

## Bidding Pace Slows at Napa Valley Wine Auction

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By *Daniel Sogg*

Although it fell short of the astonishing heights achieved during the heyday of the dot-com craze, the 2002 Napa Valley Wine Auction, held on Saturday at Meadowood Resort in the heart of the valley, still raised \$6.12 million, the third largest total in the 22 years of the event.



A black-tie banquet was held at the Meadowood Resort in St. Helena, Calif.

Bidders competed for Napa's most sought-after, small-production labels, which were often offered in conjunction with travel and dining experiences. Software executive David Doyle of Newport Coast, Calif., made the high bid of the day, \$320,000 for a package that included 26 magnums from Oakville vintners such as cult favorites Screaming Eagle and Harlan Estate.

Longtime auction participant Ona Roth of Santa Barbara spent \$300,000 for a nine-vintage vertical of Cabernet Sauvignon from Diamond Creek Vineyards. B.A. "Red" Adams of Morgan, La., anted up the same amount for nine magnums from Harlan. "You get to donate some money and drink some good wine," said Adams, who joked that he "got this one for 60 percent off" after spending \$700,000 two years ago on another Harlan lot.



Bidder Raymond Tye raises his paddle.

Despite the formidable final tally, the bidding reflected the relative restraint of a challenging economy. This year's total marked the second consecutive decrease after raising a record \$9.5 million in 2000 and \$7.6 million last year. The 138 live lots on Saturday garnered an average of about \$34,650, substantially less than last year's \$43,400.

Nonetheless, some vintners suggest that the decline might actually be for the best. "The last two years, some lots were going for such crazy numbers that it was actually pushing away vintners from the live auction," said John Kongsgaard, partner and winemaker at Arietta. Proceeds from the auction benefit a variety of health care, youth and housing organizations throughout Napa.

### Top Ten Lots

**Dolce** -- \$110,000

Ten-vintage magnum vertical of Late Harvest Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc 1989-1998