

MARTHA STEWART

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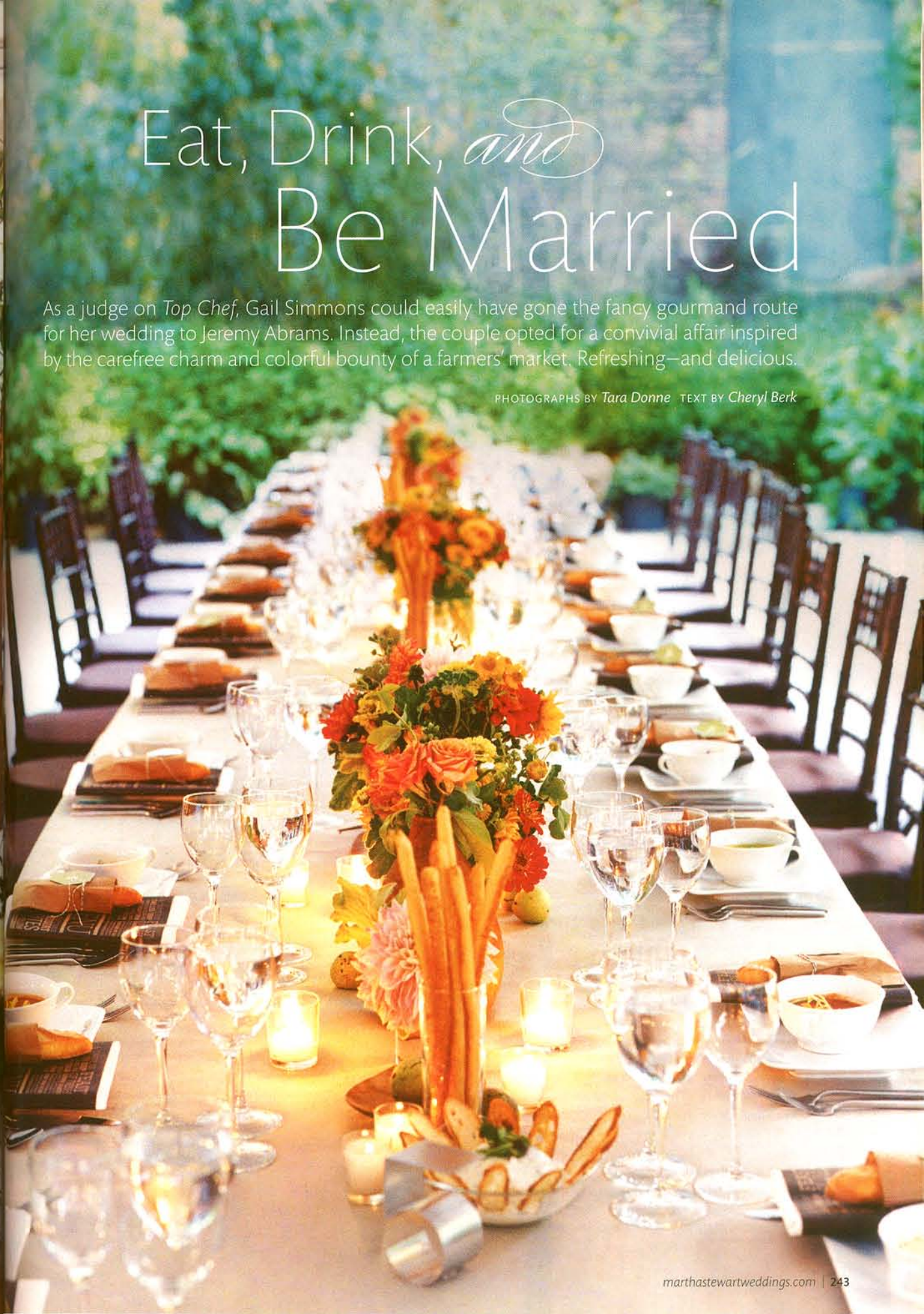


This page: Gail donned a floaty Carolina Herrera gown and the veil her mother wore at her own wedding 42 years earlier. **Opposite:** Long candlelit tables helped spark conversation. The lively centerpieces were wrapped in kraft paper after dinner and the resulting bouquets given to guests to take home as keepsakes.

