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Buffett Curry Charity Lunch Shows How A Nine Million Bid Can Unlock Major Tax Savings



[A \\$9 million winning bid for a charity lunch with Warren Buffett and Stephen Curry](#) is more than a headline-grabbing gesture. For big donors, it's a textbook example of how charity-auction spending can unlock outsized tax deductions when the IRS rules are used strategically.

This year's eBay auction markets the return of Buffett's long-running lunch tradition, which for years has raised millions for the GLIDE charity in San Francisco. For 2026, the event expanded to include Curry and his wife, Ayesha, through their Eat.Learn.Play foundation. The winning bidder will bring seven guests to Omaha in June — and thanks to Buffett's pledge to match the donation, both GLIDE and the Currys' charity will receive a combined \$18 million.

What Charity Buyers Often Miss About Taxes

Donations to bona fide charities, of course, are tax-deductible. Before making a donation, it's important to search the IRS list of [tax-exempt organizations](#) to make sure the charity qualifies. Writing a check is simple, and the amount of the charitable-contribution deduction you get is too. But donations in kind trigger special rules, including about appraisals. If your donation in kind is worth more than \$500, you need to file an [IRS Form 8283, Noncash Charitable Contributions](#).

How Auction Deductions Really Work

The rules for charity auctions and other events also have special IRS rules. Donors who purchase items at a charity auction can claim a charitable-contribution deduction, but only for the excess of the purchase price paid for an item over its fair market value. Plus, the donor must be able to show that he or she knew that the value of the item was less than the amount paid. That

means if you pay \$250 for something worth only \$100, you are entitled to a \$150 deduction.

In the case of tickets to charity dinners — say, where you buy a charity-dinner ticket for \$500 — the charity is supposed to inform you of the value of the dinner. Only the excess qualifies for a tax deduction. In the case of the lunch with eight people with Buffett and the Currys, no matter how elaborate a lunch it is, most of the \$9 million should qualify. Charities are subject to [IRS regulations](#) that generally require them to inform bidders of the value.

Why Celebrity Presence Doesn't Count As Value

How much would this particular lunch be worth? Surprisingly enough, the presence of Warren Buffett and Steph and Ayesha Curry at the lunch — or any celebrity's — is not treated as having a value. Yet as a practical matter, the lunch might have a big value for the donor. In one famous story, some years ago, one successful lunch bidder ended up later being a stock picker for Buffett.

Why Buffett Donates Stock Instead Of Cash

Speaking of stock, Buffett has made many large donations to charity over the years, and he has generally not made them in cash. The famously savvy investor and now retired CEO of Berkshire Hathaway does it in stock. Why donate stock rather than cash? When someone donates stock, the donor gets a charitable-contribution deduction based on the fair market value of what is given.

By donating at the market value of the shares, Buffett gets credit for the appreciation in the shares. That is, the fair market value of the stock is his

donation. Yet he does not have to pay income tax on his gain as he would if he sold it.

Donating appreciated stock is far better than selling the stock, paying tax on the gain, and donating the cash. Giving appreciated property is the kind of wise tax planning you would expect from Buffett.