

FARM TO FORK | GONE SHRIMPING | LIFE AT SEA

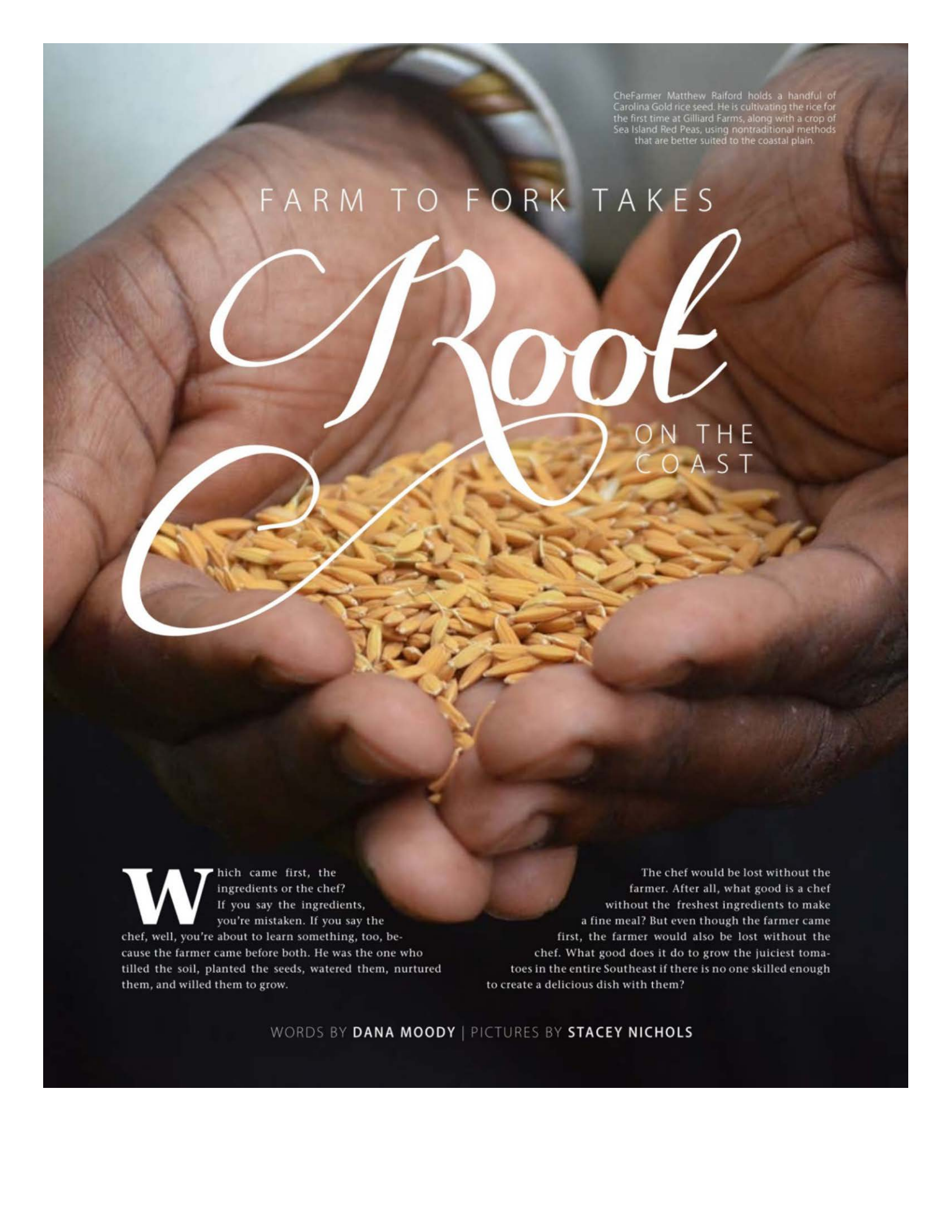
Golden Isles

THE MAGAZINE FOR BRUNSWICK, ST. SIMONS, JEKYL & SEA ISLANDS



CHEFARMER
MATTHEW RAIFORD
IS A SIXTH-GENERATION
PLANTER AT
GILLIARD FARMS.

DIGGING INTO
SUMMER



CheFarmer Matthew Raiford holds a handful of Carolina Gold rice seed. He is cultivating the rice for the first time at Gilliard Farms, along with a crop of Sea Island Red Peas, using nontraditional methods that are better suited to the coastal plain.

FARM TO FORK TAKES

Root

ON THE
COAST

Which came first, the ingredients or the chef? If you say the ingredients, you're mistaken. If you say the chef, well, you're about to learn something, too, because the farmer came before both. He was the one who tilled the soil, planted the seeds, watered them, nurtured them, and willed them to grow.

The chef would be lost without the farmer. After all, what good is a chef without the freshest ingredients to make a fine meal? But even though the farmer came first, the farmer would also be lost without the chef. What good does it do to grow the juiciest tomatoes in the entire Southeast if there is no one skilled enough to create a delicious dish with them?

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Since you cannot have one without the other, we honor both chef and farmer alike, and especially those who have a knack for both.

Fresh, organic, local – this is the trend that everyone is following, and although the Jekyll Island Club Hotel is more historic than trendy, the chefs in the Grand Dining Room were way ahead of the curve on this one. Supporting local farmers and businesses has always been important to the Jekyll Island Club Hotel and especially to the chefs in the Grand Dining Room. Sous Chef Brenna Drum is no exception to this tradition. “It kind of makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside just thinking that the carrot you’re eating was grown just down the street,” she laughs.

