



Sipping Charitably

Above and beyond the auctions, **JUDD WALLENBROCK** and other Napa Valley winemakers offer ways to taste great wine for good causes.

Drink to that: Judd Wallenbrock, founder and owner of Humanitas winery, donates all the company's profits to charity.

The wine world is famous for donating high-profile lots to black-tie benefits that raise millions of dollars each year—like the Auction Napa Valley, which has brought in more than \$70 million for area health care, youth services, and affordable housing. But wine makers and wine lovers have other ways to contribute. A handful of Napa Valley vintners are creating boutique brands and channeling the profits from them directly to charitable causes.

Judd Wallenbrock is one such vintner. A 27-year veteran of the wine industry, Wallenbrock launched Humanitas Wines six years ago with two things in mind: making great wine and giving something back. “I am a winery choosing to help charity, not a charity making wine,” he explains. “I do what I do best—make and market great wine—in order to give money to groups that do charity better than I ever could.”

Humanitas is a for-profit winery that gives 100 percent of its net profits—15 to 20 percent of revenues—to local and regional organizations that address three primary issues: education, homelessness, and hunger. “I target community groups rather than national headquarters to ensure that proceeds go directly to the neighborhoods where our customers live and work.”

Bay Area recipients include the Solano-Napa affiliate of Habitat for Humanity, which Wallenbrock helped get off the ground in 2003, and the San Francisco Food Bank, the city's largest source of nutritional assistance, distributing nearly 28 million pounds of food to more than 124,000 people each year.

“Judd's approach lets consumers choose a great wine and know they are part of doing something



Other Wines That Get in the Spirit

Schramsberg Querencia (\$39.50). This sparkling wine—a 50–50 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir—is a special collaboration between Schramsberg’s winemakers and the staff of the Wine Spectator Greystone Restaurant at the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena. The proceeds support the Jack L. Davies Land Preservation Fund, which is maintained by the Community Foundation of Napa Valley to preserve the valley as it exists today. The wine is available at the winery and the restaurant. For more information, visit schramsberg.com.

Ehlers Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc (\$20–\$100). The Leducq Foundation, a major sponsor of cardiovascular research, oversees this Napa Valley wine estate. The wines are available in stores throughout the Bay Area, at the winery, and through ehlersestate.com.

Rivera Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (\$100+). Steven and Marilyn Rivera donate all the wine proceeds from their Napa Valley estate to Bay Area charities, focusing in particular on causes benefiting children and health. Thanks to impeccable vineyard location and estate management, and the renowned winemaking skills of Karen Culler (Ladera, Wolf Family, and Culler Wines), Rivera wines have achieved cult status—and significant bids—at all the auctions at which the wines have been featured. For more information, see riveravineyards.org.

Juslyn Vineyards “Rescue” 2001 Napa Red blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. Carolyn and Perry Butler were inspired by a recent visit to Thailand to create this exquisite red blend. All proceeds benefit the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, which rescues elephants off the streets of Thailand’s cities and returns them to safe, natural jungle environments. This wine is available for purchase in 1.5L bottles (\$285) or in a three-pack of 750ml bottles. Both come in a collector’s wooden Elephant Rescue box. For more information, see juslynvineyards.com.

Portfolio Limited Edition Napa Red blend (\$100, limited production). Artist Luc Janssens and his wife, Genevieve, director of winemaking at Robert Mondavi, operate the boutique Portfolio Winery out of their East Napa home, where they produce 20 large-format bottles each year of this highly sought red blend (up to \$6,000 retail). They donate all of the profits to the Lao Rehabilitation Foundation, which fights hunger and builds medical clinics in Laos. For more information, visit portfoliowinery.com.

socially good,” says Paul Ash, executive director of the San Francisco Food Bank. “That he incorporates philanthropy right into his brand is a pure expression of how he thinks the world should operate.”

The idea for Humanitas first came to Wallenbrock 10 years ago as he turned 40 and found himself reflecting more on his professional and philanthropic goals. “It all comes down to the things I feel most strongly about,” says the married father of three, now 50, whose industry experience includes nine years as a senior executive with Robert Mondavi Winery and three with DeLoach Vineyards. “Bob Mondavi has always said that wine is a part of the good life, and that everyone deserves to live a good life. I agree wholeheartedly,” Wallenbrock says. “I really believe that wine can change the world, one sip at a time, and that’s what I’ve set out to do.”

Wallenbrock makes a small amount of very high-end wine at his Napa home—which is a legal, bonded winery—but rents space in other wineries to make most of the 2,000 cases he produces each year for public sale. “My investment goes directly into our wine, not a facility,” he explains.

Humanitas’ October 2007 releases arrived just in time for the holidays and include a 2005 Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon (\$18 retail, 970 cases available); a 2006 oak-free Monterey Chardonnay (\$16, 490 cases); and a 2006 Monterey Sauvignon Blanc (\$14, 290 cases).

Humanitas wines are available at select bars, restaurants, and wine stores throughout the Bay Area, but the best way to learn more and purchase the wines is online at humanitaswines.com. Customers ordering online can choose a community charity to benefit.

Coming in 2008: an expansion to new varietals, including high-end Cabernet Sauvignon sourced entirely from John Caldwell’s renowned Napa vineyard (\$75, 75 cases).

Ultimately, Wallenbrock would like to find another partner or two to expand to a significant size and take the brand global. “I want to build a Humanitas in Italy, for example, making Italian wines that support Italian causes, and move into Spain, France, and Australia.”

Which proves that wine *can* change the world, one sip at a time. **B**