



## Aspen Sojourner's 2017 Food & Wine Classic Superlatives

**Our editors share the highlights from their overstuffed reporters' notebooks (and stomachs).**

By [Cindy Hirschfeld](#) and [Katie Shapiro](#) 6/20/2017 at 2:12pm

The annual summit of all-star chefs, sommeliers, industry leaders, and culinary obsessed consumers lived up to its infamous reputation yet again. Celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the #FWClassic took over town (and Instagram) from June 15–18, when more than 5,000 attendees feasted on a full schedule of seminars, tastings, parties, and more parties. Here, in no particular order, our editor-in-chief, [Cindy Hirschfeld](#), and digital editor, [Katie Shapiro](#), share the top 23 moments from their overstuffed reporters' notebooks. ICYMI: Catch more of our behind-the-scenes shots [@aspensojourner](#).

### **1. Best Seminar: Wines for Zillionaires**

Following the natural progression of seminar topics that started with the release of his book *How to Drink Like a Billionaire*, energetic wine expert [Mark Oldman](#) has hit zillionaire status. (Last year, it was “Wines for Trillionaires.”) Sipping from bottles that collectively cost at least \$6,000 while laughing out loud? Priceless. And, of course, he got Aspen Mayor Steve Skadron up on stage to successfully saber a bottle of champagne.

### **2. Best New Official Event: Food & Wine's Farewell Feast**

The festive send-off meal at the Hotel Jerome was the perfect way to wind down our weekend, with some of the best brunch bites we've ever tasted. Celebrity chefs—

including chocolate maker Johnny Iuzzini, [Eggslut's](#) Alvin Cailan, and Mexikosher's Katsuji Tanabe—were joined by Clark's Oyster Bar, which set up its traveling raw bar in the recently remodeled Library, and Mionetto Prosecco, which provided a steady stream of bubbly.

### **3. Heritage Fire Local Highlights: Aspen Kitchen & Eight K**

Every time the chefs from [Aspen Kitchen](#) trotted out their clothesline bacon, hanging from two long, suspended wires, at Saturday's outdoor-cooking extravaganza in Base Village, eager carnivores swarmed around to nab a piece of the savory pork sweetened with honey lavender glaze. [Eight K](#) Executive Chef Will Nolan's smoked pig, creole maque choux relish, green tomato, and carrot top chimichurri hit the spot, too.

### **4. Best Escape: Toast x Loopr**

This locally based [luxury cannabis](#) newcomer hosted the first-ever private cannabis lounge during the Food & Wine Classic to introduce its [sleek, pre-rolled product](#). To abide by local consumption laws, private, invitation-only rides through town were offered Friday and Saturday on a decked-out bus by [Loopr](#)—a welcome break from too much food and wine. Plus, the only way to reinduce the munchies.

### **5. Best Dressed: Padma Lakshmi**

The haute Bravo host stopped by legendary Western wear outfitter Kemo Sabe to perfect her mountain-chic look before taping a challenge episode for the latest season of *Top Chef* at the base of Buttermilk on Friday.

### **6. Best Celebrity Pour: Lisa Vanderpump**

The *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* star was in the tent on Friday to personally pour the family's new rosé from Côtes De Provence. Giggy, however, didn't make an appearance.

### **7. Best Quote: Patrick Cappiello**

As one of the Aspen Chamber Resort Association's special guests at its annual kick-off to the Classic luncheon, the celebrity sommelier and creator of 40 Ounce Wines said, "I'm from New York. If we had this many days of blue skies and [legal weed](#) ... I wouldn't get anything done."

### **8. Most Athletic: SoulCycle**

SoulCycle [wins again](#) with another Aspen [pop-up](#) at the American Express Platinum House—it was the most stunning spin studio we've ever seen. And with a waitlist for all four classes over the weekend, we're pretty sure it's time for them to open a permanent location in town already.

### **9. Best Swag: Le Creuset 1-quart Dutch Oven**

Hosted by the gracious public relations team at The Little Nell and Aspen Skiing Company, the 2nd annual VIP Media Breakfast on the Nell patio highlighted a four-course menu from Element 47's culinary team, led by executive chef Matt Zubrod. Lucky for us, the French purveyor of enamel-coated cast iron cookware has a new partnership with the Nell, using its serving pieces for each dish during the breakfast and, now, throughout the property's restaurants.

### **10. Best Best Friends: Aspen Brewing Company & Restaurant Marc Forgione**

The brewery boys brought Restaurant Marc Forgione chef Andy Knudson (formerly of [Steakhouse No. 316](#)) back to town for the weekend in the Grand Tasting Tent, where he served 150 pounds of lamb from Aspen Cattle Company for his Pastrami Lambchetta, paired with This Season's Blonde.