Just down the street for Chef Brenna is just across the causeway at Sapelo Farms in Brunswick. BA Lewis and daughter, Gabe Marr, supply the hotel kitchen with every kind of vegetable from tomatoes to fava beans to Swiss chard. Brenna personally drops by the farm and picks up each week’s order for the hotel. With their Sapelo Farms Produce, BA and Gabe put their focus on “growing great food for great people,” and helping to foster a health-conscious attitude in our community. “For me, food became a conversation about life,” BA says. “Food is about how I live, how my family lives, how we eat and what we believe is important. I believe in knowing where and how my food was grown and treated.”

Chef Brenna takes BA’s idea on the quality of freshness one step further, explaining that farm-fresh products are not only healthier but taste better too. “Really the fresh local produce tastes better than the things you

might buy at the grocery store. You may not always know where the food at the store is coming from or how long it’s been sitting on the shelf, but the things I cook with are fresh off the farm and just pulled right out of the ground.” They are, of course, washed first.

Matthew Raiford also picks local and cooks fresh. Talented chef and professor of culinary arts at the College of Coastal Georgia is just barely scraping the surface of all that Matthew has to offer. He is both chef and farmer; in fact, CheFarmer Matthew, a college nickname, is now his identity.

CheFarmer Matthew comes from a long line of farmers. Gilliard Farms has been in his family since 1874, and he is the sixth generation to actually farm the land. “I’ve always been connected to the land. My family’s always been connected to the land,” he explains. Luckily for him and those whom he’s fed, cooking is also in his genes. His dad and his sister are bakers by trade. His mom was the “queen of leftovers,” taking day-old meals no one wanted and creating something entirely new and delicious. “When I was a kid we had a love for food,” he says. “Everybody knew who grew the best tomatoes. Everybody knew who grew the best watermelon.”

Fully committed to the “seed to table movement,” Matthew and sister Althea are cultivating 28 acres of their family’s farm with pecans, arugula, plums, garlic, sugar cane and herbs, tomatoes and even sunflowers – just because they’re pretty. His day begins before many of us are conscious enough to think about hitting the snooze button. In the early





Swiss Chard



Elephant Garlic



Heirloom Blackberries

hours Matthew is out walking his property, making sure everything is as it was the night before, and preparing for the day ahead. Planting seeds, weeding gardens, watering crops and even chasing squirrels away from his fresh, red strawberries may seem like a strange life to some of us, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

To Matthew there's nothing like being a part of the entire process from planting the seeds to cooking with the very same ingredients he raised himself. "I don't think there's anything else that can give me a greater high," he says. Being both a chef and a farmer is not a trend but a life-

style for Matthew. "It's in my blood to walk out and smell the rain and to look at some ingredients and say, 'You know what I can make with that?'"

The next time you are driving past a cornfield or even your neighbor's herb garden, take a moment to appreciate the farmers who dedicate themselves to green and fresh. And the next time you are buying fruit at the supermarket — wait, why are you at the supermarket? I thought we discussed this. You should be out at the farmer's market for fresh fruit. 🍓

THE CHEFS'

Recipes

CheFarmer Matthew's Arugula Pesto Lamb Chops

Ingredients:

1 large bunch of arugula
1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1/2 bunch of carrot tops (no stems)
1 garlic clove
1/4 cup pecan pieces
1/2 cup olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt or Himalayan pink salt
4 Lamb chops, 3/4-inch thick

Directions: Put arugula, carrot tops, garlic, and pecans in food processor or blender and pulse until you see small pieces.

Turn processor or blender on medium speed and slowly pour in olive oil adding salt and pepper as ingredients become smooth.

Taste and adjust salt and pepper according to your liking.

Coat each lamb chop with pesto and place into the refrigerator for 45 minutes.

Remove from the refrigerator and allow lamb chops to reach room temperature approx. 15 to 20 minutes.

Preheat Grill

Grill off lamb chops 2 1/2 minutes each side for medium rare and 3 1/2 minutes each side for medium

Note: Pecans can be replaced with walnuts, almonds and pinenuts. They can also be completely omitted.

Chef Brenna's Cauliflower & Asparagus Salad

Ingredients:

1/6 head of cauliflower
5 pieces asparagus, sliced, seasoned and grilled
1 Roma tomato, seasoned and grilled
Georgia Olive Oil, as needed to grill vegetables
Heavy pinch of micro greens or celery leaves
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 oz. local pesto (recipe follows)
Drizzle of lemon balsamic reduction

Directions: Mix all ingredients together except local pesto and lemon balsamic reduction. Once salad is mixed, drizzle local pesto and lemon balsamic reduction over salad and enjoy.

Local Pesto

Ingredients:

1/2 lb. local basil
(If basil is not available, use local oregano, parsley, or cilantro)
1 cup of pecan pieces
3/4 cup of Parmesan cheese, shredded
7 garlic cloves, tips, snipped
2 lemons, zested and juiced
Pomace oil, as needed
Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions: Put all ingredients in robot coupe and slowly add oil, blend well, and adjust seasonings.

Lemon Balsamic

Ingredients:

3 lemons, zested
3 cups white balsamic vinegar

Directions: Reduce vinegar until it is thick and syrupy. Pull it off of the heat, add zest and let cool. Store at room temperature.