



# FARM

By Mary Murray  
Photography by Jerry Rabinowitz

VIBRANT INGREDIENTS AND A SPECTACULAR  
SETTING COMMINGLE TO FORM THE ULTIMATE  
ALFRESCO DINNER AT SWANK TABLE

# *fresh*





**a** chorus of guitar, fiddle, banjo, and upright bass beckons you toward a pole barn aglow with lanterns. A friend welcomes you with smile and libation and whisks you to a communal table brimming with produce so fresh it started the day in the soil. Later that evening, as you head home warm from food and drink, you pause and gaze up at the black sky speckled with stars. This is what alfresco dining is all about. This is Swank Table.

Hosted by Swank Specialty Produce at its farm in Loxahatchee, Swank Table is the Sunday dinner of dreams. South Florida chefs swarm the fields and hydroponic grow houses to gather ingredients to prepare fine-dining-meets-picnic cuisine. Brewers, sommeliers, and mixologists join in creating a multicourse meal that complements and honors the natural setting. Best of all, a portion of the proceeds are donated to charity.

To kick off its fifth season, Swank Table transported guests to another lush locale: the Hamptons. With help from a team of chefs led by Dean James Max, Palm Beach author and philanthropist Annie Falk brought to life her latest tome, *Hamptons Entertaining: Creating Occasions to Remember*.

Falk attended her first Swank Table last year and jumped at the opportunity to co-host with Darrin and Jodi Swank to benefit two of her favorite charities: Children's Home Society of Florida and Peconic Bay-keeper. The theme was a no-brainer; she knew the farm would be ideal for a Hamptons-style fête.

"It's really quiet and peaceful, and you just feel like you're in the center of nature,"



ON ITS FARM IN LOXAHATCHEE, SWANK SPECIALTY PRODUCE GROWS MORE THAN 350 VARIETIES OF PRODUCE SUCH AS HERBS, VEGETABLES, FRUIT, AND EDIBLE FLOWERS. ON THE DAY OF THE SWANK TABLE EVENT, ALL OF THE CHEFS, INCLUDING PASTRY CHEF HUMA NAGI (ABOVE LEFT), PICKED THE INGREDIENTS FOR THEIR DISHES.





ANNIE FALK (RIGHT) TRANSPORTED GUESTS TO THE HAMPTONS WITH RELAXED YET CHIC DECOR AND FARM-TO-TABLE FLOWERS.



the pole barn. They also covered the ground with hay to mask residual mud and fill potentially perilous divots. The hay turned out to be a moment of divine intervention, as it further imbued the surroundings with the essence of the Hamptons.

"I think most people have this image of the Hamptons that it's this incredibly glamorous place," Falk says. "It is, but for the most part it's really very warm and welcoming. It's chic but simple. We have so many equestrians and professional riders who spend time there, so [with] the idea of the barn and the hay and the music, I said, 'This is so Hamptons.'"

Falk fully embraced casual elegance for the evening's decor. Lanterns and glass bottles hung from the barn's rafters, illuminating long tables dressed in burlap and outfitted with rustic tableware complemented by crisp white napkins and menus reminiscent of a fine watercolor painting. To finish the look, galvanized buckets held flowers grown right at Swank Farm. "The flowers looked exactly as they were meant to, like they were just picked from the farm and casually placed on the tables," Falk says.

Of course, no Swank Table or Hamptons happening is complete without amazing farm-to-table cuisine. Max organized a group of rising top chefs, whom he'd previously worked with at 3030 Ocean in Fort Lauderdale,

for the late-fall season. The forecast for the day of, however, looked clear and everything carried on as planned—with a few exceptions.

Unlike most Swank Tables where guests explore the grounds as they peruse vendors and sample appetizers, Falk and the Swanks decided to move all of the festivities under

Falk says. "It's just the idea of being a part of nature for the evening that I love about being outdoors. Of course, the tricky part about being outdoors is always the weather."

For this event, the weather was certainly a concern. In the days leading up, Palm Beach County experienced unprecedented rainfall

“IT'S THE IDEA OF BEING PART OF NATURE FOR THE EVENING THAT I LOVE ABOUT BEING OUTDOORS.”

—ANNIE FALK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: BURRATA APPETIZER, SMOKED SWANK VEGETABLES WITH RED CURRY AND LIME, AND CHARRED OCTOPUS, ALL BY CHEF JEREMY FORD; SODA BREAD MADE BY OLD SCHOOL BAKERY USING A RECIPE FROM HAMPTONS ENTERTAINING.



dale, to build a menu that made use of the Swank produce and featured a Hamptons flair. Falk met with the chefs months before the feast to provide them with copies of the book for inspiration.

