

**MEMBER EXCLUSIVE**

# Mitzi Perdue auctions Salisbury dinner to raise money for Ukraine



SALISBURY INDEPENDENT/LIZ HOLLAND

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By [Liz Holland](#)

When a dinner hosted by Mitzi Perdue went up for auction at a Lancaster, Pa., business conference, Perdue hoped the event would raise \$1,000 to benefit landmine clearance efforts in Ukraine.

Instead, bids opened at \$1,000 and soon skyrocketed to \$220,000. The event may have set a record for the highest amount ever raised, per person, for a charity meal in a private home.

“I still haven’t gotten over my absolute shock,” she said.

Perdue, a writer and speaker, has taken four trips to Ukraine since the Russian invasion, the first following a Zoom call with Gen. Nebytov, head of the Kyiv Region Police, who read Perdue’s article on human trafficking in Psychology Today.

“It’s far worse than that,” he told her, “Come see for yourself.” Ten days later she was on a plane to the war-torn country and spent her first night there in a bomb shelter.

Last year, Perdue sold an emerald ring that had been a gift from her late husband, poultry magnate Frank Perdue, for \$1.2 million. Proceeds from the Sotheby’s auction went to humanitarian relief in Ukraine, including shelters to protect women and children from human traffickers lurking on the borders.

She also purchased five speed boats for the Kiev police to patrol the Dnieper River after their own boats were turned over to the military.

While visiting Ukraine, Perdue also became interested in landmine clearing efforts. She noticed no children were on any of the many playgrounds and soon learned why: Russian troops frequently left small landmines for children to pick up. The Russians also have planted landmines in rural areas. Roughly 40 percent of agricultural land can’t be farmed now because of the devices.

Back home, Perdue started a crowd funding campaign at [DonorSee.com/Ukraine](https://DonorSee.com/Ukraine) for mine clearing efforts. Proceeds go to the HALO Trust, the world’s oldest and

largest landmine clearance organization. The goal is to raise enough money to pay 18 people on a full-time basis to help find and remove mines. Proceeds from the recent dinner at her home also will go to HALO.

The four couples who traveled from Lancaster to Perdue's Salisbury home on Nov. 8 were treated to a soiree headed by a culinary team from California, all of whom donated their time.

Chef Tanika von Rathonyi-Rohadfox joined by her husband Chef Paul Rohadfox, from the Santa Clara Hyatt, put a "modern French twist" to Perdue a la Vertical, a dish from The Perdue Chicken Cookbook. The pair prepared the chicken using the traditional recipe, but also cooked a boneless, pounded and rolled version that was served to the guests.

Von Rathonyi-Rohadfox said she chose a land and sea theme for her dinner when she learned that much of Ukraine's agricultural land can't be farmed because of landmines and puts a strain on other resources.

"When you starve out the land, then you overfish the sea," she said.

The two chefs were joined by Pastry Chef Anna Umar, who created a "statement cake" using the land and sea theme, and Olivier Barbeyrac, an importer of fine foods, who donated black truffles and caviar.

Perdue's condominium was decorated for the occasion by Samuel Ayala from Flowers by Edgar from Santa Clara, Calif. The dinner table was set with china, silver, crystal and linens she inherited from her father, the co-founder and president of the Sheraton Hotel Chain.

Helping out were Darryll Moss and Devon Kramer, seniors in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, who Perdue hired as servers for the occasion.

"I wanted it to be a resume builder for them," she said.