

# FOOD DRINK WINE

BY DAVE McINTYRE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROELAND KONING

## HAVE A HEART *An annual charity wine auction brings together the best of Bordeaux and DC's biggest spenders*

When J.D. Murphy, president of Computech, Inc., a local information technology firm, and his wife, Geneviève, host a dinner party at their Bethesda home on May 11, they won't have to worry about cooking. Robert Wiedmaier of Marcel's restaurant will be handling that for them. And they needn't bother about wine from their cellar, either, for Florence Cathiard of Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte and Alfred Tesseron of Château Pontet-Canet will be bringing enough to satisfy their fourteen guests.

The party, for which most of the guests will be paying \$250, is part of the private dinner series of Heart's Delight, an annual wine auction and charity event to benefit the American Heart Association. The three-day bacchanalia has raised more than \$3.5 million for the association's fight against heart disease. Thursday evening features fifteen similar dinners at private homes of donors, ambassadors' residences or restaurants offering guests the opportunity to hobnob with winemakers or winery owners, primarily from Bordeaux, although the ambassadors of Greece, Italy, Argentina and Australia manage to promote their countries' wines as well.

Many of those guests (and more) will suit up in black tie on Friday, May 12, for the Heart's Delight Vintners Dinner, which this year features the wines of Château Margaux, one of Bordeaux' First Growths, with vintages dating back to 1983. Dinner will be followed by an auction. Saturday features a tasting of more than twenty Bordeaux from the 2003 vintage, the current release, followed by another auction. Thirsty philanthropists will have a chance to bid on luxury vacation packages to Paris, Bordeaux and Napa as well as several impressive wine lots. Last year's auction catalog included a bottle of 1899 Château Latour that sold for \$4,900, a mixed case of 1982 Bordeaux (\$6,000) and a Balthazar (a 12-liter bottle holding the equivalent of 16 bottles of wine) of Château Haut-Brion 2000 (\$19,000). Saturday's dinner will be prepared by a who's who of Washington chefs, including Jamie Leeds of Hank's Oyster Bar, Bryan Voltaggio of Charlie Palmer Steak, Frank Morales of Zola and Santi Zabaleta of Taberna del Alabardero. Chefs from Ortolan in Los Angeles, Aria in Atlanta and Icarus in Boston will also participate.

Heart's Delight was initiated by friends of Bruce Bassin, a member of the family that owns MacArthur Beverages, after he died of a heart attack at age 40 in 1998. It has grown into one of the largest—if not the largest—wine charity events in the nation. The Bassin family has used its connections in the wine trade in Bordeaux and California, as well as with *Wine Advocate* publisher Robert Parker, the world's most influential wine critic, to sponsor tastings and auctions to benefit cancer and heart disease research.

The private dinners of Heart's Delight evolved as a way of promoting personal contact with the winemakers and château owners, J.D. Murphy says. "Winemakers were arriving for a dinner on Friday and a tasting on Saturday, but they weren't really getting to meet people," he explains. "This allows the winemaker to meet his customers, and gives us a chance to get to know the personality of the wine through its maker." Murphy has become friends with Tesseron of Pontet-Canet, a Fifth Growth in Bordeaux' Pauillac appellation, through the Heart's Delight dinners he's hosted at his house the past few years.

Yet Heart's Delight is more than an opportunity for Murphy to rub shoulders with the wine world's elite. For him it's emotional as well. Six years ago, shortly after becoming involved with the American Heart Association, he underwent quadruple bypass surgery. Now 56 and healthy, he's determined to help others. "The heart association is doing a world of good for the future of people with heart disease, through research into new techniques and drugs and treatments," Murphy says. "By supporting it today, we may help someone survive tomorrow." ■

For more information about Heart's Delight, visit [www.heartsdelightwineauction.org](http://www.heartsdelightwineauction.org).



A tasting of Château Margaux