

Wines vie for Pinot Cup

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In a world where gourmet candy bars boast they're bacon-flavored, it's not a stretch to say people are passionate about pork. And there are plenty of wine-lovers who insist pork is at its best with a glass of pinot noir.

The eighth annual Pigs & Pinot event this Friday and Saturday at Hotel Healdsburg celebrates the delectable synergy between the two with a string of events. But for those with a keen eye on competitive pinot and yes, suspense, the most exciting event will be Friday night when the Pinot Cup winner and runner-up are revealed. While the metal, winged pig trophy is whimsical, it still stands for quality in pinot circles.

Brian Maloney of Santa Rosa's DeLoach Vineyards accepted the Pinot Cup last year for his winery and said, "I was thrilled and shocked when (chef) Charlie Palmer and (vintner) Daryl Groom called DeLoach out as the winner. . . . It was an honor to be brought up in front of my peers . . ."

The winery won the Pinot Cup with its DeLoach, 2009 Marin County Pinot Noir, which retails for \$35. Maloney, head winemaker, said he keeps the trophy at DeLoach, a touchstone for quality.

Before the announcement this year, guests will graze and sip, sampling an array of 60 pinots from around the world paired with pork dishes like homemade sausages, charcuterie and grilled pork.

Maloney said pig and pinot both have "flavors that have some excitement. Pinot noir and pork have a similar mouth feel. They are both luscious and spread across your palate."

Maloney said the pigs and pinot noir are celebrated because they represent a commingling of food, wine and tradition.

"It's a coming together of farmers, chefs and winemakers to celebrate heritage and tradition," he said. "Like winemaking, it all comes down to where the food was raised and how it was raised by the farmer and how the chef prepares the food."

Lee Martinelli Jr., of Windsor's Martinelli Winery, said, "Pigs and pinot are a great match . . . because the two pair very well together and they are both local foods.



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The 2012 winner of the Pinot Cup, DeLoach Vineyards.

