

plant-based divine dining



I just had what may be the quintessential farm-to-table dining experience of my life, composed almost completely of plants. The place: [Blue Hill at Stone Barns](#); the time: a Sunday evening in early September, when the wild flowers, edible herbs, and delicate vegetables of summer were still in full bloom.

And the best part: the kids stayed at home, snug as bugs in the hands of our favorite teen babysitter with Ice Age 1 on DVR, and apple slices and non-GMO popcorn for snacks.

I had heard that Blue Hill knew how to serve a decent meal; my month-long battle with its reservationists two months in advance to get a spot for four for dinner on a weekend night was evidence of how popular the place really is. And the setting doesn't hurt its appeal: set on acres of lush farmland just north of NYC, the venue offers tours, egg collecting and a farmers market that keeps its buzz alive.

For more info on a family experience visiting the farm, check out [this post on Happy Day Westchester](#).

My dining experience far exceeded the restaurant's humble, naturalist surroundings in extravagance. We chose the Field

and Pasture menu with a “grill” theme, which did not exist on paper; the chefs improvised the dishes on a daily basis depending on the availability of the farm’s produce. It consisted of eight courses, all presented in ways that were consciously earthy, if not artistic: on hand-carved wooden slabs, arched wires, elevated platters, metal spikes.

The first course consisted simply of thin pieces of raw vegetables that had just been hand-picked from outside the restaurant’s door, placed on metal spikes that were attached to a wood slab and lightly flavored with salt: yellow cucumbers, new nabai pok choy, tango lettuce, baby zucchini and mokum carrots, and foot-long shoots of montebianco fennel featured on its own platter.

Smoked watermelon rind, surprisingly complex in flavor, then arrived at our table as a palate cleanser.

Then came baby tomatoes—sun gold and mountain magic—and carmin peppers drizzled with warmed honey, served on a six-inch high platter.

The second course was just as verdant, with wild herbs including nasturtiums and mustard flowers, hand woven into pieces of wire in the shape of a handle, served with shots of cantaloupe juice.



Another unidentified herb, possibly pineapple sage, came served in the potted plant that it had been grown in. A pea-based dipping sauce arrived on a simple white plate, with scissors for snipping the potted herbs (see top photo).

The next course was the smallest but by far the most elevated in taste: a slice of dewaku eggplant, roasted to the point that its meat melted in my mouth, warmed with sesame oil, smoked spices, and crusted with roasted sesame seeds.



Then came ratatouille sliders presented on a plate of sesame seeds.



And there was more: a platter of bite-sized nibbles, or amuse-

bouches, made of grains, vegetables and one with egg:



Then we had a “taco” plate with finely sliced radishes that acted as the taco shells, artichoke purée that mimicked guacamole, and small chunks of lobster (my fellow diners were not vegetarians).

Next came a grilled zucchini plate with chanterelle mushrooms:



Next arrived a sublime looking rose bradywine tomato bowl

sprinkled with petite wildflowers:



Finally, the savory dishes ended with a pasta course—purple threads of wheat—served over fresh goat cheese and a smoked pepper sauce.

At last, three hours later, we arrived at dessert: a “strawberries and cream” fruit wrap accompanied with a raspberry sorbet:



plus a wooden platter of small bites: a nest with dark chocolate sticks, peach “donuts,” baked oat cups, and mini spelt buns with herb marmalade.



By the end of the meal I could barely move I was so full. But I appreciated to the fullest my dining experience that not only served local produce, but honored the edible plants growing in abundance around me that I would otherwise use only as a garnish or dismiss as weeds. I admit: I am both humbled and inspired by the thrill of eating this feast of plants.

Who knows, I might just be serving hubby and the boys tofu sautéed with wild dandelion greens plucked from the front yard on a bed of flaxseeds for dinner tonight.