Eat, Drink, *and* Be Married

As a judge on *Top Chef*, Gail Simmons could easily have gone the fancy gourmand route for her wedding to Jeremy Abrams. Instead, the couple opted for a convivial affair inspired by the carefree charm and colorful bounty of a farmers' market. Refreshing—and delicious.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Tara Donne* TEXT BY *Cheryl Berk*



AS ANY FOOD LOVER knows, some things need to simmer slowly before they reach perfection. That was the case for music

executive Jeremy Abrams's romance with Gail Simmons, special projects director at *Food & Wine* magazine and a judge on Bravo's *Top Chef*. The two Canadians met more than a decade ago through a mutual friend when both were newcomers to New York City. "We didn't think twice about each other at first," says Gail, "but then we started spending more and more time together, and things just happened naturally."

In August 2007, Jeremy felt the time was right to propose, but getting his globe-trotting sweetheart to stay put long enough to pop the question was a challenge. After a ten-day business trip, Gail was enjoying the rare luxury of sleeping late when she rolled over onto a ring box. Inside was a cushion-cut diamond surrounded by pavé diamonds on a platinum band. "We just lay there savoring the moment," she says.

Moments later the doorbell rang. Jeremy answered it and returned with a mouth-watering breakfast in bed: a frittata, a nectarine tart, and Champagne, all from August, one of Gail's favorite restaurants.

Jeremy's proposal wasn't the only part of the couple's celebration to include a culinary theme. "We wanted our wedding to feel like a summer party—very communal and casual with a feeling of interaction through food," Gail explains.

As the setting for the August 17, 2008, event, the couple chose The Foundry, a restored 19th-century metal forge in Long Island City, Queens. To bring the feel of a bountiful country market to life to the unique urban backdrop, they enlisted planner Kimberlee Bendeck of Boutiquevents and florist Naomi deMañana, who filled the space with loose gatherings of orange, pink, and yellow dahlias and roses.

The traditional Jewish ceremony took place at 6 P.M. in The Foundry's open-air courtyard, with Gail making her way to the flower-decked huppa to Aretha Franklin's "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man." "We wanted music that would be cool with a classic vibe to it," explains Jeremy.

Guided by Gail's conviction that "round tables encourage guests to chat only with those on either side of them," seven long



tables for 25 were set under tents for dinner following the cocktail hour. To further maximize interaction among the 175 guests, celebrated chef Daniel Boulud masterminded a conversation-conducive menu that began with a trio of chilled soups. "Every other person got a different soup, so people could taste each other's or trade," Gail explains. A second course included an array of crisp seasonal vegetable salads served family style, with a platter in the center of each table to promote sharing and, of course, chatting.

After enjoying the main course of grilled striped bass or sweet pea-ricotta ravioli, guests filled the dance floor until the celebration wound down after midnight, pausing their revelry only to sample the delicious bites from the dessert bar.

As for the newlyweds themselves? Having passed this particular Quickfire Challenge with flying colors, they're on to the next exciting round: married bliss.



Opposite, from top: The couple's stationery used eco-friendly paper for the invitation suite; the honeycomb and flower theme was woven through the entire day. The newlyweds pose with family before the ceremony. This page, clockwise from top left: Gail and Jeremy exchange vows under a wood and cloth huppa with quince branches and passionflower vines. Guests sipped peach-mint iced tea and strawberry lemonade. One of the favors: a farmers' market tote bag. Radishes, carrots, parsnips, snap peas, and tomatoes were ripe for the eating during cocktail hour. Dinner-plate dahlias, roses, zinnias, geraniums, and ornamental oregano made for a summery bouquet.



The best edible favors are as FULL OF FLAVOR as they are of sentiment. It's a recipe for a delicious memory.

Opposite: As a token of the couple's appreciation, guests were given jars of sour or spicy-sour pickles, a local summer favorite and Simmons family staple. This page, clockwise from top: Sunny yellow place cards sit atop flower-filled metal crates. Guests, including *Top Chef*'s Tom Colicchio, converse as they dine. The bride's nieces, Brooke and Elle Simmons, make adorable flower girls. The newlyweds listen to speeches in their honor. Fruit tartlets are a delicious dessert option. Menus double as napkin bands, while wrapped baguettes hold tags printed with each guest's name.



SOURCES

- LOCATION The Foundry
- EVENT PLANNING Kimberlee Bendeck, Boutiqueevents
- WEDDING CONSULTANT Marcy Blum
- CATERING Feast & Fêtes from Restaurant Daniel
- FLOWERS Naomi deMañana
- STATIONERY Design, ThussFarrell; printing, Julie Holcomb Printers
- MUSIC Matt Creed
- WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY Timothy K. Lee
- GOWN Carolina Herrera
- MENSWEAR Groom's suit, Paul Smith; tie, Thomas Pink
- HAIR AND MAKEUP Jessie Riley and Jeff Chastain of Jeff Chastain Parlor
- RENTALS Party Rental, Ltd.

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