

News

F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

Connecticut Chefs Host *Dinners at the Farm*

Chester, CT (Summer, 2008) –California may have the remarkable Alice Waters of Chez Panisse fame, but Connecticut has Jonathan Rapp of the River Tavern restaurant in Chester and Drew McLachlan of Feast Market in Deep River, two passionate chefs who share Alice Water’s fresh and local food sensibilities. The two already employ this sensibility with their respective businesses but wanted to really make an impact by cooking fresh, local produce right on the farm and in so doing created *Dinners at the Farm*.

Dinners at the Farm is a series of benefit dinners celebrating Connecticut’s local food, farms and community that began last year and was wildly successful, selling out all ten benefit dinners, and serving as many as 168 guests each night. Plus, Dinners at the Farm donated over \$17,000 to local non-profit organizations and bought more than \$30,000 worth of local farm produce. Jonathan and Drew created *Dinners at the Farm* as a way to generate awareness of the local food movement and to support local farms, farmers markets, and vineyards.

The real star of the dinners is the locally grown produce that is deliciously transformed into a sumptuous feast all cooked on the back of a cherry-red, vintage, 1955 Ford F-600, flat-bed truck retrofitted into an amazingly, functioning, portable mini-kitchen. Each meal is served on the grounds of a selected local farm, vineyard or farmers market. Guests are seated under a twilight sky to a long white, linen draped table adorned with stunning wild flowers, antique reproduction copper lanterns (handmade in Ivoryton, CT), white porcelain table settings and silverware. Menus are spontaneous and feature locally sourced culinary treasures such as Stonington Scallops, Falls Brook Organic Farm’s heirloom tomatoes, Four Mile River Farm’s naturally raised beef and pork, Beltane Farm’s creamy goat cheese and many others. Plus, Chamard Vineyards of Clinton, CT will showcase their wines at a few of the dinners. Other Connecticut vineyards will be featured as well.

Dinners are served on platters family style and feature multiple courses, with tables set outdoors seating guests up to 100 total. With limited seating, reservations are highly encouraged and can be made by

visiting <http://ww.DinnersAtTheFarm.com> or calling River Tavern. The benefit Dinners are an all inclusive cost of \$130.00 per person, which includes a multi-course dinner, tax, tip and beverages with 10 percent of the proceeds of each dinner going toward a designated non-profit organization of which there are four and include Connecticut Farmland Trust, The Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries, Working Lands Alliance a project of American Farmland Trust and CitySeed Urban Farmers Market.

The concept of *Dinners at the Farm* was sparked when Jonathan was working on a plan for a community garden and market square in Chester. He thought a summer outdoor kitchen would be great to include in the plan. Meals could be cooked right in the square using the harvest of the garden and farmer's market stands as a fun way to educate folks about local agriculture and sustainability. The idea to have the dinners at a farm came last year when a non-profit organization asked to auction off a River Tavern dinner for 12 people to be held on the idyllic grounds of Ashlawn Farm. Both River Tavern and Ashlawn Farm accepted the offer and the winning bid of \$4,500 sealed the deal. That dinner was such a great success that Jonathan decided to expand the concept to a summer long series.

Ultimately, recreating a sense of connection to farming, cooking and eating is what Dinners at the Farm is all about. To learn more or to make reservations please visit <http://ww.DinnersAtTheFarm.com> or call the River Tavern Restaurant at 860.526.9417 or visit www.rivertavernchester.net.

All dinners begin at 6:00 p.m.

June 6, 7, 8	Chamard Vineyard, Clinton <i>Benefiting Connecticut Farmland Trust</i>
July 11, 12, 13	Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries <i>Benefiting Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries</i>
Aug. 15, 16, 17	White Gate Farm, East Lyme <i>Benefiting Working Lands Alliance a project of American Farmland Trust</i>
Sept. 12, 13, 14	Hindinger Farm, Hamden <i>Benefiting CitySeed Farmer's Market</i>

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