of Crested Butte's famed Soupçon and Abe Schoener of Los Angeles' Scholium Project; Friday night's Winemaker's Dinner: Epicurean's Delight with Chef Brother Luck (chef/owner of Four by Brother Luck, competitor on season 15 of *Top Chef*, winner of Food Network's *Beat Bobby Flay*, and finalist on *Chopped*), Chef Tim Egelhoff (acclaimed private chef), and Chef Rose Reyes (from locally-loved High Alpine Rum Distillery with farm-fresh small plates). There's The Chocolate Therapist, Julie Nygard, Django's Executive Chef Kate Ladoulis, and chef/owner Josh Niernberg of Grand Junction's Bin 707 Foodbar, who will delve into the details during Flights & Bites. Get into crafting edibles (wildflowers and plants) with foraging guidebook author and owner of Rooted Apothecary, Briana Wiles, or sit for a spell and sample great bourbon over a lip-smacking smoky BBQ. The pièce de résistance, though, is the Grand Tasting with over 500 select wines from 25 vintners. Choose to greet the morning at the All-Star Brunch Bash (hang with chefs et al at this invitation-only breakfast) or the festival's final highlight, the Bursting with Bubbles Brunch.

Big Tip: Before heading to Crested Butte, check in on items to bid on through the Crested Butte Wine & Food website, then register for a Click-Bid account and let the bidding begin.

cbwineandfood.com

COURTESY OF CRESTED BUTTE WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF SUN VALLEY CENTER FOR THE ARTS / COURTESY OF TELLURIDE WINE FESTIVAL