### **11. Biggest Gossip: Clark's Oyster Bar**

While we were gorging on fresh shellfish—which the [Clark's Oyster Bar](#) crew personally drove up from their Austin eatery—at Sunday's Farewell Feast, we got wind that McGuire Moorman Hospitality has its eye on Aspen for its next hot spot.

### **12. Smoothest Sip: Bad Stuff Extra Añejo Tequila**

Served at the annual Thursday night party on the rooftop deck at Dancing Bear, it's made from Tequilana weber blue agave and goes down way too easily (a bottle is \$270).

### **13. Favorite Tent Bites: Verlasso & Aria**

There are rarely bad bites in the Grand Tasting Tent, but few have us returning more than once (or, in this case, seven times). Exhibit A: Verlasso's velvety salmon topped with a dollop of lemongrass sorbet. The fish is sustainably farm-raised in Chilean Patagonia and was deliciously prepared by the Caribou Club catering team. Tied for top place were Sunday morning's soft-shell crabs from Las Vegas's Aria Resort & Casino, who also gets an honorable mention for the gigantic pieces of brioche French toast it served Saturday; they were the perfect sponges for the next hour and a half of wine sipping.

### **14. Coolest New Soirée: The Peak Party**

Held on the Cliffhouse patio at the top of Buttermilk by the wine group Terroir, the event began with guests being shuttled from the Wheeler Opera House to the base of Buttermilk in a fleet of Teslas. After a unique summer ride on the Summit Express chairlift, guests arrived to a pig roast, fondue dessert bar, throwback rock n'roll tunes, and jaw-dropping views of Pyramid Peak and Aspen Highlands.

### **15. Best Saturday Night Sunset View: Wine at the Mine VI**

At Infinite Monkey Theorem's perennially popular Wine at the Mine party on the side of Smuggler Mountain, the sunset seemed to last forever, its rosy glow illuminating Mount Sopris well past dusk. Said wine guru Mark Oldman at his seminar the next morning:

“You guys get to enjoy that for free. I’m from New York, and I expected some asshole to pop out of the bushes when it was over and say, ‘You owe me \$80 for that.’”

#### **16. Most Over-the-Top VIP Experience: AmEx Platinum House**

The American Express Platinum House x Stephanie Izard set up in a legendary 18,750-square-foot rental house on Ute Avenue (Rihanna celebrated a birthday in it) that includes an indoor lap pool, spa, outside water features with translucent floorlights, home theater, and a bowling alley resembling a mine shaft. AmEx added to the grandeur with tastings and meals from celeb chef Izard (of Chicago’s The Goat), outdoor SoulCycle classes, guided meditation, Olive & June manicures, DryBar hair styling, and more. And everywhere—lots and lots of temporary goat imagery, from hoofprints chalked on the driveway-lining boulders to small statues scattered throughout the house.

#### **17. Craziest Chocolate Concoctions: Delysia**

Nicole Patel of Austin-based Delysia created a slew of custom truffles for the Classic. From mind-blowing orange blossom and honey sriracha to flavors we just couldn’t bring ourselves to try (spaghetti dinner, cheeseburger), these were no ordinary treats.

#### **18. Tastiest Chardonnay Discovery: 2014 Gran Moraine**

Thanks go to [Leslie Sbrocco](#), who introduced this varietal from Oregon’s Willamette Valley during her sold-out seminar, ‘It’s Willamette, Dammit!’”

#### **19. Wildest After Party: Patrón the Summer**

When #roseallday ends with the latest cocktail creations from Patrón and live music from electric violinist Kat V., the party inevitably goes all night and sees even the classiest of crowds go really, really rogue.

#### **20. Best After Party: Champagne & Sushi**

Open Table's 4th annual late-night soiree at Matsuhisa is the stuff dreams are made of: hundreds of bottles of champagne flowing with endless bites of signature dishes from Chef Nobu Matsuhisa—who was literally having the best time of us all.

### **21. Perfect Pre-Game: Coppola Winery's Sofia Manis + Minis**

To celebrate the launch of its new Brut Rosé, named in honor of the award-winning director's daughter (an award-winning director herself), the winery engaged Salon Tullio to pamper guests with blowouts, manicures, and makeup, priming us gals for the photo-op-filled weekend ahead.

### **22. Prettiest Packaging: NoMADica**

The just-launched wine company from Harvard MBA Emma Toshack is her first move post-Snapchat and it's stunning ... inside and out. Toshack worked with painters, illustrators, photographers, designers, and street artists to create these limited-edition cans, which are drinkable, portable works of art.

### **23. Cutest Couple: Rocky & Christina Tosi**

Milk Bar's Christina Tosi took a break from the Grand Tasting Tent to say hello to the Hotel Jerome's newest staff member. Bernese Mountain Dog Rocky holds court at the concierge desk (weekdays only) when he's not out for a hike with guests.