No stranger to Swank, Max encouraged his chefs to design dishes around the farm-fresh produce.

"The product is what defines the menu," he says. "We look at the farm first to see what we want to serve, making a list of all the products that are in the highest quality at that time. Then each chef works to do his thing with those ingredients, and we try to make an even spread so that all the fun stuff is showcased."

"I'm so inspired by Swank, it's crazy," adds Jeremy Ford, chef de cuisine at Matador Room by Jean-Georges in Miami Beach and a contestant



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GRILLING QUAIL AND SMOKING SWANK VEGETABLES; WHOLE GRILLED FLORIDA QUAIL BY CHEF LAUREN DESHIELDS; UPROOT HOOTENANY ROCKED THE BARN WHILE GUESTS ENJOYED A FAMILY-STYLE FEAST.



on the most recent season of Bravo's *Top Chef*. For his appetizer, he put a Floridian spin on a burrata dish featured in *Hamptons Entertaining* by adding pasilla-dusted Swank tomatoes.

"He took the flavors of that recipe and made them a little more casual for the farm and a little brighter and sunnier in flavor for South Florida," Falk says.

Other appetizers included a sweet tea-smoked Florida swordfish dip with red head radish, cucumber ribbons, chicken skin, and beet-pickled onions by Lauren DeShields; a house-made Seminole beef pastrami with pickled farm vegetables by Paula DaSilva and Adrienne Grenier; and Israeli couscous with roasted tomatoes by Swank Farm's own Simon Stojanovic. Guests gathered the bites on wooden boards and paired them with a choice of beers from Native Brewing Co. and wine curated by sommeliers from Virginia Philip Wine Shop and Academy. For the signature cocktail, Hullabaloo mixologist Brett Hart reinvented a strawberry-rhubarb granita into an adults-only treat.

Falk made one request of attendees: Bring lanterns. All obliged, and by the time dinner was served each table was dotted with an haute hodgepodge of luminaries. The multicourse meal began with soda bread made by Old School Bakery in Delray Beach, fol-



lowed by a first course of charred octopus, paprika emulsion, farm herbs, and tostones-style potatoes by Ford, who also took a huge cue from the farm for his contribution.

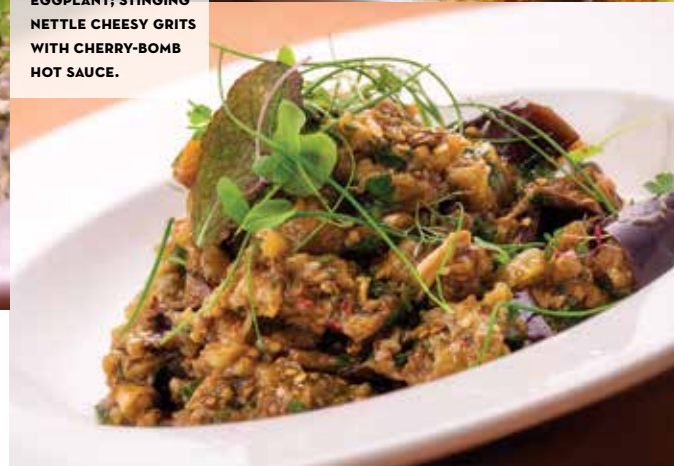
"The dish that really embraced the farm for me was our side [dish]," he says. "We literally buried kohlrabi, radishes, and beans under wood and let them smoke for 45 minutes."

Next, DeShields presented a whole grilled Florida quail with baby collard greens, pickled kohlrabi, nasturtiums, and Castelvetrano olives served with stinging nettle cheesy grits. DaSilva and Grenier followed with a tagine of Seminole beef and Rabat-style eggplant. Pastry chef Huma Nagi finished the feast with a chocolate fondue accompanied by tangerine marshmallows, pistachio financiers, coconut brittle, and fruit kabobs. Everything was cooked and plated onsite and served family style.

"Plating individually is not a communal thing, which is what the event is about," Max says. "The dinner is about sharing the bounty of a farm with your friends and family. Passing the plate is in remembrance of the Sunday supper and sharing food and love. It's less about the fancy and more about the fun." <<



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: TAGINE OF SEMINOLE BEEF; HAMPTONS CHOCOLATE FONDUE WITH ASSORTED DIPPERS; RABAT-STYLE EGGPLANT; STINGING NETTLE CHEESY GRITS WITH CHERRY-BOMB HOT SAUCE.



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—CHEF DEAN JAMES MAX

