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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NARSAI TOAST RAISES \$4.7 MILLION FOR BERKELEY REP**

### **Final gourmet gala celebrates 17 years of philanthropy and food**

APRIL 3, 2009 – Tonight, cheers and applause mingled with fond farewells – and a few tears – when 400 guests raised their glasses at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Narsai Toast. The cheers were a response to the announcement that, in a single evening, these gourmands had raised more than \$440,000 to support the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre. The tears were prompted by the realization that, after nearly two decades of creating exceptional culinary events for the Theatre that raised more than \$4.7 million, Narsai David has stepped off the podium of his eponymous event for the final time.

“This is a bittersweet moment,” said **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep, as she presented him with a photo album commemorating his years of service. “Narsai has been a valued supporter of Berkeley Rep since the days when this theatre was just an upstart organization on College Avenue. We’re not the same theatre we were 40 years ago, but our growth has come from strict adherence to the highest artistic standards and a belief in providing an environment in which talented artists can do their best work. Narsai and his wife Venus have been champions of these values and of Berkeley Rep throughout the Bay Area, and their efforts have had a huge impact on advancing our growth. We are deeply grateful to Narsai for his years of service – and we hope that, even though he’s stepping out of the spotlight and reclaiming his seat in the audience, he’ll remain a friend of Berkeley Rep for years to come.”

Seventeen years ago, theatre-lovers gathered to roast local culinary expert Narsai David while enjoying a meal created by **Wolfgang Puck, Paul Prudhomme, Jeremiah Tower, Bradley Ogden, and Joyce Goldstein**. The event was such a success that the guests and guest of honor alike returned the next year, not to roast David, but to toast him. From these beginnings, the Narsai Toast became one of the Bay Area’s most magical events, dazzling guests from the arts, business, and philanthropic communities every year with the country’s leading culinary talents.

Held at the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, the final Narsai Toast began at 5:30 PM with a wine tasting hosted by Alexander Valley Vineyards, Cakebread Cellars, Domaine Carneros by Taittinger, Match Vineyards, Ravenswood Winery, Raymond Vineyards, Robert Mondavi Winery, and St. George Spirits. The gourmet dinner began at 7 PM, and throughout the meal guests were brought behind the scenes with live video from the kitchen and interviews with the seven chefs who created it. The mouthwatering meal included the following dishes:

- **Hors d’oeuvres by Kaleo Adams & Nathan Beriau of The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco** such as Cheddar and Broccoli Arancini or Dayboat Scallop on Spring Garlic Puree and Núñez de Prado Olive Oil
- **First course by Michael Chiarello of Bottega and NapaStyle:** Delta Asparagus Braised in Olive Oil with Cambazola Fonduta, Meyer Lemon, and Pine Nut Gremolata paired with the 2007 Raymond Vineyards Napa Valley Reserve Sauvignon Blanc
- **Second course by Hiro Sone & Lissa Doumani of Terra and Ame:** Broiled Sake-Marinated Alaskan Black Cod in Shiso Broth paired with the 2006 Merry Edwards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

(MORE)

## BERKELEY REP'S FINAL NARSAI TOAST / 2 OF 2

- **Entrée by Jean-Pierre Dubray of The Resort at Pelican Hill:** Colorado Lamb Loin and Tenderloin “Rosace,” Artichoke Barigoule, Tian Provençal, Fingerling Potato Confit, and Basil Jus paired with the 2004 Narsai David Estates, Cuvée Venus
- **Dessert by Gerald Hirigoyen of Piperade and Bocadillos:** Meyer Lemon Curd Cake with Crème Fraîche and Strawberry Compote and Biarritz Rocher au Chocolat with Roasted Hazelnuts, both paired with the 2007 Quady Elysium

A live auction featuring a wealth of culinary and travel adventures followed dinner. Lucky bidders went home with a priceless array of wines from Northern California vineyards, as well as several **extraordinary adventures:** a trip to Washington, DC for two which featured a private tour of the White House, US Supreme Court, and Library of Congress; a trip to New York City for four which included lunch with *Gourmet* editor-in-chief **Ruth Reichl**, tickets to performances by Manhattan Theatre Club and New York Ballet, and tickets to *Saturday Night Live* with a behind-the-scenes tour led by staff writer **Jorma Taccone**; and the sentimental favorite of the evening – a dinner for ten at the home of **Narsai and Venus David**, including wine selected from their private cellar.

As one of the founders of California cuisine, Bay Area gourmand **Narsai David** has helped elevate the region’s cultural profile. He founded the highly successful restaurant and market Narsai’s in Kensington. Currently, he serves as food and wine editor for KCBS-AM, filing daily reports from his travels around the world. Wherever he goes, his objective remains the same: to share the simple pleasures of cooking through education. In 1977, Helen C. Barber first harnessed David’s boundless energy for the good of Berkeley Rep when she invited him to join the Theatre’s founding board. The rest, as they say, is history. From loaning his restaurant’s dishes to the prop shop, to serving on the architectural review committee for the Theatre’s Addison Street home, to the 17 galas he hosted and the millions of dollars he raised to benefit Berkeley Rep, David has tirelessly given his time, energy, and wisdom to improving Berkeley Rep and making it an invaluable part of the Bay Area community.

All **proceeds from the Narsai Toast** support Berkeley Rep’s outreach and education programs, including its nationally-renowned internship program. The lead sponsors for this year’s event were Fossil; The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; and KCBS. The connoisseur sponsor was The Roda Group. **Felicia Woytak** chaired the event, and **Rich Edwards, Scott Haber, Mitzi Inglis, Sara Olsen, Arlene Robertson, and Jean Z. Strunsky** served on the planning committee.

Born in a storefront, **Berkeley Rep** has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Founded in 1968 by Michael Leibert, the Theatre quickly earned respect for presenting the finest plays with top-flight actors. In 1980, with the support of the local community, Berkeley Rep built the 400-seat Thrust Stage where its reputation steadily grew over the next two decades. It gained renown for an adventurous combination of work, presenting important new dramatic voices alongside refreshing adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. The company celebrated by unveiling a new 600-seat proscenium stage in 2001, the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. It also opened the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, a permanent home for its long tradition of outreach and education programs. The addition of these two buildings transformed a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex, the linchpin of a bustling Downtown Arts District which has helped revitalize Berkeley. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 50 world premieres. The Theatre now welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans, and administrators. In the last eight years, Berkeley Rep has helped send eight shows to New York: *36 Views, Bridge & Tunnel, Brundibar, Eurydice, In the Next Room (or the vibrator play), Metamorphoses, Passing Strange, and Taking Over.*

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