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Mansion festival to feature celebrity chefs, wine experts

By Christine McCall/Daily News staff

NEWPORT - If fine dining and wining sounds appealing to the ear, the Newport Mansions Wine and Food Festival on Sept. 27-29 is sure to appeal to the taste buds.

After the success of last year's inaugural festival, the Preservation Society of Newport County decided to step it up another notch by inviting additional celebrity guests, more food and wine experts and more educational seminars for this year's event.

"We're always looking for new ways to attract new audiences that fit in with the ambience of our attractions," said Andrea Carneiro, spokeswoman for the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Carneiro said this year's event is "bigger and better" with a lineup of several additional celebrity guests and chefs and a number of food and wine experts returning.

More than 150 wineries will participate in the three-day event. There also will be restaurant wine dinners that pair some of Newport's finest chefs with well-known wineries.

One of the headliners of the event is TV chef, author and teacher Nancy Verde Barr. She is the former executive chief to Julia Child and culinary producer at "Good Morning America." Barr will host a seminar titled "From Casseroles to Cassoulets: How Julia Child Turned a Jell-O Nation into a Gourmet Culture."

Another well-known chef, Jacques Pépin, will attend. Pépin has published 24 books and been the host of nine TV cooking series. He will host a cooking demonstration, "Bounty from the Sea," which will feature recipes from his most recent book. Pépin will be the guest of honor at Wine and Rosecliff on Friday, Sept. 28, where guests will dine on samplings of his recipes and taste vintage wines.

Also new to the festival is Sergio Esposito of Italian Wine Merchants. Esposito is considered to be a leading U.S. expert on Italian wines. Kevin Zraly, author of "Windows on the World Complete Wine Course," will return with his "One Hour Wine

Expert" seminar. He also will be the guest auctioneer during the Grand Tasting live auction.

The Grand Tasting will be held on the grounds of the Marble House on Saturday, Sept. 29. Wines from all over the world will be available, as well as sampling from about 24 restaurants and food suppliers. The Grand Tasting also will feature book signings by some of the headliners. The live auction will follow the tasting and there will be opportunities to take home specialty wines and other luxury items.

Additional food and wine experts making an appearance at the festival include: Steve Olson, "the Wine Geek;" Intermezzo magazine publisher and cooking expert Roseann Tully; Ihsan Gurdal of Formaggio Kitchens; William Whiting, grandson of the founder of Banfi Vintners; Edward Korry of Johnson & Wales University; and Yankee magazine food editor Annie Cops.

Educational seminars will take place each day at various Newport mansions including Marble House, Rosecliff and The Elms. The seminars offer people the opportunity to learn about food and wines from some of the leading experts in the field.

Carneiro said The Preservation Society of Newport County is expecting a good mix of locals and tourists to attend the event. She said the festival attracts people from all over the country who are interested in and knowledgeable about food and wine.

"What we really offer is a fabulous venue," Carneiro said.

TO GO

What: Newport Mansions Wine and Food Festival.

When: Sept. 27-29.

Where: Various Newport mansions including Marble House, Rosecliff and The Elms.

Cost: Varies depending on event. All of the proceeds from the festival will benefit the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Info: Visit www.NewportMansions.org.