

5 Reasons to Count Down to Next Year's Calabasas Malibu Food and Wine Festival

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The Los Angeles area experienced a bit of a heat wave this past weekend, which made for the perfect weather for a night outdoors at the 9th Annual Calabasas Malibu Food and Wine Festival. More than 100 different food, drink and commodity vendors participated in the two-night event. Held just outside of the city, the scenic Calabasas Country Club played host to a relaxing yet entertaining

evening for Malibu's, Hidden Hills' and Calabasas' elite. Although we have another 363 days to wait, these are the five reasons you should be looking forward to next year's event:

A Unique Evening Out

While summer is known for big-ticket blockbusters, the traditional dinner-and-a-movie date can get stale. Why be cooped up inside when SoCal offers gorgeous summer weather? With food, drinks (including non-alcoholic options) and entertainment, the festival brings together everything you'd want for a night out in one place. Not only does it serve as a unique date-night option (as it did for me), it also provides all the elements for a memorable girls (or guys!) night out — something I'm making note of for next year. An added bonus is its plethora of photo opportunities, from posing with Mini Coopers and BMWs parked in front of the humongous #BCLONA, to taking pictures in front of a wall of flowers or using the rolling hills of the golf course as your backdrop.



The Auction

With more than a few dozen items, the silent auction was a source of entertainment for the evening. In a kind of e-Bay format, people placed bids throughout the night and those who had their eye on a specific item could place a bid for the “buy-it-now” price



to not worry about continuously checking the bid sheet (as the new owner of a signed Steph Curry jersey did). Besides the 2015 NBA MVP merchandise, there were plenty of Lakers items as well as a signed Aaron Rodgers jersey and even a signed pair of shorts from legendary soccer player Pelé. For those that didn't enjoy sports memorabilia, there were also wine packages, handbags and even signed photos from the Game of Thrones set.

The Food

To be honest, I was hoping for more food. After hitting up a few vendors twice, I still ended up ordering food on the way home since there was a minimal selection. What was there, however, was excellent. Comfort foods like pizza and soft pretzels were just as delicious as Something Good 2 Eat's creole empanadas and Roy's tuna tartare. A long line at the Academy of Culinary Education's table proved worth the wait as their spread of Italian sandwiches, pasta and panna cotta was an excellent mini-meal.

The Drinks

The drinks were the definite stars of the evening. Being a wine festival, it's obvious that there was enough wine to make a Real Housewife happy. The festival was a great opportunity to find a new favorite winery, as smaller companies like Canyon Crest Winery, Vino Vargas, Gagnon Cellars and Cielo Malibu Estate Vineyard kept glasses full. My favorite sips of the night though came from the Ventura Limoncello Company, Aktien Brewery's Rose Beer, UB Irish Whiskey's almost-dangerous peach punch, and Diddy's extra-smooth DeLeón Tequila (which was served as both a shot and a punch). I would definitely recommend hiring a driver or using an Uber at the end of the night, that way you won't have to pass up any of the tempting libations.

The Cigar Roller

I really hope Luis Mejia of M. Cigars makes a repeat appearance next year. His table was one of the most unique of the evening. Friendly and clearly experienced, Luis knew his stuff. And although he only had one type of cigar at the festival, almost everyone who stopped at his table seemed pleased with it. He did promise that he provides several options when booked for other events though.

In all, the Calabasas Malibu Food and Wine Festival was a great way to find out about local vendors as well as try some newer brands. What I'd also like to see next year though are more tables; aside from chairs, there weren't very many places to put a plate down to eat, which made things difficult. I'd also like to see more VIP benefits, the earlier admittance didn't seem to make much of a difference and there was no exclusive area to be found.



Next year though, being its 10th anniversary, I'm sure the Calabasas Malibu Food and Wine Festival will be even larger and more impressive. If you can't wait until then, get your tickets for the upcoming Food, Wine and Jazz at the St. Regis Monarch Beach event at the end of August.