



SIP, SAVOR, AND SUPPORT

| BY JACK MCCARTHY



Studies show that forming meaningful connections with people can be good for your heart. So, in the name of heart health, experience an unparalleled event that connects you to the world's best winemakers and chefs.

That event is the Heart's Delight Wine Tasting & Auction, an annual event benefiting the American Heart Association. Celebrating its 25th year, Heart's Delight is an unforgettable four days of world-class wine, gourmet cuisine, and heartfelt philanthropy. This extraordinary gathering of wine enthusiasts, renowned chefs, and community leaders is not just a celebration of fine taste but also a vital opportunity to support life-saving heart research and education.

Taking place in the heart of the nation's capital, this beloved event brings together wine connoisseurs and newcomers alike, offering a uniquely curated selection of exceptional wines from some of the world's most celebrated vineyards. "The work and the focus of the American Heart Association is deeply inspiring and incredibly impactful in the lives of so many," says Katherine Lugar, the 2025 Heart's Delight Chair. "Over the years I've seen the tremendous work of this particular event. It's an amazing gathering of so many things that make life fun — great wine, great food, great people, an auction that has a lot of travel components and experiences — and it's all done while raising money for such an important cause that affects so many. Heart's Delight has enjoyed 25 years of progress, and there's so much more ahead." In anticipation of this year's event, held May 7-10, we recently sat down with Lugar to discuss what to expect for the 25th annual celebration of Heart's Delight.

What inspired you to take on the role of Chair for the 25th anniversary of Heart's Delight?

My dad had a massive heart attack when he was 50. He didn't have any of the traditional underlying causes that you think of when you think of people that are most susceptible to cardiovascular disease. It was a miracle he lived, and he lived another 36 healthy years because of the incredible medical care he was given. So it's hard to have those personal experiences and not want to do your part to support the people and institutions that are saving lives.

Could you share an overview of the four-day event and what makes each night special?

The first day kicks off with the Congress has a Heart celebration, which features top American wines, a live auction of large format bottles, and an exclusive collectors dinner. The second night is centered on intimate, international-themed wine dinners that occur in embassies and private homes, which can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for a lot of participants. Each dinner pairs incredible wine with unforgettable meals.

The third day is the Vintners Dinner, highlighting Bordeaux wines paired with truly exquisite cuisine. The dinner is followed by an absolutely thrilling live auction hosted by Jamie Ritchie. It's one of those auctions you can't look away from. It offers experiences and packages that are really difficult to get elsewhere. The Heart's Delight Auction is enormously successful in putting forward elements — trips, wines — that are hard to come by and secure access to on your own.

Finally, the fourth day offers a Bordeaux master class and a grand tasting reception, where the guests can sample exceptional wines, enjoy dishes by top chefs, and participate in really exciting silent and live auctions.

For those unfamiliar with wine or fine dining, how does this event cater to them and make it accessible?

What I love about this event is that there is a menu of options. You don't have to love wine to enjoy eating a world-class meal in a beautiful embassy. It's a unique lineup of events that has something for everyone. Everyone has the choice to pick an event that speaks to them and drives value and impact for them. You're surrounded by incredible people, and everything goes to a great cause.

What are you most excited about for this year's celebration? Are there any surprises or standout moments we should look forward to?

I'm really excited to attend Saturday's events, which feature acclaimed English wine critic and journalist Neal Martin, who will host master class and virtual tour of Bordeaux. I'm also looking forward to this year's surprise theme. The American Heart Association always curates a theme — like last year's Wild West — that generates fun and perfectly captures the spirit of the four-day celebration.

Why is supporting the work of the American Heart Association critical, and how does Heart's Delight contribute to advancing its mission?

It gives people longer and healthier lives. At its core that is what this is all about. Having some fun along the way is important, but having an impact is the true reason why this event is so critical. Since 1999, Heart's Delight has raised more than \$25 million, and sustaining that mission is so important. As we look to the future, we have the opportunity to help promote longer and healthier lives in the fight against cardiovascular disease, and — bonus — we get to have some fun doing it.

