

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Sarasota-Manatee Originals Presents
The Fifth Annual
Forks & Corks Food & Wine Festival
January 27-30, 2012

Tickets for Forks & Corks events go on sale November 14

The Grand Tasting

January 29, 2012 ▪ Noon to 4 p.m.

At the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

The Grand Tasting features signature dishes from more than 40 of The Sarasota-Manatee Originals member restaurants and a stunning array of wines and beers presented by guest wineries and breweries

(Sarasota, Florida) Tickets go on sale November 14, 2011, for The Grand Tasting and other Forks & Corks signature events. Forks & Corks Food & Wine Festival, a four-day culinary festival, January 27-30, 2012 is presented by The Sarasota-Manatee Originals (SMO), the festival features winemaker events at area restaurants (January 27 and 28); interactive food, wine and beer seminars (January 28); The Grand Tasting in The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Courtyard (January 29); and a trade event for area restaurants, retailers, and hotels (January 30).

The Grand Tasting, which features signature dishes from the area's top chefs, along with a vast array of wines and beers presented by guest vintners and breweries, is January 29 from noon to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$75 for general admission and \$125 for VIP. Tickets for the Grand Tasting include free admission to the museum's art galleries on the day of the event. All ticket sales are done online. Last year the events sold out weeks in advance. "We're recommending that people buy their tickets for The Grand Tasting early because we sold out weeks prior to the event last year," says Kate Atkin, executive director of SMO, explaining that more than 40 Originals restaurants will participate in the event. "We had no Grand Tasting tickets available for purchase on the day of the event, and we're expecting that to happen again this year since we have become a premiere food and wine festival."

This year's Grand Tasting will once again feature a silent auction of fine wines to benefit American Red Cross. "Raising money for the American Red Cross is a vital element of this event," says Atkin. "We've raised over \$100,000 in the past four years for our charitable partners and hope to continue to raise much needed money for the worthy organizations."

Atkin says that a main objective of Forks & Corks is to reinforce the Sarasota-Manatee region as a significant culinary destination. "The restaurant industry is a vital part of our community's economic make-up," she says. "In terms of how we sell Sarasota and Manatee counties to the world, we see our part as integral to the big picture as are our pristine beaches, wonderful climate and rich cultural amenities."

She adds that the event is also an important way for Originals restaurants to promote themselves. "Participating restaurants almost always report increased

revenues immediately following the event,” she says. “The Grand Tasting is an invaluable tool to introduce menus and services to hundreds of people who may never have stepped through their doors.”

For more information about the fifth annual Forks & Corks Food & Wine Festival, visit www.freshoriginals.com/forksandcorks or call 941-955-3663.

About The Sarasota-Manatee Originals

The Sarasota-Manatee Originals is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 2003, of more than 50 locally owned, independent restaurants in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Member restaurateurs are dedicated to preserving the culinary heritage of the Suncoast.